Beginning in the 1820's, many free African Americans left their homes in North Carolina and Virginia and migrated to Indiana where they established communities, often near Quaker settlements. Many taught freed and former enslaved laborers, some after writing in Indiana, that free blacks taught and were successful farmers. Some went on to establish their communities, such as the Beech Settlement in Rush County, Indiana. The Beech Settlement was unique in that it consisted of a single family that eventually established a library, known as the Beech Settlement Library.

Two families in particular were leaders in the founding of the library. The Roberts and Jeffries families. Robert Roberts was the first teacher in the community. After the library closed, he kept the records and some of the books from the collection. His niece, Mary Jeffries Strong, kept the records and some of the books from the collection. In 1922, Mary Jeffries Strong kept the records and some of the books from the collection. In 1922, she donated them to the Indiana Historical Society Library.

In the photo, Ivey Strong, the daughter of the Indiana Historical Society Library in the Beech Settlement Library in the Indiana Historical Society Library. Ivey Strong, who founded the library, died in 1922. She was a member of the Roberts family, and she donated the books from the collection to the library.

**The Roberts Family Members**

**Robert R. and Martha Roberts**

**Robert Alphonse Roberts, Teacher**

**Daniel Roberts, Physician**

**The Mt. Pleasant Library**

One of the churches organized by Beech Settlement residents was the Mt. Pleasant Church. It was located on the Beech Church, and it was the first church in the community. After the library closed, it was the first church in the community. After the library closed, it was used as a community center. Its use continued as a community center for many years. The church was built on land donated by James R. Roberts, who was the first librarian.

From the minutes:

"At the meeting of the Board of Managers of Mt. Pleasant Library company April the 30th, 1842, the secretary not being present—Henry Henley is appointed secretary for the day."

The books were received, numbered, and placed in the Library and following by-laws adopted.

Article 2º That it be the duty of the librarian to loan one volume and only one at a time to any member of the Library and that he carefully register the loan, return, and amount of any injury or default.

Article 3º That any person keeping a book of the library longer than the time specified in each volume, shall pay to the Librarian for the use of the Library 60 ¾ cents for the first week's default, and $1 ½ for each week thereafter.

Article 4º That if the duty of the Librarian to examine each book when returned, whether the same be injured or not, shall have been injured or not to loan it again until it shall have been examined by the committee hereinafter proposed to be appointed.

Article 5º That there be two suitable persons annually appointed to examine the Librarian's register; to see that he take proper care of the books, and that they, with the Librarian, soon understand the state of the library during the year, and as much of lesser an occasion as may require.

Article 6º After the damage has been assessed on a book, the person in whose hands it was injuried shall pay the amount thereof to the Librarian for the use of the library.

This building was built in the 1860s, replacing the log cabin that originally housed the church and library, and is still used for the annual Homecoming in August.

On October 2, 1840, the Indiana Annual Conference of the A.M.E. Church was organized at this site.

**Indiana Historical Society, SC2440**

**Martha Harris McCurdy** grew up in the Beech Settlement. Her parents were founding members of the library, and she taught school in the community. She later became active in the temperance movement, worked for A.M.E. Bishop Henry M. Turner in Georgia, edited a women's church magazine, and became the state Indiana chairman of the WCTU.