

September 2024  
Vol. 40/ No. 4

# McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

## The McFaddin Women and Their “Fine Feathers”



Ida Caldwell McFaddin in the 1890s, dressed to go out.

**By Judy Linsley**

World events in the first half of the 20th-Century dramatically influenced clothing design. The elegantly corseted women

of the Edwardian Era marked the first decade of the century; World War I, 1914-1918, brought practicality and social change; women of the prosperous Roaring Twenties short-

ened their skirts (and hair) and discarded their corsets (Designer Coco Chanel decreed that “luxury must be comfortable, otherwise it is not luxury”); the Great Depression of the 1930s returned to less frivolous longer hems and natural waistlines; and World War II brought practical styles for active women. When the war ended in 1945, designers like Christian Dior were delighted to return to feminine, full-skirted fashion. Fashion-conscious women had to hustle to keep up with these changes.

As a young matron in Beaumont in the early 1900s, Ida McFaddin was known for wearing “fine feathers.” Ada Roos, a neighbor of the McFaddins’ and later buyer for the Fashion clothing store, claimed that she “used to watch by the window to see what Miss Ida was wearing.”

Ida earned her sartorial reputation. In the early 1900s, Beaumont

stores were limited in their stock, especially for someone accustomed to the very finest in fabric and fashion. Ida bought much of her clothing in Cincinnati, a commercial rail hub on the train route from Beaumont to her hometown of Huntington, West Virginia. She patronized dressmaker Madame Dunlevy, stopping on the way to Huntington to choose fabric and style and undergoing final fittings on the way back to Texas. The finished dresses were packed in wooden crates and sent by rail to Beaumont.

As time went by, Beaumont clothing stores stocked more fine merchandise, though Mamie’s 1913 diary records that she still often shopped in Houston. While planning her trousseau for her wedding in 1919, she found some items in Houston but purchased her wedding dress in Dallas.

By the 1920s, Beaumont matrons could

choose from several local establishments. Among them, the White House, Rosenthal’s, and The Fair Store were full-line “dry goods” stores, carrying clothing for the whole family and housewares. The Fashion sold only upscale women’s clothing.

Like most well-to-do women of their time, Ida McFaddin and Mamie McFaddin Ward were shoppers. Selecting a seasonal wardrobe was a serious, twice-yearly ritual, performed once for fall and winter and once for spring and summer. Once purchased, virtually every garment required alterations, as the fit was as important as the fabric and style. Ida and Mamie underwent not one, but two fittings, choosing matching shoes, hats, purses and gloves, brought to the fitting rooms by clerks for approval or rejection. Thus both women were prepared for the season but still free to enjoy supplementary shopping

# Director's Desk

Dear Friends -

While not readily apparent, the months of July, August, and September have been exceptionally productive as the McFaddin-Ward House prepares for a very busy October, November, December and into 2025.

In addition to planning for Fall and Holiday displays, Curator Victoria Tamez and Assistant Curator/Registrar Katherine McAtee have addressed conservation of Carroll Ward's portrait - newly restored by Whitten and Proctor Fine Art Conservation in Houston and again hanging in the Pink Bedroom. Additionally, attention is underway to return several of the Collection's timepieces to working order. Chappell Jordan Clock Gallery was onsite earlier this year repairing three of

our clocks and are currently addressing issues with five other clocks - including the Entry Hall's tall case clock and the Music Room's unique "Gloria Clock" - in their Houston workshop.

Likewise, Education Director Jennifer Lowrance has scheduled a full array of open houses and workshops for public, private, and homeschool instructors throughout the remainder of the year, as well as a special Seniors Craft Workshop scheduled for November 7th. All of this in addition to planning for upcoming BISD field trips for every 7th grader in the district.

Not to be overlooked is the hugely popular McFaddin-Ward House Lecture Series, in addition to the music on the lawn events and the always-anticipated Holiday

include Kevin Eckstrom, Chief Public Affairs Officer of the Washington National Cathedral, Rabbit Goody, internationally known textile historian, designer, and master weaver, and Brian Hill, director of the U.W. Maritime Administration.

