

# More Than *Just* Employees



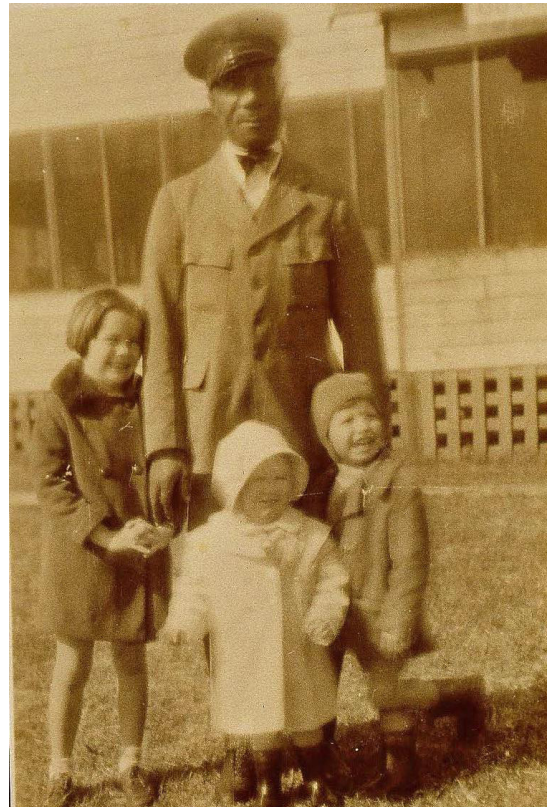


# More Than *Just* Employees

Household employees were central to the inner workings of the 12,800 square foot McFaddin residence. A butler or downstairs maid, an upstairs maid, a cook, a yardman, a laundress, and two chauffeurs - one for Ida and one for W.P.H. - comprised the home's core household staff. While each had specific duties, it was expected that they be able to fill in for other employees if necessary.

Several of the McFaddin's household employees—generally referred to early in the century as servants or domestics—enjoyed long periods of association with the family. Many other men and women, most of them African-American, worked at the McFaddin home over the years.

It was not unusual for the family to pay for their employees' medical care, and they also provided good food, uniforms, and gifts to mark holidays or special occasions.



Andrew Molo, Ida McFaddin's chauffeur, with three of Ida's grandchildren: Mamie, Perry Jr., and Caldwell.

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## Schedules & Routines

*"They were good to you, but you didn't go there to sit down," recalled McFaddin cook and maid Albertine Parker.*

A typical work schedule for a McFaddin household employee was six days a week from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with one afternoon and Sundays off. In the McFaddin household, certain tasks were assigned to specific days of the week.

Every day began with cleaning of the entire house. The upstairs maid, in addition to helping the ladies of the house with their toilette, dusted, straightened and cleaned bedrooms and bathrooms. One downstairs room was slated for more detailed cleaning each day, for instance, the library on Monday, the dining

room on Tuesday, and the breakfast room on Wednesday.

Instructions for household employees were generally issued early in the morning by the ladies of the house before they came downstairs. The maid and butler were assigned their cleaning, the cook given the menu, the chauffeur told when and for what destination he would be needed.

New employees were trained, first by Ida and later by Mamie McFaddin Ward, or even much later by Cecelia Smith.

# African-American Life in Beaumont

Nearly all household employees in Beaumont were African-American, and therefore subject to the rigid segregation practiced in the South. They were restricted to riding in the backs of buses and streetcars and barred completely from many white facilities. African-Americans had their own retail operations and their own doctors and dentists. On extended trips, after Ida's chauffeur took her to a hotel, he would go to a boarding house that

would accommodate African-Americans.

June 19, or "Juneteenth," the anniversary of the emancipation of slaves in Texas, was a special holiday for African-Americans. On Juneteenth, McFaddin employees were usually given the remainder of the day off after they had finished their morning duties. Sometimes they held their celebrations at McFaddin Beach, located on the upper Texas Gulf Coast.



Paycheck for Adelaide Thibodeaux, who worked for the McFaddins in the early 1900s

## Wages

Household employees in the early twentieth century were never highly paid; however, McFaddin household employees probably earned above-average wages. In 1939, for instance, average annual earnings in Texas for household employees were \$258; McFaddin household employees averaged \$444.

Low wages were in part offset by other considerations. Employees who lived in the rooms

in the McFaddins' carriage house paid no rent. Both they and the household employees who "lived out" ate most, if not all, their meals in the McFaddins' kitchen. Those who were interviewed remembered that while the McFaddins demanded much of their employees, they also fed them very well, provided medical care, uniforms, and Christmas and wedding gifts.



# Cecelia Smith

*“Miss Mamie and I were just like sisters...I always admired [Ida and Mamie]...they just made me feel like I was somebody, you know.” – Cecelia Smith*

Born in 1900, Cecelia Smith moved to Beaumont with her family in 1906. Her mother, Brunie Thibodeaux Smith, went to work as a “housegirl” for the McFaddin family, later becoming their laundress.

