

Save pioneer home near new mall

Start to talk about the old Scott House on Progress Avenue in Scarborough — a solid, three-storey fieldstone built in 1841 — and before you know it you're deep into just about the whole history of the Borough with its criss-crossing marriages between the Thompsons, the Purdies, the Pattersons, the McCowans and many more.

The house is the only original structure still standing in the area and barely survived the building of the adjoining Scarborough Town Centre. It stands just to the north of the re-routed Progress Avenue, a tranquil oasis between the rushing Highway 401 and the bustling activity of supply trucks and builders and shop owners preparing for the May 2 opening of the Centre which will have more than 130 stores.

The owner of the house now is the T. Eaton Co. which, with Simpson's and Miracle Mart, is a prominent tenant in the new Centre. Eaton's want to save the house from destruction and are reviewing a variety of uses for it which would preserve its character, yet allow it to perform a useful function.

George Scott, who built the house, immigrated from Dornach Parish in Dumfriesshire, southwest Scotland — a hilly, farming county on the border with England and the home of Robbie Burns and Thomas Carlyle. Like his ancestors he was a farmer and may have fled to the comparative peace of Upper Canada because of the frequent clashes back home. He was able to hire good craftsmen to build the house and to fill it with curly-maple furniture cut from his own bush.

Apparently no one survives of George Scott's progeny, largely because they were not, especially the marrying kind. George, who died in 1865 at the age of 70, had six children, only one of whom, Francis (1832-1901) married — two died in infancy, a girl died at age 17 and John (1841-1914) and Helen (1843-1896) never married.

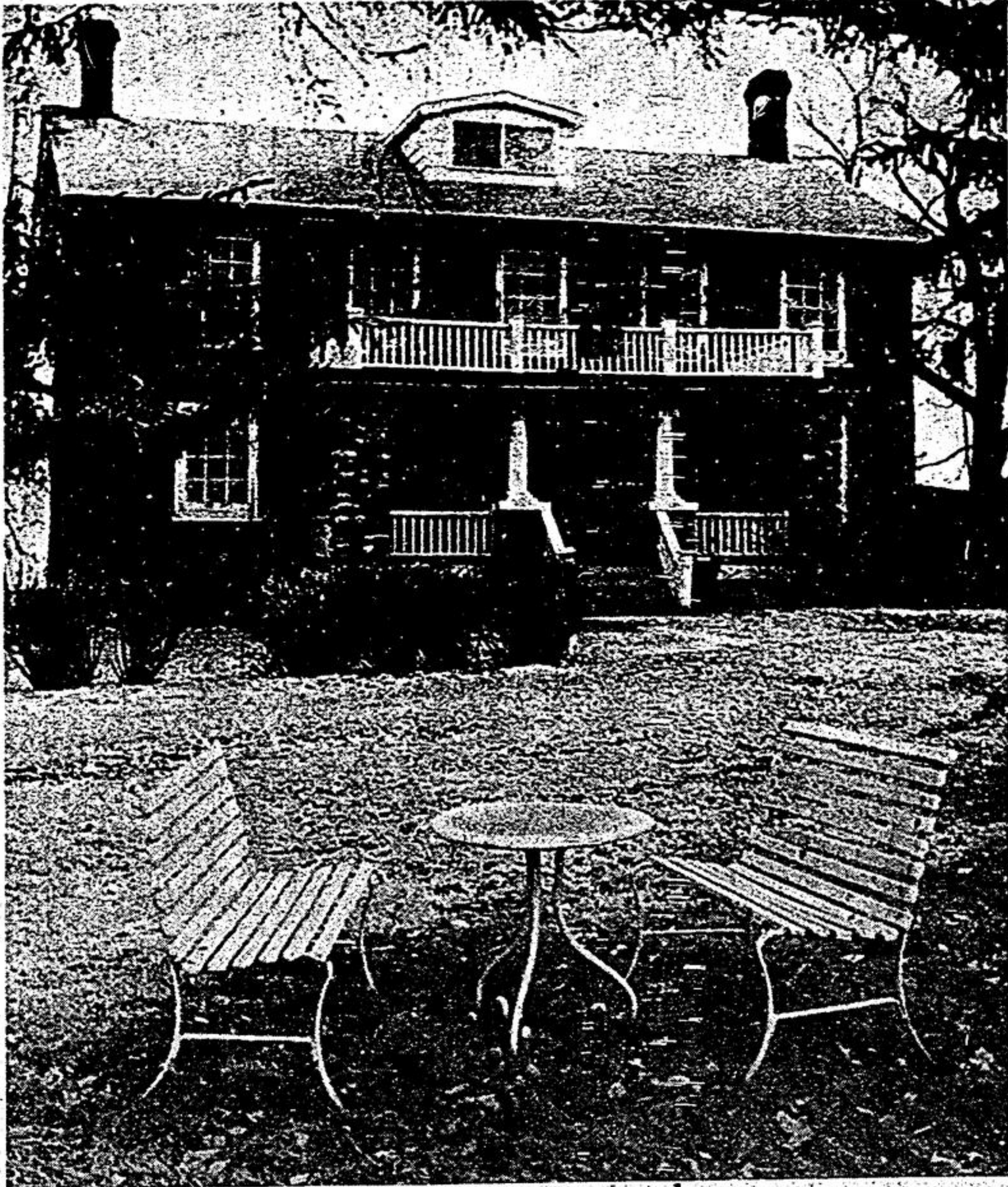
Then Francis, or Uncle Frank as he is still remembered by some, married Elizabeth Lambie (1842-1917) and had five children, but again, two died in infancy and only one married — George (1869-1939). He and his wife, Margaret Jane Bell (1871-1950) apparently had only one son, Alan, of whom there is no record. Alan is believed to have married but had no children. He moved away and is thought to have died in the 1950's — the last of the line.

