Scott, Helen May (1882–1963)

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Kuk Heon Lee graduated from Sahmyook University (B.A.), Newbold College (M.A.), and Sahmyook University (Ph.D.). From 1990 to 2009, he served as a pastor at Korean Union Conference. In 2010, he joined Sahmyook University as a lecturer and professor at the Theology Department. His research and teaching interests are in Church History. He wrote several books and published several papers on the subject. Currently, he is also the Dean of Planning at Sahmyook University.

Helen May Scott, an educational missionary, entered Chosen (Korea) as the fourth of the missionaries for the educational work of the Korean Adventist Church. She was the longest missionary in Korea, serving for 32 years.

Background

Born in Massachusetts on June 25, 1882, Helen May Scott graduated from the South Lancaster Academy in 1904 and served as a teacher and bible worker. In 1908, she was called to be a Korean missionary while studying theology at Washington Training School. Her appointment as a missionary in the field of education was due to a special invitation from Korea. Mimi Scharffenberg, who was the first female missionary in Korea, established and operated a girl's training school and appealed to the General Conference (GC) to send professional educational missionaries. In response to this appeal, the GC appointed Miss Scott as a missionary. Since there was also a request for a medical missionary, the GC appointed Dr. Riley Russell as a medical missionary and Miss Scott as an educational missionary. They entered Korea on September 24, 1908.

Ministry in Korea

Helen May Scott was in charge of women's education with Scharffenberg at the girls' school in Jinnampo, founded by Scharffenberg. When the mission headquarters in Soonan was relocated to Seoul in September 1909, Scharffenberg moved to Seoul as the director of the department of Education and Sabbath School. Therefore, Helen May Scott took charge of Jinnampo Girls' School. She, along with Dr. Russell's wife, Ella Camp Russell, supported female students enduring tuition problems with the help of the American Dorcas Association. The girls' school in Jinnampo was moved to the area near Soonan boy's school in November 1910. From 1911, the Korean Training School integrated male and female courses.

The Korean Adventist Church School, which was started in 1907 in Soonan to train workers, was officially approved as a three-year secondary school under the name "Korean Industrial School" in 1910. In April of that year, Howard M. Lee came Korea to work as a manager of the school, and in 1911, he was appointed principal of the school. Howard M. Lee was the husband of Carrie Scott, Helen May Scott's younger sister. He and his wife volunteered to serve as missionaries to Korea due to the influence of Helen May Scott, who had come to Korea two years prior. After taking office as principal, Howard Lee improved the educational facilities and environment, received female students as well as male students, and ran the school in a coeducational way. As a result, Helen May Scott, who ran a girls' school, became a teacher of the Korean Industrial School and taught the Bible and arithmetic. During this time, Scott and Howard Lee organized the Adventist Youth Club in Soonan Church and began AY activities in Korea.

According to the 1912 Yearbook of the GC, Helen May Scott was appointed as the assistant principal. Howard Lee, as a principal and business manager, received funding from the GC in 1913 to build school buildings, girls' dormitory, and clinics in the school. The new school building had an auditorium and chapel in the center. The girls' dormitory included Miss Scott's private residence. While working as a teacher at the Korean Industrial School in Soonan, she lived in this house and participated in educational works while taking care of female students living in the dormitory.

In April 1915, the 5th General Meeting of the Korea Mission was held at Soonan Church, and in May, the 1st General
Helen May Scott spent most of her time as a teacher for the Korean Industrial School. In particular, she focused on nurturing female workers. Thus, she led the Bible Study Meeting for women, teaching female students as teachers. The Bible Study Meeting for female workers began in 1919. In the Bible Study Meeting for these women, she mainly taught the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White. With the revitalization of the evangelist training program for women, the Korean Industrial School has also run theological course for women in the department of Theology since 1923. She was appointed the chief professor of the theological course for female workers. After the department of theology moved to Seoul in 1931, the theological course for women also moved to Seoul. Since 1933, Theology department was operated as a correspondence course. From 1936, however, the theological course for women was reorganized into the training course for female evangelists. She was appointed head teacher of the course.

Leading educational works for women at the Korean Industrial School in Soonan, Helen May Scott actively engaged in evangelism activities along with her students. In September 1916, she and six female students supported the evangelical meeting in Anju, Pyongannan-do. They distributed evangelism pamphlets to people and taught them the Bible for two hours every day. Their evangelism activities established a church attended by about 40 adults in the Anju area. In 1917, they conducted evangelism activities for women in Cheorwon, Gangwon-do, even though Scott was not able to continue the evangelism due to her poor health. In 1919, she established the Uiseong Church by conducting evangelism activities in Uiseong-gun, Gyeongsangbuk-do. In May 1930, she supported evangelism activities with Sa-Deok Choi, a female theological student at the Hwangjoo Church, Hwanghae-do. She supported evangelism activities in Daegu in 1932, Kimhwa in 1933, Cheorwon in 1934, Daejeon in 1935, and Sinseol-dong, Seoul in 1936.

The Korean Advent Church suffered a lot due to the global economic panic that hit the 1930s. Korean Adventist missionaries tried to overcome the church’s crisis through the Metropolitan Evangelical Meetings. As part of these efforts, evangelical meetings were held in Seoul (1931), Daegu (1932). And in 1934, an evangelical meeting was also held in Busan. Helen May Scott actively participated in these evangelical rallies. In particular, she created and operated a Bible Study group for a week after the meeting, leading many to the Adventist faith. Through these various evangelism activities, she devoted herself not only as a teacher, but also as a Bible instructor.

When Scott was teaching at the training course for female evangelists, some people strongly objected to worship services held at the Korean Industrial School in Soonan. However, on January 18, 1936, the Maeil Shinbo published the decision to allow worship services at Korean Industrial School run by the Adventist Church. The article also contained photos of leaders of the Chosen Union Mission (CUM), including E. J. Urquhart, the president of the CUM. Helen May Scott cut out the photos and articles as much as she could from the newspaper, which contained this article, so it could be ready by the church and school. The incident shocked her, since she was an American. Since then, Japanese colonial rule has been strengthened, making it difficult for most missionaries, including Helen May Scott, to operate in Korea.

**Later Life**

The missionary work of Helen May Scott lasted for about 32 years until the 1940s. The situation in Korea, which was under Japanese colonial rule in the 1940s, however, was not conducive to her work. Japan started the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and was preparing for the Pacific War with the United States in 1941. Under these circumstances, American missionaries were forced to withdraw to their home countries in 1940. The GC began withdrawing missionaries from Korea in November 1940. Helen May Scott was the first to return to the United States in November 1940. After returning to the United States, she attended the General Session of the GC in May 1941 as a representative of the Korean Church and performed her duties as a Korean missionary. She then remained single and lived with her family before falling asleep in the arms of the Lord on January 8, 1963.

**SOURCES**

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- Church Compass. February 1918; April 1919; July 1927; August 1930; June 1934; July 1936; February 1941.
- Maeil Shinbo, January 20, 1936.


NOTES


5. Ibid., 106.


10. Oh, 151.


12. Church Compass, April 1919, 16.


14. Church Compass, July 1936, 32.

15. Oh, 449.

16. Church Compass, February 1918, 15.

17. Oh, 537.

18. Church Compass, August 1930, 27.

19. Church Compass, June 1934, 29.


22. Church Compass, February 1941, 16.