

## Old Time Summers in Herndon

By Chuck Mauro

Memories of summers in Herndon at a time when life moved at a slower pace.

Frances Darlington Simpson, granddaughter of prominent summer resident J.J. Darlington (see our *Patch* column, “Herndon’s Most Prominent Summer Resident,” published on March 20), provided an interesting glimpse of what summers were like in Herndon during the early to middle 1900s. These memories are included in her book, *Virginia Country Life and Cooking*, originally published in 1963.

Francis grew up at the Darlington estate, which was located behind today’s Walgreens drugstore at the corner of Elden and Van Buren Streets. One of her summer favorite delights was going to Chamblin’s Drugstore on Station Street, where “one gets the most delicious sundaes, sodas, grilled hot dogs, banana splits and wonderful, wonderful coffee.”

In *Virginia Country Life*, she continues:

Next to the drugstore was the restaurant where we would rush, when starving between meals, to get perfectly marvelous warm juicy roast beef sandwiches and double scoop ice cream cones, one scoop chocolate and one scoop banana.

Across the street is Mrs. Dudding’s hardware store, a unique and fascinating place and unlike any hardware store I have ever seen. Then, next door is Mr. Wiley’s newspaper and candy store where my children can still choose from an intriguing assortment of jaw breakers, red and black licorice strips, peanut chews, etc. as we used to do. Mr. Wiley stands kindly and patiently by while these lengthy transactions take place, the pieces of candy selected, the pennies counted out, obviously amused at yet another generation of youthful enthusiasm. Next is Nachman’s, where we always found a colorful assortment of organdy and mosquito netting for the costumes we were forever making but which is now twice its original size and the local maison of haut couture.

Across the railroad tracks is the [railroad] station and beyond that a little way is the theatre [now The Upholstery Shop, located at 757 Elden Street]. What a fascination was that theatre or “movie hall” as it was called. Today it is used for dances and meetings as the Herndonians are very much au courant with television and not concerned with movies, but when we were children, it was a real treat to go with our friends to the movies at the “movie hall”—not that we always saw one when we got there. Sometimes the reel would break, other times a tremendous storm would come up and the electricity power would be shut off, leaving the player piano to carry on alone in the darkness while we crept home with flashlights and once more an angry skunk sought refuge in the movie hall, causing the audience to disperse in three minutes flat. Still it was great fun.

Way up at the end of the main street [Elden] is the school [at Locust and School Streets]. Every year, usually in July, “Herndon Day” was held on the school grounds. This was the highlight of the summer and a red letter day! There were contests, prizes, a poor greased pig to be caught, a baseball game, and rows and rows of booths selling the most mouth watering things, all homemade from fried chicken, country ham sandwiches, potato salad, to pies all of kinds and every size, shape, and flavor of homemade cake imaginable. On Herndon Day we went early and stayed late and to say that we ate indiscriminately is a masterpiece of understatement.

Sundays at Herndon were lovely, lazy days. After Sunday School and church we would walk with our friends to the village [the Darlings referred to Herndon as “the village” and Washington, DC as “the town”] for a chocolate soda at the drug store, then to Mr. Wiley’s, to pick up the Sunday paper and home to enjoy the funny papers.

Those were the days!