

## Edith Ort Thomas

Edith Ort was born in Everittstown, New Jersey, on November 22, 1904. She attended grade school in Alexandria Township and graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. After that she went to Lambertville High School. The only way she could get to high school was by train, which she took from Frenchtown. She graduated in June of 1922. Edith also went to college at Newark New Jersey State Normal School in Newark, New Jersey and graduated in 1924. It was very rare for women to go beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the 1920's.

After she graduated she got engaged to a man named Joseph. Unfortunately Joe got killed in a farming accident. This was a very sad time for Edith.

In 1925 Edith Ort got her first teaching job in Frenchtown. She had to teach in the Borough Hall and churches because the original school had burned down. In 1926, Frenchtown School was opened and Edith Ort began teaching 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Miss Ort was a very strict and fair teacher. When she taught, teachers were allowed to hit their students. Miss Ort only hit one student in her career because that student threw a book on the floor, on purpose, and broke the binding.

Edith Ort could never be tricked. Mrs. Kathy Skerbetz, her grand-niece, told a story about a student bringing a snake to class. The student hid the snake in Miss Ort's desk, hoping to scare his teacher. Edith found the snake and without letting out a scream said to the class, "Perfect time to have a lesson on reptiles."

Miss Ort liked to travel and was not afraid to drive her car to her adventures. In her lifetime she traveled to California to visit the Petrified Forest and even went to Mt. Rushmore. She was always thinking of her students and would return to school with stories of her journeys for her pupils.

Edith Ort got married to Walter Thomas when she was 50. Unfortunately they never had any children. Edith Ort Thomas always referred to her students as "her children." She felt very lucky to teach and cherished every moment of it.

Mrs. Thomas retired in 1965, after 40 years of teaching in Frenchtown. In 1966, the Frenchtown Board of Education renamed the borough school in her honor. Mrs. Edith Ort Thomas died on February 11, 1988.

We thank Edith Ort Thomas for her service to the children of Frenchtown and the enormous impact she made on her many students.

Skerbetz, Kathy, grand-niece of Edith Ort Thomas and teacher at Frenchtown School. Interviewed on November 12, 2013.