The decade of the 1920s brought enormous social, economic, and political change. The Great War (World War I) had ended November 11, 1918, but political boundaries had been permanently altered. Fighting and the concurrent influenza pandemic had taken an estimated 70 million lives. Both victor and vanquished were depleted of manpower and wealth. The United States, far from the battlefield, emerged as the world's leading economy.

The Progressive movement of previous decades had achieved two of its goals with women's suffrage and Prohibition and was giving way to a consumer culture. The nation entered a decade of industrial growth that made technology such as automobiles, washing machines, and radios available to middle-class families.

Women, empowered by their valued contributions to the war effort and their newly won ability to vote, enjoyed the booming economy, whether as workers or homemakers. Either way, they could enjoy their new freedom to wear short skirts and makeup, discard their corsets, bob their hair, smoke cigarettes and dance the Charleston. Coco Chanel became the fashion guru of that generation.

Texas shared in the national prosperity, though like many states it was still mostly rural. The largest Texas cities in 1920, all with more than 50,000 population, were Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio.
When Mamie McFaddin Ward passed away, everything in her home instantly became part of the museum collection. Everything!

The collection is comprised of 35,000 different objects that range from hairnets to fine decorative arts, each holding an educational value to the entire collection. But there is one most interesting artifact that has always stunned and even intrigued staff and visitors alike: a rat trap from the 1920s with the rat still in it (now petrified, of course.)

Over the years through conferences and events, our forever prisoner has been visited by many museum professionals in its specific location in collections storage. Never in a million years would I have thought to display it, but in January 2020, Curator Ashley Thornton got the call. The Bryan Museum in Galveston was putting together an exhibit on the 1920 bubonic plague in Galveston. And they wanted the rat!

Well, we had to oblige their request, as this may be the “big break” our little friend has been waiting for!

If you are in Galveston anytime soon, stop by the Bryan Museum. It is a world class museum in a very unique space. I won’t ruin the excitement for you but they have an amazing collection of Texas art and historical artifacts and documents. And for a little while longer, a rat.

-- Director’s Desk --

Oh, Rats

The museum’s 1920s rat trap, with petrified occupant, is currently on display at the Bryan Museum in Galveston.
Collections Corner

By Ashley Thornton

In January, the museum opened its 2020 Lecture Series with the inimitable Alexander Rosenberg, a rising artist in the glass blowing world and beyond. Rosenberg explained to the McFaddin-Ward House audience the purity of colorless glass, as it is the only form of glass that allows one to see the exterior and interior simultaneously. He went on to define blown glass as a cumulative record of the movements required to craft the piece; the final product is a manifestation of its history. How poignant it is to say an object encompasses the story of its maker and owner, a statement very much alive in the museum.

With this in mind, one particular glass vase from the MWH collection seems to reflect a complex history of movements and creation. Full of purposeful fissures, the vase has a cracked texture throughout that catches every angle of light. The Corning Museum of Glass defines this characteristic as ice glass. To create this effect, a glass blower quickly submerges the molten glass into cold water. The sudden decrease in temperature causes the glass to fissure. The artist then reheats the glass in order to bond and strengthen the piece.

This vase hails from the Blenko Glass Company in Milton, West Virginia. Ida Caldwell McFaddin and Mamie McFaddin Ward frequented the company, not only for its excellent reputation but also for its proximity to Ida’s hometown of Huntington, West Virginia. Blenko introduced into the market a type of stained glass for windows called Norman slab glass. Norman slab glass possessed the same “flaws and imperfections” that gave medieval stained glass its unique beauty. After the stock market crashed in 1929, Blenko began producing tableware. The company made full use of the Norman slab glass formulas to create the beautifully distinctive glass we have in the collection today, totaling over 200 pieces.

The Corning Museum of Glass sponsored/hosted the “Blown Away” series on Netflix, on which Rosenberg was a finalist. Be sure to visit their website for an incredible resource on glass terms and definitions. www.cmog.org/research/glass-dictionary

A selection of the MWH collection’s handcrafted Blenko glass, on display at the Visitor Center, top, and an ice glass vase, above, from Blenko, ca. 1940.