I'm happy to report that the McFaddin-Ward House is well on its way to almost doubling attendance over 2022 numbers ~ skipping over 2023 numbers due to the museum's closure from February through October for the re-wiring project. This is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the entire staff, with special kudos to Sarah Parker, our remarkable Communication/Social Media master.

We look forward to seeing you soon at the McFaddin-Ward House!

Open Houses ~ all curated by Bel Morian, the museum's Director of Public Programming. Lecture presenters

Tony L. Chauveaux  
Executive Director



THE MCFADDIN-WARD HOUSE LECTURE SERIES PRESENTS

**THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL:**  
A TESTAMENT IN STONE TO CRAFTSMANSHIP AND ARTISTRY

LECTURE BY: KEVIN ECKSTROM

THURSDAY  
12TH | SEPT | 2024  
6:30 PM | 1906 CALDER AVE | BMT



# Curator's Corner

## Season of Fun and Sun



Season of Fun and Sun, Dining Room Installation



Katherine McAtee (Asst. Curator) and Victoria Tamez (Curator) set up Primary Bedroom Installation for Season of Fun and Sun.

**By Victoria Tamez**  
*Curator of Collections*

The curatorial department has been busy this summer with a new intern, a new installation, a new season for inventory, and the return of an object from conservation.

Our intern for this summer is Isabel Rodriguez, a graduate of Lamar



Summer Curatorial Intern,  
Isabel Rodriguez

University with a degree in Communication-Advertising. She is currently working toward a degree in Graphic Design at Lamar Institute of Technology. A wonderful addition to the team, Isabel has been aiding the curatorial department with photography, inventory, summer installation, and creating a new exhibition for the Visitor Center. Come by the Visitor Center to see the new installation!

Our team has also been busy installing our Summer 2024 House Installation: "Season of Fun and Sun." We currently have three dresses on display with one on the first floor in the Music Room and two on the second floor in the Primary and Pink Bedrooms. Take a look at the bright, summer colors in the Dining Room where we have cut and cased glass wine glasses in multiple colors with matching cordial glasses. The tables in the Dining Room and Breakfast Room have placemats instead of tablecloths so the designs of the tables themselves are easier to view. The Primary Bedroom currently houses a few objects from our archival collection

including passports, postcards, travel itineraries, and a menu from the Queen Mary. The postcards represent a variety of European countries the McFaddin ladies traveled to during a multi-week European trip with the travel itineraries detailing their activities during this European vacation.

Once we completed our Summer Installation, the team focused its attention on our annual inventory. This inventory follows our electrical project which required us to remove a majority of the objects from the house. Thus, this inventory includes new objects that were introduced after the installation, so it required a few edits here and there. The annual inventory is a fantastic way for the team to refamiliarize ourselves with the objects in the house and look for any condition issues that may have arisen over the year.

We are also happy to report that the Carroll Ward portrait, usually found in the Pink Bedroom, has returned from conservation! Whitten & Proctor Fine Art Conservation did wonderful work on the portrait, and we hope you come by and see the portrait in its new condition!



# FEATHERS

Continued from page 1



Mamie McFaddin in 1911, in the dress she wore when she led the Grand March at the Thanksgiving dance.

excursions.

“Regulars” like Ida and Mamie, who came in often and bought a lot, received special attention. Rosine Wilson recalled that sales clerks “remembered your size, your preferences, asked after your family, and you after theirs.” In return, Ida rewarded them with a gift of, say, perfume or stockings. In later years, Mamie invited them to her teas or receptions. When Ida shopped at the Fashion, Ada Roos waited on her. After Ada’s death, Ida went with Mamie to the White House, to be waited on by Mildred McGee, who recalled how “wonderful” Mamie was to her and the alterations

staff.

Mildred began working at the White House in 1928 in the alterations department, while still in high school. Fourteen years later, she was made sales clerk, and two years after that became the

buyer. Right away she was sent to the New York market. It was during World War II, and she had no experience. Wartime rationing and scarcities had hollowed out the White House’s inventory. She described the dress racks as “bare! You could have shot cannons [through the holes] in our stock room.” Against all odds, she ended up with a full supply of dresses partly because, as she said, “they felt sorry for me and wondered what I was doing up there.” She added that it also helped that the White House was “so well thought of in the New York market.”

