

December 2024
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McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

McFaddin Christmas Traditions



The McFaddin-Ward House in the snow, ca. 1948.

By Judy Linsley

Every family, every region, every country that celebrates Christmas has traditions that are handed down from one generation to the next. In the McFaddin family, Christmas was, first and foremost, a time for family, friendship, and giving. Throughout their lives, Ida Caldwell McFaddin and Mamie McFaddin Ward honored this tradition, often adapting to a changing world.

On December 4, 1894, Ida Regina Caldwell married William Perry Herring McFaddin in her hometown of Huntington, West

Virginia. As they enjoyed an “extensive honeymoon,” they may have spent their first “married” Christmas in Huntington. Their second Christmas was probably spent in a modest one-story structure on Liberty Avenue. By then, they had a new baby, Mamie Louise McFaddin, born November 5, 1895.

In 1896, the family moved to a newly-built Queen Anne-style house on Calder Avenue, where Mamie’s younger brothers were born, William Perry Herring McFaddin Jr., “Peb,” in 1897, and James Lewis Caldwell McFaddin,

“Cobb” or “Blink,” in 1901. In January, 1907, the McFaddins made their final move, to 1906 McFaddin. This grand home soon became noted for beautiful and elaborate holiday entertainment.

Flowers and greenery were key to holiday décor. In 1900, Ida had hosted a “Delightful Reception” for the Twentieth Century Club, lavishly decorating her Calder Avenue home with mistletoe, palms, smilax, and chrysanthemums in the club colors of gold and white.

Later, poinsettias came to define Christmas. Both Ida and Mamie decorated with poinsettias, and

Mamie in particular was known for massing poinsettias around the staircase and fireplaces during the holidays. In 1939, perhaps inspired by ideas from the Magnolia Garden Club, Mamie tried a new look, using the “date fruit in palms,” stock, poinsettias, white mums, red firethorn and laurel. “Looks stunning I think,” was her proud verdict, written in her diary.

Ida and Mamie modernized their home décor in 1938 when they first installed lights on the shrubbery outside the house. *The Beaumont Enterprise* mentioned the McFaddin house as being

Director's Desk

Dear Friends -

We are delighted to welcome you, your family, and friends to be our guests and visit the historic house handsomely decorated once again for the holidays.

This year's holiday interpretation, "Candlelight & Carols:

A Melodious Holiday with the McFaddins," will immerse guests in the elaborate decorating traditions of an elegant and extravagant McFaddin Family holiday party.

Gold candelabra, red and gold dinnerware, sparkling crystal, glamorous party

clothes, and other special items from the reserve collection will be on display.

Unlike past years, we will host two Holiday Open Houses on consecutive evenings - December 7th and December 8th - from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm, with great music, holiday

treats, and a special visitor from the North Pole.

We hope to see you there!



Tony L. Chauveaux



Be Our Guest!

McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE

Holiday Open House



SATURDAY, DEC. 7 and SUNDAY, DEC 8

5 PM - 7 PM

1906 Calder Ave | Beaumont

HOLIDAY SPLENDOR | LIVE MUSIC | REFRESHMENTS

The event is admission-free and open to the public.

Curator's Corner

Candlelight & Carols: A Melodious Holiday with the McFaddins

By Victoria Tamez
Curator of Collections

Happy Holidays from the Collections staff here at the McFaddin-Ward House! We have a brand-new holiday interpretation for you all to see. This year, we are focusing on music for our “Candlelight and Carols” 2024 Interpretation. Each room this year was decorated with a specific holiday carol or tune in mind. Look a little closer at each room to see if you can figure out which song inspired our rooms!

The bright lights of the Christmas tree illuminate the Entrance Hall, while the Dining Room and Breakfast Room are full of shining silver details designed to draw the eye. Imagine festive holiday music flowing throughout the house as the family and guests enjoyed a wonderful holiday party. A black and white lace evening gown accompanied by a black tuxedo jazz up the Entrance Hall, while a peach lace evening gown and a sparkling black sequin gown adorn the Pink Parlor and Pink Bedroom.

Take a look on the second floor in the North Bedroom and enjoy how it might have looked when Ida's two nephews, Ted and Dab, visited in 1922. A pair of pajamas and a nightshirt see the boys getting ready for bed as the holiday festivities take place downstairs. See if you can also spot the gift being wrapped in the Green Bedroom and take a guess at who it is for!

We are having two Holiday Open Houses on the same weekend, and we hope to see you all there! Our Open House will be on Saturday, December 7th and Sunday, December 8th from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. On behalf of myself, Registrar/Curatorial Assistant Katherine McAtee, Museum Techs Mary Acclis, Christal Coleman, and Desa Letulle, we wish you a happy holiday!



Dining Room



Entrance Hall



Breakfast Room

XMAS TRADITIONS

Continued from page 1

among “lovely Beaumont homes well worth driving by for their Christmas message made evident in lights.” Mamie continued the practice in subsequent years.

One holiday icon, the Christmas tree, doesn’t appear much in McFaddin holiday records. Only two mentions of a tree are made in Mamie’s diary: in 1918, for Ida’s brother Jim Caldwell, his wife Merny and their children, and in 1922, for Mamie’s young cousins Teddy and Dabney Caldwell.

Eggnog, first mentioned in Mamie’s diary in 1916, became a part of the family’s gift-opening ritual on Christmas morning, even during Prohibition. Albertine Parker, wife of W.P.H. McFaddin’s chauffeur, Tom, recalled that Tom picked up the whiskey for the holiday eggnog from the local bootlegger.

