

Iona Mural



In 1956 the beautiful mural of the church on the island of Iona, Scotland was painted in the downstairs hall by Knox member Molly Grendal (1913-1980). Mary (Molly) Doris Grendal was born in Ottawa, August 1, 1913, to Harriet (Beveridge) and Frank Grendal. From a young age she showed a gift for drawing and writing. She went from Elgin St. School to Lisgar Collegiate. Before graduating from Lisgar she followed her dreams and went to art school in Newark, New Jersey. When her father died it was necessary for her to return home.

She continued her studies first with Alan Beddoe, the Ottawa artist who devoted 30 years of his life to creation of the Books of Remembrance that lie in the Peace Tower's Memorial Chamber in memory of Canada's war dead. She also studied with painters Ernest Fosbery and Franklin Brownell, mentor to Dr. R. Tait McKenzie.

Due to the inspirational enthusiasm of her minister Colin Miller, she made a pilgrimage to the Island of Iona. Hoping to share the aura of this holy isle she offered to paint this mural – and Knox gladly accepted her offer. This labour of love took many hours on weekends and evenings after work at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

Molly initiated many visual aids as superintendent of the Primary Sunday School. With the collaboration of her sister Marjorie and Joyce Harris, she embroidered the beautiful blue silk cloth for the communion table which was used for decades. She continued to keep the mural in good repair though she was dying of cancer, and in great pain. The last time she left home was to make the final repair to her work. Molly died in April 1980.

Restoration of the mural, in consultation with the National Library and Archives of Canada, was done in 2007 by David and John Legris of Legris Conservation Inc.