Beginning probably in the 1920s or 1930s, Ida and Mamie ceased to closely follow fashion trends. Granddaughter Rosine recalled that they “liked an only slightly varied style of clothes, which buyers from the local stores ordered for them and many of their con-

temporaries while other styles came and went.” They continued their seasonal shopping rituals, however.

Like all astute buyers, Mildred purchased clothing at market with specific clients, such as Mamie, in mind. Mildred recalled that “Miss Mamie really knew clothes.” “She loved them beautifully tailored and she wore a lot of beautiful prints.” She added, “I bought everything that I could find in mind for her to see...and she usually took it all.”

Ida and Mamie always wore “house dresses” at home, never slacks. Mildred mentioned that Mamie loved a specific line of cotton batiste dresses “better than anything I ever bought for her.” She also preferred a straight skirt. “We had to narrow every skirt I believe we ever sold her.” In later years, if Mamie was feeling under the weather, Mildred would take the

clothing and an alterations person to Mamie for her to see at home.

There are beautiful examples of Ida and Mamie’s clothing in the McFaddin-Ward House collections. Though we wish we had more, we have photographs, correspondence, and Mamie’s diaries. On September 10, 1936, she wrote: “Mother and I went to Fashion and looked at fall clothes. Mother bought quite a few and I got two black dresses.” The next day she went to the White House and found “nothing there.” Her entry for Oct. 16, 1941, reads: “I [went] to town [and] took dresses to have fitted...looked for purses and hat, got one purse.”

Connecting the dots that link our collections with archival information is a fascinating puzzle. By fitting the pieces together, we can make the McFaddin-Ward House come alive for our visitors.



Left to right: Mamie McFaddin Ward, Jim McFaddin, Jim’s friend Kyle Wheelus, and Ida McFaddin in New Orleans, ca. 1949. Jim McFaddin was Caldwell McFaddin’s son.



# Education

## Summer Education Activities

By Jennifer Lowrance

*Director of Educational Programming*

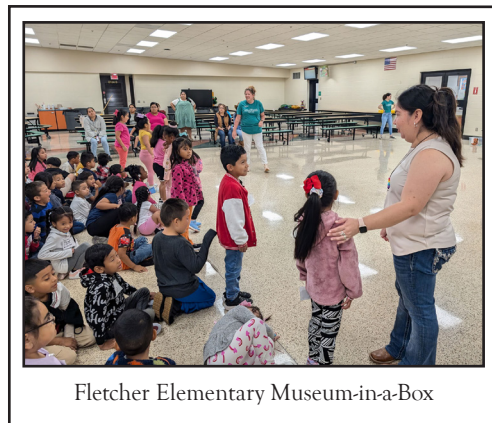
Yeehaw! What a great summer! Campers at The McFaddin-Ward House Ranching Roundup had a roo-tin' tootin' good time!

Twenty-nine campers were greeted with cowboy hats and bandanas upon arrival and corralled into crafts awaiting them in the Visitor's Center. Campers tried their aim at archery, churned their way into homemade butter, and dipped their toes into the art of candle making. Not a minute wasted, we heard from a local FFA chapter about raising horses, goats, and rabbits, followed by the Jefferson County Agri-life extension teaching a lesson on farming and vegetables, topped off with a homemade side of etouffee. We cooled off in the afternoon with our homemade ice cream! Our last hoorah on the trail ride was a lesson on grilling and experiencing a real chuck wagon, thanks to Bill and Leslie Wilson! The campers got a glimpse into how tough cowboy life could be - even in cooking. Janie Perry taught them how to cook over an open fire using a dutch oven. The fruit of their labor was peach cobbler topped with their homemade ice cream. What a treat! I cannot wait for next year's Ranching Roundup!

The summer didn't slow down. We visited Fletcher Elementary's summer program and had a wonderful time doing a Museum-in-a-Box experience for their Kindergarten through 3rd grade. We played ranch games and talked about the McFaddin family's history in ranching. Teachers were dressed in western attire and the children were so excited at the day's activities. We were also able to leave the teachers with a craft to take back to their classroom to make with the 300



Campers from Ranching Roundup Summer Camp 2024



Fletcher Elementary Museum-in-a-Box



Teachers enjoy 1st floor walk thru tour.

students and continue to talk about Beaumont's history.