According to Cecelia, often called Cecele or Ciel, Mamie (who was about five years older) taught her and her sister Hilda the ABCs. As a child, Cecelia helped her mother with the washing and ironing; when Brunie did extra work at night at the McFaddins’ parties, Cecele came along so her mother wouldn’t have to walk home alone. When she and Hilda were older, Ida paid their tuition to Holy Rosary School in Galveston.

After she finished her schooling, Cecelia worked at the McFaddin house until she moved to Galveston, ultimately returning in 1940 to work for the McFaddins. She moved into the east side of the carriage house and never left again. By her own admission, she was doing exactly what she wished to do.

Over the years, Cecelia and Mamie became close. After the deaths of Ida in 1950 and Carroll in 1961, which left Mamie alone in her home, Cecilia moved into the house to keep Mamie company. More a companion than an employee, Cecelia slept in the north bedroom, though she still maintained her rooms in the carriage house to go to when she wished. An enduring friendship based on loyalty and respect developed from Mamie’s and Cecelia’s employer/employee relationship, and in 1975 Mamie established a trust for her devoted maid. Mamie died on October 24, 1982, and Cecelia stayed on in the carriage house until her own health prevented her from living alone. She died November 2, 1989, and is buried at Live Oak Cemetery in Beaumont.

Cecelia’s memories, preserved in oral interviews, were invaluable for documenting life at the McFaddin house and carriage house.



Cecelia Smith (middle bottom) at the museum’s opening reception



Mamie & Cecilia

# Louis Lemon

*"We didn't have TV then, so he was our entertainment. He was a character, he was something else!" – Dorothy Collins, Louis Lemon's great-niece*

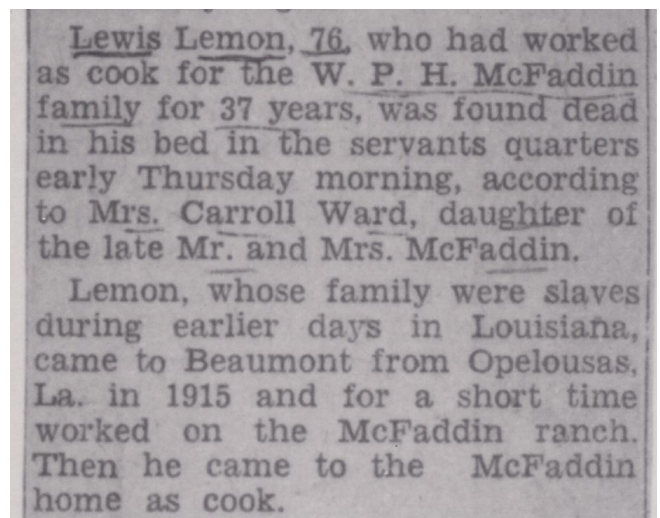
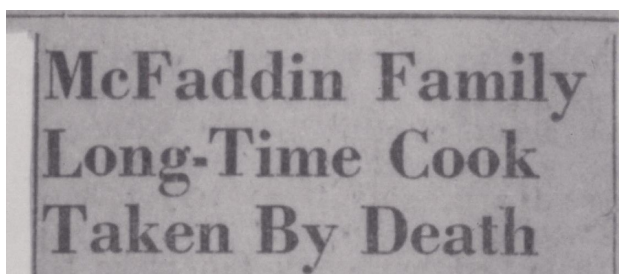
A longtime chef for the McFaddin family, Louis began cooking at the McFaddins' ranch in south Jefferson County in 1915, and then moved to the house in the early 1920s. An excellent cook, Louis was known for being a dapper dresser and possessing a temperamental disposition, occasionally throwing red peppers into the wood stove burners to keep people out of the kitchen.

His biscuits were especially noteworthy, as they were light, tall and only about the size of a half-dollar. He preferred cooking on a wood stove to cooking on a gas stove. Both W.P.H and Ida were very fond of tea cakes, so Louis kept a constant supply of them in a cookie jar in the northwest corner of the kitchen near the window. The grandchildren would peek in through a crack in the swinging door and when Louis left the kitchen through the other door, they would run in, get a cookie, and run out before he came back.

Louis died on February 28, 1952, at the age of 76, in the servants' quarters in the carriage house. The Beaumont newspaper called him one of "the old school of servants" and noted that he had worked for the McFaddins for 37 years. When he died, Mamie and Carroll Ward and Mamie's brother Caldwell McFaddin went to the funeral in his hometown of Opelousas, Louisiana, where Caldwell gave a eulogy.



Louis Lemon worked for the McFaddins for 37 years.



Louis Lemon obituary



# Tom & Albertine Parker

Tom Parker, born in 1886, was W.P.H.'s chauffeur from 1910 until W.P.H. died in 1935. Since W.P.H. never learned to drive, and since he traveled extensively with little advance notice, Tom became more than just a chauffeur to him. A special interdependency grew between them; while the employer/employee relationship was retained, a certain degree of familiarity and affection developed.

