

Rebecca: Arlington in the 1910s



School Days

Jewish immigrants to the United States were excited to have their children attend school. Because of their heritage, many Jews were denied access to school in their home countries, but in America, education was free and available to all. Rebecca, living in crowded New York City, went to P.S. 6, which was a large building with many children of various ages. In contrast, Arlington was made up of mostly farms. Schools were built farther apart, and since there weren't as many children, all grades were housed and taught in one room. Some of the early schools were Ballston, Hume and Ft. Myer (later renamed Wilson). One teacher would work with each grade at a time, giving the other children lessons to work on by themselves. In both schools, reading, writing, math, geography and spelling were taught to every child with a desire to learn.



Top: Fort Meyer Heights School, later Wilson Elementary, under construction, circa 1910. **Middle:** Fort Meyer Heights elementary school students in front of the school, circa 1911. **Bottom:** Fort Meyer Heights 7th and 8th graders.

Courtesy of the Virginia Room
At Arlington Public Library

Local Business



Rebecca's father owned a shoe store on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In 1918, Sher's Store, on the corner of Walter Reed Drive and Columbia Pike, was established by another Jewish immigrant family. The grocery store became an important part of the neighborhood; the store stayed open on Sundays so that families who attended church across the street could do some

shopping before heading home. Menashe Sher passed the store down to his daughter Ida and son-in-law Sol Cohen, and it became Sher & Cohen's. This Jewish family was a minority in Arlington. Their daughter Ruth recalls attending Shabbat services in rented business offices in Clarendon because there was no synagogue. Ruth first met her future in-laws at her father's furniture store when they, overhearing her last name, asked if there was a good kosher butcher in the area.

Amusement Parks

When it was time to celebrate a special occasion and have fun, Rebecca's family went to Coney Island, with its beach, rides and games. Here in Arlington, those looking for outdoor fun would go to either Arlington Beach or Luna Park. Luna Park was an amusement park, located where Glebe Road intersects with Route 1. It was part of a chain of parks, with roller coasters, chute-the-chutes, and a Hall of Mysteries. The main roller coaster was destroyed by fire in 1915, which forced the park to close. Soon after, Arlingtonians could go to Arlington Beach for thrills. Arlington Beach was right on the Potomac where the Teddy Roosevelt Bridge is now. There were bathing houses, rides and a dance pavilion, and there was a great view of Hoover Airport just down the shoreline.