All That Glitters Really is Glass
By Arlene Christiansen

Some time ago a copy of a letter from our archives was left on the break room table in the Administrative Office. Dated May 23, 1907, it was a reply to W.P.H. McFaddin concerning the shipment of the interior components of the breakfast room/conservatory by rail car from the Lecoutour Brothers Stair Mfg. Co. in St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. McFaddin had apparently written to complain that one of the stained glass windows had been damaged in shipment.

What I thought was unusual about this letter was the wording; though it was standard business language in 1907, someone reading it today might not be able to understand it. It starts off, “Your favor of the 21st inst came duly to hand and regret to note its contents.” I believe that means “Your letter of May 21, 1907 came to my attention and I’m sorry for what it said.” The word inst is an abbreviation for instante mense, meaning a date of the current month, in this case May.

Then the letter goes on, “Beg to advise, that our Mr. Charles Lecoutour who personally attended to the loading of your car, will be in your city in a day or two, and will take the matter up with you.” “Beg to advise” is shorthand for “I would like to inform you.” Mr. Charles Lecoutour was the president and treasurer of the company, and since there was a problem, he was coming from St. Louis to discuss the matter with Mr. McFaddin. Talk about customer service! Nowadays, you’re lucky to get a real person on the phone, much less anyone actually meeting with you, and all the way from St. Louis, no less. In 1907 the retail business was a whole different world. Companies depended on the customer’s satisfaction in order to stay in business. Of course, I don’t think too many people were ordering entire rooms to be sent hundreds of miles by rail car. Lecoutour Brothers would want such a customer to be happy and to tell his friends of the great service.

The architect who originally designed the McFaddin-Ward House, H. C. Mauer, also designed the breakfast room. He ordered all of the interior work — art glass windows, woodwork, trim, and columns — from Lecoutour Brothers. The cost of the materials was $1,403.11 and the cost of shipping by rail car was $95.57. We have in our archives a letter of shipment of materials, an invoice listing all the materials, and the letter regarding the damage. We also have a Lecoutour Brothers catalog. The letter of shipment even lists the train car (#150608) that held everything — a whole room fit into one car. Imagine.

The breakfast room/conservatory was added on to the house in 1907, soon after the McFaddins had taken up residence. It is thought that they wanted a smaller, less formal eating area in addition to the dining room; at that time having two dining areas was popular for those who could afford it.
The new room replaced a porch that ran along the outside wall of the kitchen and the library. According to information in our archives, two doors were added: an additional door from the conservatory into the library and a door from the breakfast room to the back porch. There was no direct access from the breakfast room to the kitchen at this time; domestic employees had to walk through the entrance hall or through the back porch to bring food to the space. In 1912 the freight elevator was removed from the east end of the butler’s pantry and a door was added into the breakfast room that would allow easier passage to the kitchen.

The breakfast room/conservatory is my favorite room in the house. It is absolutely lovely when the sun shines through the art glass windows, and the grape light fixtures on the ceiling are unusual and beautiful. Come by and see it sometime. We'd love to have you!
Beaumont, with a population of just over 40,000, nevertheless enjoyed characteristics of big-city life and tried to modernize operations. In 1919 the city had adopted a new charter that combined “manager, commissioner, and mayor-council forms of municipal government,” in an effort to improve the city’s ability to serve its citizens.

Beaumonters saw, and commented on, what went on in the nation and the rest of the state. Beaumont newspaper editorials in 1920 speculated on how women’s votes would affect politics, calling the woman a “silent voter,” and “an unknown quantity,” even though Texas women had already voted in primaries in 1918. As in other Southern states, Texas charged a poll tax (to be able to vote); though it was originally designed to suppress the African American vote, there was speculation that this might also keep down the female vote. Ida Caldwell McFaddin and her daughter Mamie McFaddin Ward had already voted on July 27, 1918, probably for the first time, but not nearly for the last.