Tom drove W.P.H. not only around his vast Jefferson County holdings, but also to his Knox County ranch, to cattle shows in Fort Worth, wherever W.P.H. needed to go. W.P.H. once gave Tom an overcoat to help him keep warm because he had to stand and wait in the cold so much.

During W.P.H.'s last illness, Tom remained near, helping care for him, sleeping in the hall by the bedroom door, and at times even at the foot of the bed. Family tradition says that W.P.H.'s last words were, "Tom, Tom."

After W.P.H.'s death, Tom worked at a McFaddin-owned parking lot in downtown Beaumont. When Tom died in 1947, Mamie made the funeral arrangements, paying for the casket, the vault and the grave site.

Albertine Parker, Tom's wife, worked as a substitute cook for the McFaddins, helped Ida make fruitcakes at Christmas, and assisted at various times with seasonal housecleaning.

She remembered Ida as being very gracious and always encouraging of the household employees' efforts. Another memory was of "Miss Ida" hiding cookies or candy in her handwork bag so the children wouldn't see it, and eating it very quietly as she did her handwork.

At the age of 104, Albertine died August 27, 1994.



Tom & Albertine Parker, ca. 1912

## *Employee of Several Prominent Beaumont Families Dies Here*

Parker was known as the first chauffeur in Beaumont and was founder of the Chauffeur's club here. He was a member of the Bishop Lodge 72 of Masons and the Graham Congregational church. Funeral services will be held tomorrow afternoon at 4 o'clock in the Graham Congregational church. Fleming's funeral home will be in charge of arrangements.

Tom Parker obituary

# Servants' Quarters

In the early 1900s, household employees often “lived in” where they worked. Accommodations varied from rooms in carriage houses to small backyard structures to rooms inside main houses.

Two-room apartments on

either side of the Carriage House provided free housing for employees of the McFaddins who wanted to “live in.” These apartments, unlike many homes of that time, had indoor plumbing, electricity, hot water, and gas heat. Many employees lived

in the Carriage House but Louis Lemon and Cecelia Smith were the two longest residents.

Cecelia lived in the east side of the Carriage House, furnishing her rooms with her own belongings and with items the McFaddins gave her.



Cecelia Smith's carriage house rooms, photographed ca. 1983.



Museum interpretation of Louis Lemon's bedroom

Louis Lemon lived in the west side apartment for 37 years, while he served as cook for the family, until his death in 1952.

These rooms look as they might have when he lived here in the early 1930s: simple, hand-me-down furnishings with a bare light bulb hanging down.

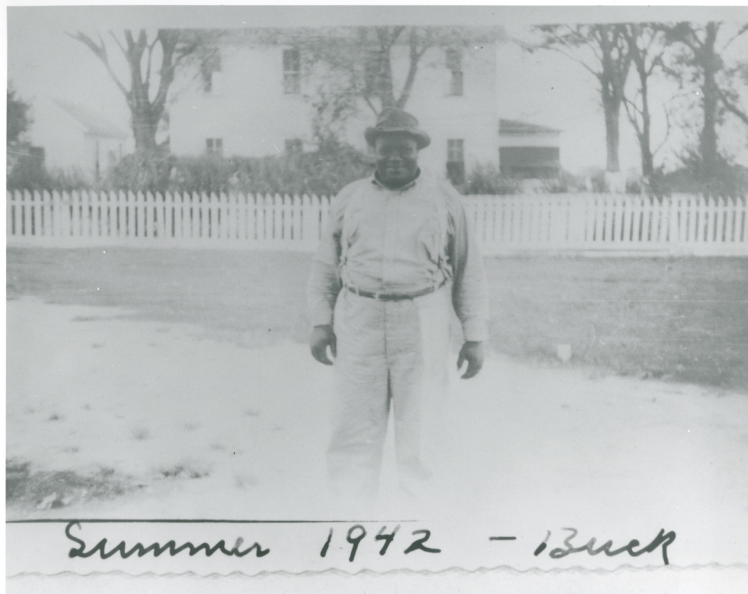


# A Legacy

In addition to the employees listed in this booklet, over 100 men and women worked for the McFaddins between 1900 and 1950.

Some stayed for years, others only a day.

Their contributions to the care of the McFaddin-Ward House made it possible for guests to enjoy the museum today.



Buck Sam managed the McFaddin farm for 52 years.



Adelaide Thibodeaux, who worked for the McFaddins in the early 1900s, is pictured riding donkeys with Caldwell, Perry, and Mamie McFaddin at Mineral Wells, Texas.



Brunie Payne worked as maid and laundress for the McFaddins for 44 years, beginning about 1906.



Percy worked as yardman for the McFaddins from 1933-1948 and lived in the carriage house.