



## **ST MARY PARISH LIBRARY**

St. Mary was among the last of the parishes to establish a public library service. Although there was a small library service started in Highgate as early as 1947, this was organized by a community group. It was not until 1951 the Parochial Board provided in its estimates the necessary funds to operate a library service in the parish.

The statutory committee appointed under the Jamaica Library Service (JLS) law held its inaugural meeting in September, 1950. Mr. A. H. Val Cottrell, then Clerk of the courts for St. Mary, was elected chairman and the committee set about making arrangements for establishing a library in Port Maria. Mr. Cottrell and late Mr. H. B. Phillpotts another member of the committee undertook task of finding accommodation for the library. Although working tirelessly their labour was fruitless as the rate of rental for the only available premises proved in excess of library's resources.

The possibility of housing the library in some church hall was considered, but, none of those available was centrally located. The Parochial Board was contacted and permission was given to use the Town Hall for that purpose until other accommodation could be found. However before this could follow thorough, a small building on Hodgson Street was made available to the Committee.

On June 4, 1951 the library was officially opened by Mr. A.E. Nash, then Resident Magistrate for St. Mary. The library opened with a stock of books one thousand four hundred books (1,400) provided by the Jamaica Library Service. It was opened to the public from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and was operated by voluntary staff. Although the problem of accommodation was temporarily solved, the Committee was not satisfied with lack of space and the limited facilities which handicapped growth and development. Efforts to obtain a more suitable space was sort and found at the Church Hall for rent, but this was still not satisfactory.

By November, 1954 arrangements were made for a section of the Victoria Park in Port Maria for a site. In April 1957, the library was removed into its new building and within a year membership rose to over 3,400 and resources increased to 27, 867.