



## Notes from Ramallah, 1939

*Nancy Parker McDowell*

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## **Notes from Ramallah, 1939** Nancy Parker McDowell

From the first letter written on board the ship Rex, Notes from Ramallah, 1939 shows an adventurous young American Quaker woman headed for the Arab world and neighboring lands before World War II. Woven throughout the letters and journal entries from Nancy Parker McDowell's year as a teacher at Ramallah Friends Girls School are images of the Palestinian people under British occupation. From accounts of pulling students out of the line of gunfire to stories of teaching baseball to her students, her notes reveal the full breadth of the Palestinian culture: the bustle of the teeming marketplace, the beauty of Ramallah embroidery, and the generous neighbor who loans her donkey to everybody and lets anyone drink from her well. And, in the midst of the danger in Palestine and in prewar Europe, Parker McDowell enters political discussions with Arabs and soldiers across the Middle East and in Europe, and she and her friends manage adventures in Jerusalem, Syria, Transjordan (where she rides with royalty in a bulletproof car), Cairo (where she climbs one of the pyramids), Germany, and France. This passionate and humorous memoir is a study in contrasts: an adventurous youth who still longs for home, a war-torn but beautiful land, and a war-weary yet determined people.

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