

## Oil Painting of Mary Harris *by Caroline Farncomb*



An oil on canvas painting of Mary Magrath Harris (1859-1954) by Caroline Farncomb. Mary is sitting on an ottoman in front of a window at Benares. She is wearing a cream-coloured dress and a blue hat.

**Mary Magrath Harris** (1859-1954) was the granddaughter of Reverend James Magrath (1769-1851), who was the first rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church. All of the Harris Family attended St. Peter's and that is where Mary met Arthur Harris, who she married in 1881. Mary was the mother of Naomi and Annie Harris. This portrait was painted in 1906 on the occasion of Annie's wedding to Beverly Sayers and depicts Mary wearing the same dress she wore to the wedding. It was painted in the upstairs guest bedroom and Mary is seated on an ottoman which now sits in the hall way upstairs.

**Caroline Farncomb** (1859-1951) was a close friend of the Harris family and a well respected RCA (Royal Canadian Academy) artist. She studied with Mlle. Van den Broeck in London, William Chase in New York, and in Paris at the Academie Julian; and exhibited her work in Canada and Europe, receiving many first prizes in exhibitions in London, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. A number of other Caroline Farncomb paintings can be found at Benares including the portrait of Mary Harris in the drawing room, the painting of Arthur Harris in the sitting room, and the still-life of waterfowl located in Arthur's bedroom.

For information on Caroline Farncomb and the Academie Julian, see: Gabriel P Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, *Overcoming all Obstacles: The Women of the Acadmie Julian* (New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1999); Nancy Geddes Poole - *The Art of London, 1830-1980* (London, Ontario: Blackpool Press, 1984); Rebecca Sisler, *Passionate Spirits* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1980), 36.