The other children of Uncle Frank were the last of the family to occupy the Scott House — Margaret, born in 1870, who died in 1941, and her younger sister Agnes, 1877-1943. Neither of them married, but Mrs. Jennie McCowan remembers that they had adopted a

brother and sister from the Children's Aid Society, Len and Dorothy Jenkins. When Agnes died, the house went to their adopted children, and as far as Mrs. McCowan knows, Dorothy married and moved away, and Len sold the property in 1952 to a Mr. Lou Sherry and moved to British Columbia. Mr. Sherry lived in the house for a time, then sold it to the late Ernest Ridout, a real estate man. Eventually it passed to Mrs. Zena Bomba, thence to Eaton's. Mrs. Bomba still lives there with her daughter, Yvonne.

A map of Scarborough for 1860 shows that the land now occupied by the Scarborough Town Centre was owned by George Scott. Another map dated 1878, which was 13 years after George died, shows it registered in the names of Frank and John, George's two surviving sons, while below Ellesmere, directly south, is another 100 acres in the name of Frank. The maps are interesting because they also record the properties of the Secors and Thompsons and John Bushby — after whose family, by the way, one of the new streets leading to the shopping mall was named.

Mrs. McCowan was born Janet Purdie in a general store run by her father at Markham Road and Sheppard Avenue — she always called it the Third Concession. "I remember Margaret Scott and Uncle John Scott," she says. Margaret belonged to the Women's Institute and was president of the Agincourt Branch just after World War I. Mrs. McCowan prizes a picture taken in 1911 of "St. Andrews Old Girls," showing Maggie Scott (as Margaret was always called) and her sister Agnes and Mrs. Geordie (George) Scott. Another photo taken in 1910 shows about 40 members of the St. Andrews Church, all of whom were children when the church (still standing) was built in 1849, and prominent among the bearded men in the back row is John Scott, son of the patriarch



The Scott residence, built in 1841, borders on the Scarborough Town Centre, north of Progress Avenue. It is the desire of the T.

Eaton Co., to preserve the house and its character, yet allow it to perform some useful function.

and uncle to the spinster sisters.

Mrs. McCowan's family gave their names to McCowan Road. Now 77, she vividly recalls that the stand of trees which has been preserved on the north side of Ellesmere Avenue, just below the new Scarborough Civic Centre, was always referred to as "Scott's Bush". The developers, Scarborough Shopping Centre Ltd., managed to preserve a stand of seven acres of the bush so that the mature trees could lend a rustic touch to the modern shopping complex. Mrs. McCowan

remembers too that the Scott House was always surrounded by trees and many people have told her that they never saw it until recently when the new road was put through, it was so buried in the woods.

Miss Elspeth Newell was a good friend of Margaret and Agnes. In 1939 the Scott girls gave her the crane cut of their summer kitchen, a black iron bar which Miss Newell installed in her cottage. "In two years it

will be a century old," Margaret told her — which is how it is known that the Scott House was built in 1841 — the sisters apparently left no written record of their family or property.

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who is 80, visited the girls frequently and has a gift from them, pillowcases on which they had crocheted the initial H (her maiden name was Heron). It was a fine old house, she says, "full of lovely china and silver". The girls had enough to live comfortably. They had a horse and buggy early in the century and after the First World War, they drove a Ford two-seater. They enjoyed company and many remember the large, well furnished living room which stretches from front to back of the house with two windows at either end, ideal for entertaining.

There was a croquet lawn to the north of the house and Mrs. McCowan was one of the ladies in white dresses who played there. She remembers the Scott girls had nice gowns, and early in the century when she visited there "the hospitality was great."

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