Capping off the summer was a celebration for our Beaumont area teachers. We held our Annual Teacher Appreciation Happy Hour on August 1st. Nearly 50 teachers came from surrounding school districts to have a fun evening out, tour the first floor of the house, and learn more about planning field trips. The Beaumont Heritage Society and Spindletop Boomtown Museum were invited to join us and share education opportunities at their sites, including our col-

laborative '100 years' field trip experience. This field trip shows students what life was like from 1845 to 1950 in Beaumont. Teachers did not leave empty handed as door prizes from all three museums were drawn, and each teacher left with a swag bag of goodies and information about the museums.

The fall is shaping up to be a busy one with more educational programming scheduled in the coming months. In addition to our homeschool workshops, I am planning to have two Craft Workshops for Seniors. They are sure to be a great time!



# 'Other Views' How Rice!



W.P.H. McFaddin on his horse, ca. 1890s

## By Arlene Christiansen

W.P.H. McFaddin began ranching with his father, and by 1905 he owned thousands of head of cattle and over 20,000 acres of land. At its largest, his land holdings comprised approximately 120,000 acres in Jefferson County and 48,000 acres in Knox and King counties in North Texas. His land ownership made possible his wealth from real estate, ranching, oil, and, less widely known but once very important to the Southeast Texas economy—rice farming.

Early rice farming had been known as “providence rice,” the farmer depending on providence to provide rain to sprout the grain. In 1892, Joseph Broussard bought a

gristmill in Beaumont and converted it into the first commercial rice mill in Texas. Irrigation canals followed, and rice acreage in the area rapidly began to increase.

With his business partners, Obadiah Kyle and Valentine Wiess, W.P.H. formed canal and irrigation companies (all of which he managed) to handle his rice interests. He built thirty miles of canals and a 200,000-gallon pumping plant. The system, capable of watering 18,000 acres of land, supported the first large-scale rice growing in the area. The company furnished land, seed, and water to farmers in exchange for return of half the crop. This allowed the farmers to focus on planting and harvesting the rice,

while W.P.H. handled the ordering, watering, and milling of the rice. If only water was furnished, the farmers were charged two sacks of rice per acre. The land was excellent for growing rice and a farmer could expect to harvest 12-13 sacks of rice per acre.

In 1903, W.P.H. and his partners leased the Atlantic Rice Mill, and in 1904 they built the McFaddin-Wiess-Kyle Rice Mill. When W.P.H. entered into an endeavor, he learned everything he could about it, in order to do things right. When he built the irrigation company, he used the most advanced equipment available at the time. The same was true when he built his rice mill. Using the latest technology, his mill

was, according to the Beaumont Enterprise, “the largest rice mill in Texas, and one of the largest in the United States.”

Rice mill ledgers in the McFaddin-Ward House archives show that McFaddin rice was shipped to Boston, San Francisco, New Orleans, Salt Lake City, St. Paul, Portland (Oregon), and other major U.S. cities, as well as Puerto Rico, Cuba, Canada, and Europe. Railway records alone occupy an entire ledger.

In 1905, W.P.H. modified the mill to address the growing need for rice flour, which was in high demand, especially in Texas and Arkansas. W.P.H. believed that rice flour was better than wheat flour and promoted rice flour across the nation. Unfortunately, the market never met his expectations.

W.P.H. also promoted rice starch and rice powder. At the time, rice starch was almost entirely manufactured in Germany. W.P.H. and others had plans to organize a company that would manufacture starch and other rice products. This would benefit the farmers as well as the mills. The powder was known as San Jacinto Rice Powder and was used the same as talcum powder on the skin. Talcum powder was thought to cause pimples and blackheads, whereas rice powder supposedly prevented them and left the skin clear and refreshed. But like rice flour, neither rice powder nor rice starch became a mainstay





Postcard of the McFaddin-Wiess-Kyle Rice Mill, ca. 1912.

in the marketplace.