One unpleasant national trend reached into 1920s Beaumont. The Ku Klux Klan was organized in 1915, named for the Reconstruction-era vigilantes. The anti-African American, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant group claimed to uphold traditional morals and feminine virtues but operated outside the law and advocated violence against its victims. In Jefferson County, the Klan exercised total control over Jefferson County offices for several years in the 1920s. Ida clashed with the Klan in 1924 when raising money for a new building for the Beaumont Day Nursery (Beaumont Children’s Home), of which she was president. The newspaper reported that the Klan, which tried to improve its image by balancing violence with charitable acts, offered a donation of $1200 to the cause. Ida refused it, even though she lost another $250 when the general manager of the Magnolia Refinery withdrew his donation. Ida and the Children’s Home reached their $7000 goal without the Klan’s, or Magnolia Refinery’s, money.

Another unpleasant event made local news. In 1920, a bubonic plague epidemic threatened Beaumont, Galveston, and Port Arthur. On June 26, Mamie McFaddin Ward wrote in her diary, “A woman died here with Bubonic plague.” Beaumont imported an “expert” rat catcher from New Orleans, paid him a salary, and awarded a ten-cent bounty for each rat killed. The epidemic was averted in less than a month, with Beaumont recording only 8 cases of plague and two fatalities.

In November 1925 a new field was brought in on the flanks of the old Spindletop oil field, inaugurating a second oil boom. This created a subsequent boom in both residential and business construction; the downtown added many buildings that still mark the skyline today. The McFaddins prospered greatly from this event. This increase in wealth helped offset the losses they were dealing with in their rice and cattle businesses, as agriculture was stuck in a decades-long depression. The Agricultural Agent for Jefferson County encouraged local farmers to try different crops and to plant truck gardens so they could eat even if their cash crops failed to make money.

The decade was also an eventful one for the McFaddins personally. From October of 1922 to May of 1923, Ida’s young nephews Teddy and Dab Caldwell lived with Ida and Mamie while their father, Dabney Caldwell Sr., was in the hospital. It was Mamie’s first and only adventure in motherhood.

Both of Ida’s parents died in the 1920s, after being in poor health for several years. James Lewis Caldwell died in 1923, and Mary O’Bannon Smith Caldwell in 1927. Soon after her grandmother died, Mamie attended a Ward family wedding on October 27 but true to the family’s tradition of curtailing social events during a mourning period, “stayed in back.”

In the 1920s Ida’s close friend Minnie Burke Curley (“Auntie Curley” to Mamie and her brothers) moved to Beaumont from Mineral Wells to become the housemother at the new YWCA building on Calder Avenue in Beaumont. She frequently came out to eat with the McFaddin family, as Mamie’s diary records.

Louis Lemon became the permanent cook at the house in the 1920s. Mamie wrote in her diary on April 2 that “Louis came to cook.” Rebecca Collins had been the cook at the house and Louis originally cooked at the ranch, occasionally substituting for Rebecca when she was ill. When her illness forced her to quit, Louis took her place.

Both of Mamie’s brothers married in this decade, after which they moved into their own homes nearby. On November 28, 1925 Caldwell McFaddin married Rosine Blount in Nacogdoches, Texas, at Rosine’s mother’s home. On October 24, 1927 Perry Jr. and Amizetta Northcott White (from Huntington) were wed in Mineral Wells, Texas, at the home of Amizetta’s aunt, Garnett Mincey.

At first glance, the McFaddin-Ward House archives don’t appear to contain as much information about the family in the 1920s as in other decades. There’s a gap in Mamie’s diaries between 1926 and 1935, and scrapbooks and correspondence files are of limited benefit. But we have newspapers and the Internet, and those, added to what is in the archives, tell us much about the lives of the McFaddins and how they fit into a changing and sometimes tumultuous decade.

When Ida’s mother died in 1927, the family sent out this black-bordered card to friends and family who had sent flowers or made other remembrances.

