



December 2020  
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# McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

## McFaddins Enjoy A “Modern” Christmas

By Judy Linsley

Christmas in downtown Beaumont in the 1920s was a bright and exciting season, with lots of bustle, noise, hype, lights and music. Shoppers crowded the many stores along Pearl Street, hoping to be able to buy all their Christmas gifts along the busy thoroughfare. Like a huge strip mall, the blocks-long street held department stores, drugstores, and “racket” stores (carried a bit of everything), florists’ shops, cigar stores, gun shops, and car dealerships. Other shops carried men’s and ladies’ clothing, shoes, hats, and jewelry.

Housewives could do the weekly grocery shopping at the Piggly Wiggly, then duck into a specialty shop for candy, fruit, or bakery items for their holiday dinner. They could buy cosmetics and get their hair done, while their husbands could step out of their offices and get a haircut. Interspersed among the endless retail establishments were banks, accountants’ offices, insurance offices, detective agencies, law offices, the Western Union office, stockbrokers’ offices, and contractors—all on Pearl Street.

The local Chamber of Commerce pointed out to shoppers that they no longer needed to go to Houston—Beaumont had it all. The Eastern Texas Electric Company urged them to take the streetcar rather than chance not finding a parking place. The holiday season in Beaumont reflected changes in the nation and the world. No one had to look far for entertainment, whether old-fashioned or new-fangled. Traditional Vaudeville was still alive and well, but local movie theaters offered the newest Hollywood productions, including a few “talkies,” after the first came to town in 1926. For home audiences there was radio. Only



Christmas at the McKees, 1929.

four years after the first commercial radio station broadcast from Pittsburgh in 1920, Magnolia Refinery’s KFDM went on the air in Beaumont, and soon listeners could tune in to both local and national Christmas broadcasts. Even the telephone entertained, as housewives could now ring up their friends to exchange holiday gossip. The number of phones in households and businesses jumped from 4,265 in 1920 to 10,800 in 1929.

Electricity, though still scattered in rural communities, was widespread in urban areas. The Beaumont Daily Journal for December 2, 1922 urged shoppers to “Make This An Electrical Christmas,” advertising electric per-

colators, heating pads, grills, toasters, heaters, radiators, waffle irons, curling irons, and clothes irons. The market for electric Christmas lights, both indoor and out, had taken off, and after 1925 the NOMA Electric Corporation, became the largest manufacturer of Christmas lighting in the world.

The McFaddin family was part of this bright bustle, everyone enjoying the season’s offerings in various ways. The men pursued their own interests; Perry Jr. was an active in the Shriner order and loved a party, taking charge

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# Director's Desk

## Our House is Truly Your House

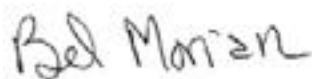
The museum has experienced a successful re-opening, welcoming visitors with open arms on a walk-in or reservation basis. Social media and marketing efforts have reminded our community to come and enjoy the beautiful offerings of our museum. What a joy it is to have visitors back on campus!

The November launch for the first MWH Our House is Your House: Key Hunt has created quite a buzz and a lot of fun excitement for our community.

It has been a pleasure to serve as Interim Director and with great enthusiasm, the

entire MWH staff and Board of Directors welcomes Tony Chauveaux as our new MWH Executive Director. We are so thrilled to move forward with wonderful plans for the future with Tony.

Warmest regards to you,  
our friends,



Bel Morian



Tony Chauveaux at Glass House.  
Photo by Neil Landino.

What a pleasure it is to return to Beaumont and join the McFaddin-Ward Museum. Little could I have imagined that my adventures at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, and Longue Vue House and Gardens in New Orleans, Louisiana would eventually lead me back home to Beaumont and one of the community's crown jewels.

Just as Mamie McFaddin Ward was determined to maintain the home that she and her mother created together, the Museum staff, funded by the Mamie McFaddin Ward Heritage Foundation, has

worked tirelessly to preserve the house and grounds - an exceptional ongoing undertaking. That, along with community programming and educational outreach, make the McFaddin-Ward House Museum a valuable component of Beaumont and the surrounding area.

I look forward to continuing that work, and helping to imagine "what's next" for the McFaddin-Ward House Museum!



Tony L. Chauveaux

# Curatorial Corner

## The Curious Curator

By Ashley Thornton

For every museum visit, I believe there stands an “aha” moment that resonates with a person. A “sticky memory” some call it. It pinpoints an instant that generates a small epiphany or a flittering second of inspiration that you can fondly recall as the weeks go by. For me, these moments stem from the objects of the MWH collection.

Take a look at some of my favorite objects that resonate with me...as of now. The list is ever-changing, for we all know the house has a way of revealing new treasures each time you step inside.

