



ST. THOMAS PARISH LIBRARY

St. Thomas Parish Library owes the first 21 years of its development to the initiative of the late Miss Inez C. Bowen who in 1947 garnered support from leading citizens of Morant Bay for the formation of a public library for that town. A resolution to this effect was passed in 1948 and Miss Bowen met with the committee to outline her proposal. In response, Mr. Douglas Moyston, committee member and solicitor of the firm Moyston and Silvera offered temporary accommodation for the library at the firm's offices. A meeting with Mr. A. S. A. Bryant, then Director of the Jamaica Library Service, and the Steering Committee was later held on July 1, 1948, to which Mr. Bryant brought a collection of three hundred (300) books from the recently established JLS Headquarters. In the course of the year the Headquarters further assisted the new library with a grant and additional supplies of books.

By March 1949 the library changed its location to a building owned by the Forresters of Forresters' Lodge. However in October of that year the Library had to be temporarily closed for reorganization. It was reopened in November, but by then it became apparent that the library needed a more central location; so by 1950 premises located in the commercial section of Morant Bay, and owned by Mr. S. Duncan were rented to accommodate the library. By February 1950, the library was established with the St. Thomas Parochial Board contributing funds towards its

maintenance between 1950 and June 1951. A Statuary Committee was also appointed with responsibility for the management of the service in the parish.

The second half of 1951 was a period of severe setbacks. On June 30, fire destroyed the premises which housed the library. Within three days an emergency service was set up in the upper floor of the Court House. Less than two months later, the hurricane of August 1951 destroyed the roof of the Court House and the library became damaged by wind and water. Spirits were still undaunted however, and once more an emergency service was set up, this time, in a corner of the Anglican Rectory, and there it remained until the Court House was repaired. In the next two years the Parish Library provided a limited service within Morant Bay while library development took place in remote areas.

The parish library building was finally erected in 1954 and was officially opened on November 25 of that year by his Excellency the Governor, Sir Hugh Foot. Central Government, through the Jamaica Library Board provided most of the funding along with the Parochial Board through the parish library committee.

In the coming years the library delivered a range of services to its rural areas in an effort to fully integrate itself into the life of the community.