

Anita K. Laurent Scholarship



The Anita K. Laurent Scholarship was created in cooperation with the Topeka Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, of which she was a founding member. Anita believed strongly in the opportunity and the power of education. She was known for being outspoken and standing up for her principles. Anita studied home economics at Kansas State Manual Training Normal School in 1911. She spent most of her 34-year career in Topeka, retiring in 1944.



Anita K. Laurent - 1896

Requirements:

Any Major from Family and Consumer Sciences
Resident of Kansas

Class:

Sophomore Standing
Junior Standing
Senior Standing

3.000 Minimum GPA
Financial Need

PROFILE: *ANITA K. LAURENT*

HEADLINE: *“GIRL IN BLUE.” TEACHER, PHILANTHROPIST*



The “Girl in Blue” is Anita K. Laurent, a longtime resident of Topeka, Kansas. The painting dates to 1896 and was painted by her aunt, Clarisse M. Laurent, a prominent artist in northeast Kansas.

Her family was French; her grandfather, Louis Jean Pierre Laurent, was arrested for his political views during the French Revolution and escaped before he was to have been exiled and sent to a penal colony. He made his way to London and was joined there by his wife Louise and their two children, Hermance and Louis Charles.

The family immigrated to New York, where Laurent’s Aunt Clarisse was born, before moving to Topeka in 1858, where her mother, Regina, was born. Louis Laurent built a two-story house in what is now North Topeka and the family lived upstairs while he operated a mercantile (store) below with the help of his son. A street in North Topeka still bears the family name.

When the political climate in France changed, Louis Laurent returned to his homeland with his wife and younger daughter, Regina.

Regina married in 1884, but, as was the custom then in France, her husband assumed the more prominent Laurent name. Anita was born January 28, 1891 in Buenos Aires, Argentina in South America. In 1903, she came to Topeka to live with her Aunt Clarisse and Grandmother Louise.

In 1909, she began teaching at the Harrison School in Topeka. In 1911, she took a leave of absence to study home economics at Kansas State College at Pittsburg, Kansas. In 1912, she returned to Topeka to teach at the Lafayette School and continued teaching home economics in the Topeka school system for 34 years, retiring in 1944.

She was most proud of her profession and was a charter member of the Topeka Home Economics Association, which was founded October 31, 1923.

Laurent was highly respected in the Topeka community and a consummate home economist. She died April 5, 1973 in Topeka. A friend remembered her by saying: Anita was always extremely proud of her heritage and well known for being outspoken and standing up for her principles, which were generally right.

In her will, Anita K. Laurent provided for the distribution of her personal property, including prized kitchen equipment, home arts such as her coveted quilts, and her favorite cake recipe: a 1950's-style coffee cake made with brown sugar, coconut and pecans.

With no family, Laurent chose to leave the bulk of her estate – a small farm in North Topeka – in trust for scholarships to home economics students at Pittsburg State and Kansas State Universities. She placed the administration of the scholarship with fellow members of the Topeka Home Economics Association, which later became the Topeka Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

The scholarships were given in honor of her aunt, Clarisse M. Laurent, but named for Anita K. Laurent (the donor).

Although a woman of relatively modest means by today's standards, Laurent's decision to establish a scholarship and provide educational opportunities for others should come as no surprise. Her family had a history of valuing education long before it was encouraged for women: Laurent's mother's eldest sister, Hermance, attended Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York; her uncle, Louis Charles, the Sorbonne; her aunt, Clarisse, Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, and the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music before returning to France to study art. Her mother, Regina, the youngest child in the family, studied at a girls' school in Jacksonville, Illinois, before the family returned to France.

Beginning in fall, 1974 and continuing through spring, 2005, the Association has administered the scholarship trust and awarded more than \$400,000 in educational awards to students at the two universities.

In 2004, members in the Association voted to divide the remaining assets (which had grown to a little over \$400,000) to honor Anita K. Laurent's legacy – an opportunity for education – with an endowed scholarship in her name at each University.



Photo Caption: The Girl in Blue, a portrait of Anita K. Laurent painted by her aunt, artist Clarisse M. Laurent, was presented to Cedar Crest, the Kansas Governor's residence, as Laurent requested in her will. It has become a favorite with the state's leaders and their families.

Photo Credit: Reproduction of the "Girl in Blue" courtesy of Cedar Crest.

Note: Anita K. Laurent is buried in the family plot at Fairmount Cemetery, 1430 S. Quebec Street, Denver, Colorado. Also buried in the same plot are her grandfather, Louis J.P. Laurent (1815-1890); her grandmother, Louise C. Laurent (1825-1911); her uncle, Louis C. Laurent (1857-1940); and her aunt, Clarisse M. Laurent (1857-1940).

*Provided by Topeka Association of Family and Consumer Sciences members
Nancy B. Peterson, writer, in collaboration with Loreen Locke McMillan.*

Last revised, Aug. 12, 2005.

Merci

*On behalf of your fellow TAFCS members,
THANK YOU
to the Scholarship Study Committee for all
your work to make the Anita K. Laurent
Scholarship more user friendly for
our future FACS professionals.*

CONGRATULATIONS on a job well done!!!