Another rice product that W.P.H. strongly supported was what he called “rough rice” or “unpolished rice,” rice that was higher in nutritional value and actually required less processing; but it could not compete with the more aesthetically pleasing polished white rice that was so popular. It was suggested that W.P.H. should have gone to marketing school, where he might have come up with a more pleasing sales pitch for the whole grain. It was later marketed by Comet Rice and others as “whole grain rice.”

Around 1903 or 1904 a Rice Kitchen opened in downtown Beaumont to ed-

ucate the community about the uses of rice beyond “just putting gravy” on it. This was also the brainchild of W.P.H. McFaddin. The Rice Kitchen was run by the Public Schools Improvement Club and the ladies of the Episcopal Church. The purpose was twofold: it fed anyone who wanted a meal, and it promoted the many different ways of preparing rice for eating, demonstrating that rice could be served for 100 meals without repeating a recipe. It also promoted rice products, such as rice flour. Although W.P.H. was only indirectly involved, he took great pride in that effort to promote rice.

In July, 1906, the rice mill

burned. Though it was at first feared a total loss, the “mill proper” was saved and repaired in time to process that year’s crop in August. In 1914 one of W.P.H.’s partners, Valentine Wiess, died, and the mill ended up in litigation. The next year, W.P.H., in partnership with his son-in-law L. W. Houk, leased the mill to ensure continued quality of milling before Houk purchased it in 1917. A drought that same year brought a salt water intrusion into the irrigation canals, ending that part of W.P.H.’s prosperous venture. The mill continued operations until 1926, when B. A. Steinhagen purchased it and sold it to Comet Rice, ending W.P.H. McFaddin’s

involvement.

Though today little rice is grown in the Beaumont area, throughout W.P.H. McFaddin’s career, the Southeast Texas rice industry prospered. His ownership of premium crop land and his financial security from other ventures put him in a favorable position both to support the industry and to enjoy profits from rice irrigating and milling. In the first quarter of the 20th century, W.P.H. McFaddin was considered one of the most influential men in Southeast Texas. Though he is most often remembered for his empire of land, cattle, and oil, his accomplishments in the rice business were also important.

# McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS



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www.mcfaddin-ward.org

The  
McFADDIN-WARD  
HOUSE  
725 North Third Street  
BEAUMONT, TEXAS  
77701-1629  
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## Public Programming Perspectives

By Bel Morian

The McFaddin-Ward House invites you to join us for interesting, dynamic, and rare opportunities to hear several very special lectures and music this Fall. We have more in store for the Spring, but below is a glimpse into the first half of the season:

Thursday, September 12  
6:30 p.m.

**McFaddin-Ward Lecture featuring Kevin Eckstrom**  
"The Washington National Cathedral: A Testament in Stone to Craftsmanship & Artistry"  
Visitor Center

Thursday, October 10  
6:30 p.m.

**McFaddin-Ward Lecture featuring Rabbit Goody**  
"A Stitch in Time: Historic Textiles for Museums, Movies and Designers"  
Visitor Center

Friday, October 18  
6:00 p.m. gates/6:30 p.m. music

**Music at the McFaddins' featuring Jimmy Simmons and Friends**  
East Lawn

Friday, November 1  
6:00 p.m. gates/6:30 p.m. music

**Music at the McFaddins' featuring Jivin' Gene**  
East Lawn

Thursday, November 14  
6:30 p.m.

**McFaddin-Ward Lecture featuring Brian Hill**  
"On the Neches with MARAD and the Reserve Fleet: MARAD Operations"  
Visitor Center

Wednesday, November 29

**The museum will be fully decorated for Christmas. Bring your family and friends for a festive tour.**  
Visitor Center

Saturday December 7  
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

**McFaddin-Ward Holiday Open House Weekend | Saturday Event**  
Holiday Décor, music, holiday treats, Santa, lights, carolers and more  
Begin at the Visitor Center

Sunday, December 8  
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

**McFaddin-Ward Holiday Open House Weekend | Sunday Event**  
Holiday Décor, music, holiday treats, Santa, lights, carolers and more  
Begin at the Visitor Center

Follow the McFaddin-Ward House on social media  
for behind-the-scenes glimpses of museum life & historical happenings.



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Scan the QR code with your phone  
to preview upcoming MWH events.