- **Art Nouveau candlestick**

This female personification of Nature guards the entrance to the parlor. The candlestick was crafted ca. 1905 and is in the Art Nouveau style. The deeper I am immersed in the decorative arts here



Art Nouveau candlestick. She holds a flower above her head, which becomes the holder for a candle.

at the museum, the more the Art Nouveau movement calls my attention. As a rebuttal against the rise of industrial America, Art Nouveau drew inspiration from nature, utilizing organic and curvilinear lines. These design elements manifest as flower stalks, vines, or other natural objects, like female figures.

- **Blenko Wine Glass**

This piece currently is on display at our visitor center, but you can see it rotating throughout our exhibits. Glass-blower extraordinaire, Alexander Rosenberg, participated in our lecture series earlier this year, and in doing so ignited my appreciation for the hand-crafted glass pieces in our collection. This wine glass features an air twist stem – a type of decoration first used in 18th-century drinking glasses made by twisting columns of air.



Wine glass with air twist stem by Blenko Glass Co. in Milton, West Virginia, ca. 1930.

- **Japanese cloisonné vase**

I classify this little vase as one of the collection’s hidden treasures, for it typically tucks away on a what-not stand on the second floor. It may be small but it is mighty, with a sneering dragon slinking across a shimmering cloisonné enamel background. I see why Mamie fancied Asian art!

While physically beautiful, these objects lead to a greater story. They give a hint as to how Mamie viewed her world. I’ve always said a visit to a museum should leave you inspired. Now I believe, at the very least, a museum should leave you curious. Whether it results from a glimpse of Art Nouveau or a conversation with a premiere artisan, it is the childlike curiosity that forms a “sticky memory” that leaves you wanting more.



Japanese cloisonné vase, ca. 1900



# Collections Corner

## A Feathered Treasure

By Emily Fischer

Although Christmas may look different this year, one tradition that has not changed is the Christmas tree. The classic Christmas tree has not always looked as we know it today, however. Some of us may remember a little tree crafted of feathers that made its way into our homes at Christmas time.

The tradition of the feather tree started in the late 1800s in Germany, during a ban on cutting Christmas trees in an effort to save German woodlands from deforestation. One solution was the first artificial Christmas tree, crafted of goose and turkey feathers dyed green to simulate pine needles. The feathers were then attached to wires and wrapped around branches positioned in a painted wooden base.

Feather trees grew in popularity as German immigrants took their Christmas traditions with them across

the Atlantic to the United States.

Germany dominated production until World War I, when Americans began manufacturing their own. The Sears Roebuck Catalog first advertised feather trees in 1913, featuring trees that were easy to ship and easy to assemble.

By the 1920s, trees sold in department stores could range from two inches tall to thirty inches tall, and later increased upwards of eight feet tall. However, by the 1930s the feather tree decreased in popularity as the American tree farm industry grew.

After World War II, feather trees lost their status even more as aluminum trees took over the artificial tree market. But, due in part to a scrawny-looking live Christmas tree featured in the Charlie Brown Christmas TV special in 1965, feather trees experienced a resurgence, with fans aspiring to recreate Charlie's

little Christmas tree for years to come.

While a green tree was the most popular feather tree, other color options grew throughout the years to include white, gold, and lavender. It appears that the McFaddins found a unique color with their pink feather tree from the 1970s. This fourteen-inch tree is tucked away in our Christmas collection and is a favorite with museum staff. It also features matching pink ornaments that are placed throughout the fluff and feathers, with the tree secured on a white styrofoam base. One of Mamie's favorite colors to decorate with was pink, which can easily be spotted throughout the house. It seems that this small but lavish pink tree would have fit right in with Mamie's pink style to complete her embellishments for the holiday season.



The Pink Bedroom is a great example of Mamie's use of her favorite color throughout the house and even incorporated into the holiday season.



This pink & plush feather tree can be spotted on display in the Parlor room this holiday season.

# 'Other Views'

## More Than "Just" Employees

By Arlene Christiansen

What was it like to work in the McFaddin-Ward House? What were the holidays like for domestic employees? A house the size of the McFaddin-Ward House required ample staff: butler or downstairs maid, upstairs maid, cook, yardman, laundress and a chauffeur each for Ida and W.P.H. McFaddin. Each had specific duties but was also expected to perform extra work when needed, and the holidays would surely have been one of those times.

Several McFaddin employees worked for the family for years, and through oral interviews and museum archives, we have some of their stories. I wanted to learn more about them and also see how they fit into a McFaddin Christmas celebration.

Andrew Molo and Tom Parker, chauffeurs for Ida and W.P.H. McFaddin, respectively, drove their employers everywhere locally. But Andrew also took Ida to Winslow, Arkansas, for the summer, and across Texas to found new chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution; and Tom drove W.P.H. to his North Texas ranch and to the Fort Worth stockyards.

