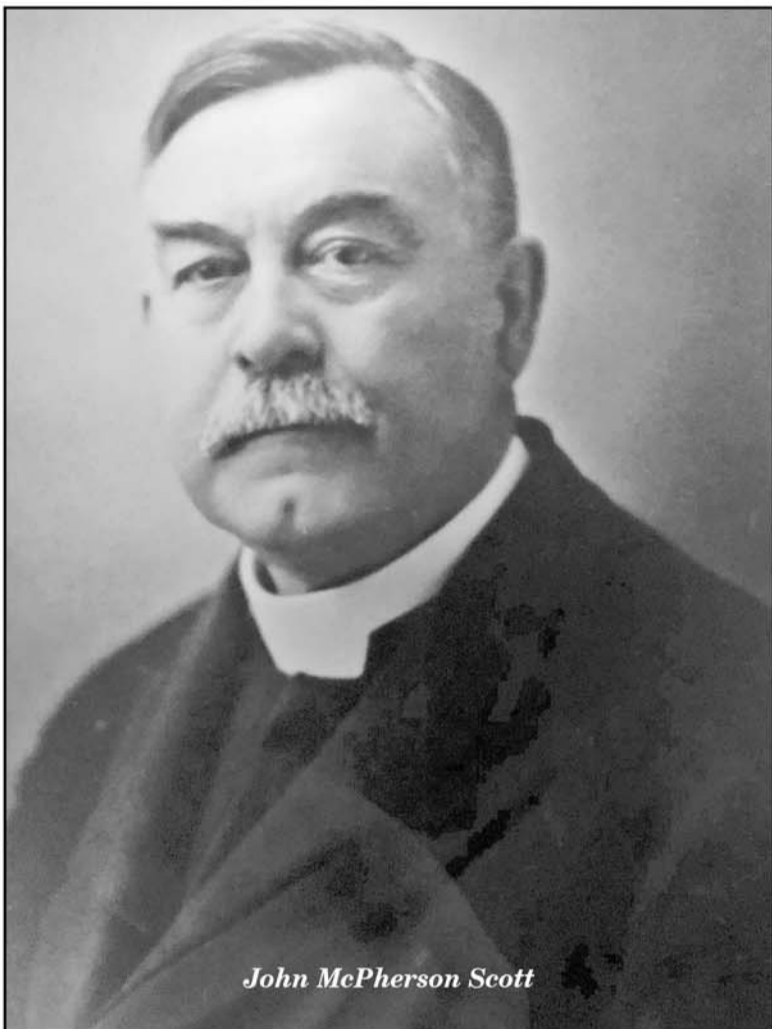


Legacy of Ayr's John McPherson Scott continues to impact the City of Toronto



John McPherson Scott

By Galvin Zaldivar

Minister, son of Ayr and namesake of Toronto's Scott Mission, Reverend John McPherson Scott died one hundred years ago last week.

Scott's life may have been cut short by what could have been the Spanish flu, but his legacy is widely recognized.

In a comment provided to the Ayr News, Toronto Mayor John Tory said:

"The Scott Mission plays a

vital role in our city by providing support and services to those who need it the most. Born in Ayr, Rev. John McPherson Scott's work in Christian ministry in Toronto helped build the foundation of the Scott Mission today. His early work with Jewish Immigrants led to Morris Zeidman taking up the leadership of the Scott Institute, named after Rev. Scott following his death, which grew into the Scott Mission we know today."



Morris Zeidman.

"It shows the impact that a life can make on the life of a city and the importance that newcomers to our city, from nearby Ayr in Scott's case, and Poland in Zeidman's case, have in helping to build up our city," said Tory. "As Mayor, I've visited the Scott Mission and recognize the importance of organizations like it play in helping vulnerable people in Toronto."

Born in 1859, the son of George, a carpenter, and Christine Menzie. Scott's family helped build Ayr's Stanley Street Presbyterian Church, the first in town, in 1834. Scott's father, George Scott drew the plans for the church and even offered his services to help build it.

Scott received his elementary education in Ayr and later graduated from high school in Galt. Scott's family moved to Peterborough in 1881, by which point Scott had earned a B.A. from the University of Toronto and a B.D. from Knox College. He was ordained as first minister of St. John's Presbyterian Church, Toronto in 1889.

The Scott Mission in Toronto that bears his name, has its roots in the Christian Synagogue founded in 1908, where newly arrived Jewish immigrants, fleeing Czarist pogroms in Eastern Europe, could receive English lessons and family-friendly community programs.

Scott was charged by the Presbyterian Church in Canada with heading up outreach efforts to Toronto's growing Jewish community.

Scott had a reputation for getting things done, and had already helped set up a different Jewish Mission in Toronto, and within a year laid the groundwork for the new Synagogue's mission and ministry.

Among those who would come through the Synagogue's doors would be a young 17-year-old immigrant new arrived from Poland, Morris Zeidman, who would later found the Scott Mission. Ben Volman a Messianic Jewish Rabbi, would detail the life of Zeidman and the foundation of the Scott Mission in his 2008 book, *More than Miracles*.

"Without Scott there would be no Scott Mission," Volman said. During his time at the Synagogue, Zeidman would convert to Messianic Judaism, a form a Judaism that accepts Jesus Christ as the foretold messiah while observing traditional Jewish practice and ritual.

Elaine Zeidman Markovic, Morris's late daughter, told Volman her father's conversion was "holy chutzpah."

"Those were lonely years, because Messianic Jews were neither fish nor fowl," she said. "They were ostracized by their fellow Jews and oddities to fellow Christians."

These feelings of isolation, Zolman posits, would make the bonds between the young Zeidman and Rev. Scott all the more important, and the latter would remain a mentor to Zeidman for

the rest of his life.

The most dramatic moment of Scott's life occurred on December 23, 1914.

As the Reverend was making his way to St. John's Presbyterian Church from his home at 537 Broadview Avenue, Harry Asher, a former missionary who felt his own work had been ruined by Scott's, fired twice at close range. Asher would fire three more times as Scott attempted to flee, only to be subdued by two passersby who handed him over to police.

Scott was hit in the hip, but miraculously survived, crediting his life to his spectacle case absorbing most of the force of the first two shots. A second shot only grazed the skin in the region of his heart.

Six years later, Scott died unexpectedly on February 25, 1920, after suffering only a few days from pneumonia or what could have been the Spanish Flu. Five years later, the Christian Synagogue would be renamed the Scott Institute in his honour and Zeidman would open the Scott Mission in 1941.

"Zeidman's name connected with Scott was not a minor thing," Zolman said.

In *More than Miracles*, Zolman

says the choice of name was no accident, it stands as an "enduring legacy to Scott's inspirational vision and commitment to bless the Jewish people."

According to their website, the Scott Mission, located at 502 Spadina Avenue, offers a "Christian ministry of mercy and love," to Toronto's poor and needy.

"I'm confident the values Rev. Scott learned growing up in Ayr about the importance of caring for your neighbours and helping those less fortunate helped guide his work in our city," said Mayor John Tory. "Ayr residents should be proud that good work continues to this day in Toronto."

Galvin Zaldivar, is a Journalism student from Humber College. A political junkie and history buff, he has covered issues as diverse as the involvement of youth in political life to local and community events.

Since a young age, Galvin has had a passionate interest in telling stories and writes creative fiction in his spare time. For him, going into journalism was a way to find and tell new stories, explore new situations and highlight pressing issues of the day. Born in Toronto in 1993, Galvin currently lives in Mississauga.