Ida, back row, center, with fur and hat, at the Beaumont Day Nursery (Beaumont Children’s Home) with matrons and young residents.
By Becky Fertitta

The March installment of Viewpoints from the Visitor Center is always a celebration of the volunteers and their hard work and accomplishments from the year just ended. In late January, adult volunteers attend a special dinner given in their honor. Awards are distributed to those who’ve met certain milestones. A very special award is given to a volunteer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty. At the dinner, the outgoing president describes all the fun and happenings of the year she served, and Volunteer Service Council (VSC) officers are elected for the new year.

It is so true that pictures tell a thousand words. The images shown here are of those award winners, plus the 2020 VSC officers. Many thanks to all the volunteers pictured with this article (see photos). Plus, to the hard-working ladies who put so much of their time and talent into the McFaddin-Ward House, especially during the holidays, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Kim Williams, thank you for being the president of the VSC in 2019 and for creating all the wonderful decorations for our events that we cherish, especially the table display for Christmas and for our beautiful banquet, and thank you for leading the MWH Book Club in February. Laura Assunto, thank you for helping to decorate (and undecorate) the visitor center for Christmas, for being a huge help with refreshments, set-up and clean-up (food prep) for the Christmas Preview, for working in the main house for the Christmas Open House and for spending the day in Silsbee with 200+ third graders; DiAnne Thomas, thank you for leading the social/hospitality committee through 2019, helping to decorate/undecorate the VC, organize the Christmas Preview refreshments, set-up and clean-up and for working in the house at the Christmas Open House.

Kathleen Smith, thank you for providing delicious food for the Christmas Preview and for being part of the Silsbee Elementary School team. Barbara Smith, thank you for preparing food for the Christmas Preview and helping with the Silsbee program. Prissy Rouse, thank you for preparing food for the Christmas Preview, for working at the Christmas Open House and for being on Team Silsbee. Sharon Passmore, thank you for preparing food, setting up and cleaning up for the Christmas Preview, for helping to undecorate the VC, helping with prep and clean-up for the Brown Bag in January, and for being one of the Silsbee Crew. Lyndia King, thank you for helping with the Christmas Preview refreshments and for working at the Christmas Open House. Thank you, Bonnie and Mike McDaniel, for working at the Christmas Open House. Thank you, Janie Perry, for taking down Christmas decorations at the VC, helping clean-up after the Brown Bag Luncheon and being part of the Silsbee Crew. And last but not least, thank you to all the other Silsbee Team members: Joyce Gaskin, Catriona Green, Marian Pekar, Jenny Pullen, and Ashley Thornton.

Volunteers Cathy Shoemaker, Mike McDaniel, Rainey Knox and Carla Tucker receive service pins for donating over 125 hours to the museum.

Prissy Rouse, Peggy Ducote and DiAnne Thomas are honored for giving over 750 hours to the museum.

Catriona Green, left, receives recognition for over 250 hours, plus is named Volunteer Innovation Personified for 2019 by Becky Fertitta.

Newly-elected officers for 2020, left to right: Joyce Gaskin, education committee chair; Kathleen Smith, social/hospitality committee co-chair; Sharon Passmore, social/hospitality committee chair; Barbara Smith, president; Catriona Green, member-at-large; DiAnne Thomas, vice-president; and Marian Pekar, education committee co-chair.
## Events Calendar

### Thursday, March 12
Free Lecture: “Black on the Battlefield: Story of the Buffalo Soldier”
Captain Paul J. Matthews, presenter
Visitor Center
6:30 p.m.

### Monday, April 6
Mahj at the Museum
Visitor Center
2-5 p.m.

### Thursday, April 9
Free Lecture: “The Royal Art of Poison”
Eleanor Herman, presenter
Visitor Center
6:30 p.m.

### Saturday, April 25
Spring Picnic
Museum Grounds
4-7 p.m.

### Thursday, May 14
Free Lecture:
May 14
“Crap Taxidermy”
Daisy Tainton, presenter
Visitor Center
6:30 p.m.

## Volunteer Calendar

### Tuesday, May 12
(tentative)
Volunteer Exhibit Preview
Lecture Hall
10 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

### Monday, May 18
Volunteer Book Club
Lecture Hall
11:30 a.m.