Andrew Molo began chauffeuring for Ida about 1913 and did so, with gaps, until 1935. He sometimes doubled as a butler. During World War I he was subject to the draft, which greatly worried Ida. In the 1930s, Andrew sometimes took his nephews and Ida in her car to ride the "Joy Road," an area of small manmade roller-coaster-like hills that people could drive their cars over.

Tom Parker was WPH's chauffeur from 1910 until W.P.H. died in 1935, and their long hours together created a degree of familiarity and affection between them. When Tom



Mamie Ward with Cecelia Smith, center, and two other maids before a party at the McFaddin-Ward House, 1960s.

refused to leave the road and drive across the marshy ranch, W.P.H. asked, "Why in the hell can't you do it?" Tom calmly replied "Cause I can't pack you out of there." W.P.H. gave Tom an overcoat because he spent so much time waiting outside. Tom helped to care for W.P.H. in his last illness, sleeping nearby. After W.P.H.'s death, Tom ran the McFaddins' parking lot downtown. When he died in 1947, he had worked for the family for 37 years.

Louis Lemon, McFaddin cook for 37 years, lived in the Carriage House. He started cooking at the ranch about 1915 and moved into town in 1923. Hard-working cowhands didn't appreciate his dainty, half-dollar sized biscuits, but Ida and Mamie did. Even though he didn't welcome visitors in his kitchen, Louis kept teacakes in a cookie jar there. He frequently helped with seasonal cleaning. In 1952, Louis died in his sleep in the Carriage House.

Cecelia Smith came from Louisiana in 1906 with her mother, Brunie Thibodeaux Smith, who became the McFaddins' laundress. Brunie and her children Cecelia, Lionel and Hilda briefly lived in a small house on the McFaddin block, but that house burned. Cecelia recollected that Mamie, five years older, taught her and Hilda their ABCs. At twelve, Cecelia began caring for white children, and later Ida paid for her and Hilda to attend Holy Rosary Boarding School in Galveston. As an adult, Cecelia worked for the McFaddins until about 1922, when she moved back to Galveston for better pay. In 1940 she returned to Beaumont and moved into the Carriage House.

After Mamie's mother died in 1950 and husband Carroll in 1961, leaving Mamie alone, Cecelia spent nights in the main house. After Mamie died in 1982,

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Andrew Molo chauffeured for Ida McFaddin most of the time between 1913 and 1935.



Husband-and-wife, Tom and Albertine Parker, worked for the McFaddins for 37 years.



Louis Lemon worked for the McFaddins for 37 years.

Cecelia stayed in the Carriage House until her health failed. She died in 1989, a loyal employee, companion and friend to Mamie for 42 years, in her own words, doing exactly what she wanted to do.

Buck Sam managed the McFaddin farm for 52 years, raising crops to feed the family and the ranch hands. Every week he delivered fresh produce, milk, eggs, butter, homemade sausage, chickens, and other good food to McFaddin homes in Beaumont.

Buck Sam couldn't read or write. He carried a stamp that said 'Buck Sam' that was honored in all area farm or ranch supply stores. The McFaddins donated toward the building of his church, and Caldwell McFaddin spoke at his funeral in 1961, praising Buck's loyal service and affirming the McFaddin family's love for him. The family made it a point to attend the funerals of longtime employees.

Tom Parker's wife Albertine, McFaddin cook and maid when needed, recalled, "They were good to you, but you didn't go there to sit down." Like other domestic workers, McFaddin employees worked long hours—typically five twelve-hour days and another half day. A "live-in" employee, like Cecelia, could take brief breaks in her carriage house rooms, though still on call. Wages were uniformly low, though McFaddin domestic

employees earned above average for the place and time. Employees recalled that the McFaddins also provided three full meals a day and often paid for medical care and uniforms. When Tom died in 1947, Mamie paid for his casket, vault and grave site.

Work levels increased during the holidays, as employees learned the full meaning of "other duties as assigned." Both Ida and Mamie wanted the holidays to go "just so," and only the employees could ensure success in decorating, cooking and entertaining.

Mamie's diary often names domestic employees along with their holiday-related tasks. They polished silver and brass, set tables, washed and ironed linens, cleaned the porch, hung wreaths and greenery, installed outdoor lights, and delivered gifts to friends and family and flowers to the cemetery. They helped Mamie decorate for parties and dances and stayed late to work them and clean up. Though some employees had Christmas Day off, others cooked and served. Tom picked up whiskey from the bootlegger for the McFaddins' holiday eggnog. Cecelia did special cleaning, helped decorate the house and deliver gifts, and filled in where needed.

Ida and Mamie always remembered employees at Christmas with money, often crisp new bills from the bank, sometimes personal items as well—such

as a sweater for Tom Parker in 1941.

After the holidays, employees helped take everything down. Greenery was tossed, decorations were packed, and fine dinner things were cleaned and stored. Much of the work of putting things away fell to Cecelia, and as years went by, she became the person who knew where everything was kept, even more than Mamie.

Each of the employees I've named had a special relationship with the family as shown by many years of faithful service. Many became like trusted companions, though still operating within the constraints of employer-employee relations and segregation. I find it amazing that so many were employed for such long tenures. I believe that a mutual "high regard" greatly benefited all involved.



Buck Sam managed the McFaddin farm for 52 years.



## Modern

Continued from page 1



Tom Parker, Jr., center, son of chauffeur Tom Parker and his wife Albertine, stands with Dabney Caldwell, left, and Teddy Caldwell, right, on the second-floor of the McFaddin home in 1922 or 1923, when the two little boys came to stay with the McFaddins.



Ida McFaddin, top center, poses with children at the Beaumont Day Nursery in the 1920s.

of music and programs for the Shriners' holiday dance in 1922. Caldwell, combining his love of music and St. Mark's Episcopal Church, sang with the choir in the oratorio "The Holy City" in 1924. W.P.H., busy at the ranch during the day, was, as his family enjoyed remembering, always willing to go to parties and dances with Ida in the evening.

Like other Beaumont matrons, Ida and Mamie shopped for Christmas gifts and everything else along Pearl Street. They enjoyed seasonal social activities but made sure that the holidays went smoothly, especially if house guests were involved. In 1922, Ida's very young nephews Teddy and Dabney Caldwell stayed with the McFaddins for several months, and the McFaddin house briefly returned to the magic of a children's Christmas. Mamie bought the boys gifts and the whole family saw that they had a good holiday. On Christmas Eve, Mamie wrote in her diary, "Folks took ride & kids to see Municipal tree." The next morning she recorded "Had tree for boys." Years later Teddy (Ted by then) still fondly recalled that Christmas.

The McFaddin women were involved with other children. As president of the Beaumont Day Nursery (later Beaumont Children's Home), Ida worked to make the children's holiday a special one. "Ma & Pa went to Day Nursery Xmas Tree," Mamie wrote on Christmas Eve, 1921. True to her role as Ida's assistant, Mamie also helped with Christmas preparations at the facility.

One of Mamie's most time-consuming Christmas tasks was to shop—for friends, family, employees, Day Nursery children, even

sales clerks and employees in the downtown stores and offices. She also wrapped all her gifts, usually Ida's too, and often drove around to deliver them (or had employees do so). On Christmas Eve in 1920, she wrote "Caldwell & I delivered presents." In 1921, exhausted, she commented "Shopped I think all day." In 1924, after a long day's shopping, that night she "wrapped Christmas things."

By the 1920s, Mamie could wrap her gifts in beautiful holiday paper. In 1917 a Hallmark stationery store had run out of the solid red, white, and green tissue paper sheets that people used for gift wrap. Instead, the store offered sheets of decorative French-designed paper used to line Hallmark stationery envelopes, and the ornate wrap became a nationwide hit.

Modern times notwithstanding, tradition still governed McFaddin Christmas celebrations. Christmas Day was for exchanging gifts and drinking eggnog, and Christmas dinner was with family. In 1929, even though the stock market had crashed that October, Christmas went on as usual. That year the whole McFaddin family—Ida and W.P.H., Mamie, Perry Jr., Caldwell, and their spouses—celebrated Christmas dinner at the Harrison Avenue home of W.P.H.'s niece, Kydie McKee, and her husband Norval.

The future might be uncertain, but the family was together, and to Ida and Mamie, nothing mattered more. Ida's Christmas note to Mamie sometime in the 1920s, written to accompany a gift, said it all: "Mamie, With my whole heartfelt of love. May the sweet spirit of this Blessed season abide with my precious girl." It was signed "Mother."

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## Hanging Out at the Museum Our House is Your House

The MWH hosted its first Our House is Your House: Key Hunt, and we were blown away by the amazing turnout! 10 brass skeleton keys were hidden throughout commu-

nity locations in Beaumont, and clues were posted on social media.

Each of the 10 key finders received awesome prizes and was entered into the drawing

for our grand prize.

Thank you to everyone who participated! We can't wait until next year! Here are some photos of our wonderful winners.



Mackenzie found Key #1 at the Beaumont Children's Museum.



Carrie found Key #2 at the Art Museum of Southeast Texas.



Andy & Christle found Key #3 at the Fire Museum of Texas.



Katie found Key #4 at the John Jay French Museum.



Nicole found Key #5 at the Chambers House Museum.



Hayden found Key #6 at St. Mark's Treasure House.



Elleanor found Key #7 at the Temple of the Brave.



Alex & Kacee found Key #8 at the MWH.



Deric & family found Key #9 at Spindletop-Gladys City.



Sarah & Hank found Key #10 at Cattail Marsh.  
\*Grand prize winner\*