Christmas shopping was an important ritual. In 1914, as a young single woman, Mamie didn’t begin until December 17, though the delay was pardonable due to an illness and her having been in two weddings. In 1915 and 1916, instead of shopping, she hand-stitched many of her Christmas gifts; her diary entry for Dec 14, 1916, read “Sewed & washed & ironed Xmas presents” before she wrapped them.

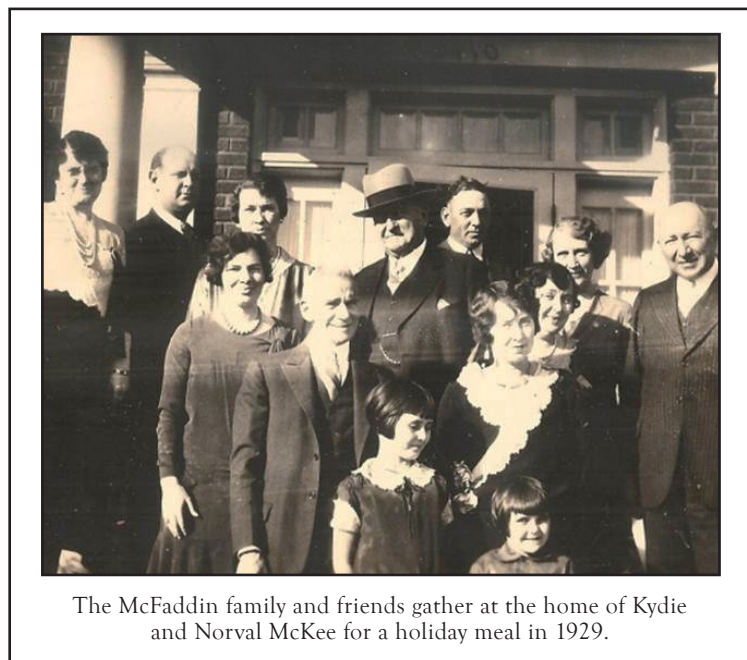
After Mamie’s marriage to Carroll Ward in 1919, she got more organized and usually began shopping around December 1. She needed to. Her long Christmas lists (and Ida’s) included not only family and friends but household and office staff and sales clerks in department stores. It was important to both women to remember everyone. Gifts were usually delivered on Christmas Eve by Mamie and a household employee, sometimes by employees alone.

Sending Christmas cards ranked right up there with giving gifts. Mamie’s diary first recorded her addressing cards on December 19, 1915. According to her niece Rosine McFaddin Wilson, Mamie “remembered an incredible number of people at Christmas with cards,” and the lists in the museum’s archives confirm that statement.

In most years, Ida and Mamie hosted Christmas dinner at their home, often two meals—one for the McFaddins and one for the Wards. The separation was not a problem of relationships but rather of logistics, since the dining room held only so many. These dinners underwent several changes. For a few Christmases in the 1930s and 1940s, Mamie was on her own, because Ida was in Huntington on family business. Mamie missed her mother terribly then. During World War II, with many household employees serving in the military or working in wartime industry, dinners were moved to the Beaumont Club or the Beaumont Country Club.

Even though they were well organized, Ida and Mamie were hard-pressed to get everything done around the holidays. In 1937, for example, in the days before Christmas, Mamie shopped for gifts, ordered and picked up flowers for the house and for family graves at Magnolia Cemetery, finished wrapping hers and Ida’s gifts, called to invite guests to a dance she was giving on December 29 to honor out-of-town guests, went to a charity ball, and attended a Christmas program at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church.

On December 24, she delivered flowers to the cemetery, put flowers, fruit, and candy around in the guest rooms, and with Ida’s help,



The McFaddin family and friends gather at the home of Kydie and Norval McKee for a holiday meal in 1929.

got out the china, crystal, silver, and linen for Christmas dinner. Fortunately, she had the able assistance of two household employees, Carrie and Joe, who put out the greenery, hung the wreaths, and delivered gifts.

Christmas Day (hot and sultry, according to the diary) was non-stop. Mamie and Carroll opened gifts, went to an eggnog party, then came back and served Christmas dinner (noon) to Perry and Caldwell’s families and her aunt, Ouida Watts. Then it was off to the movies and to a dance.

The pre-Christmas frenzy was one reason that Mamie and Ida generally held their big parties between Christmas and New Year’s, when the bustle and excitement of Christmas Day had subsided a bit. The day after Christmas in 1937, Mamie focused on preparations for her dance at the Beaumont Country Club. She also attended several other receptions and dances but was too tired to go to all of them. On December 29, the big day, Mamie wrote in her diary: “went to Country Club at 2:30 with Joe & Carrie; fixed flowers on

mantle, fixed two tables with our lace cloths and silver and red roses. Looked lovely.” Thank goodness, again, for Joe and Carrie.

That night, Mamie wore her red and gold dress. Her diary tells us: “Everyone had a good time.” Apparently so; she and Carroll didn’t get home ‘till 5:00 a.m., and she had blisters on her feet, partly from dancing the Big Apple, a trendy dance that originated in the African American community.

In December, 1941, World War II began for the U.S., and life changed for everyone. Holiday celebrations were overshadowed by uncertainty. In a letter to Mamie in 1943, Ida McFaddin voiced a universal sentiment: “I do hope we can spend a lovely, happy Christmas together, for God knows what another year may bring, and it is up to every one of us to make the very best of what we have, while we have it.” It’s a sentiment well worth remembering.

Though holiday celebrations have undergone many changes over the centuries, good wishes for the season are eternal. Have a wonderful Christmas!

Education

Learning for Life

By Jennifer Lowrance

Director of Educational Programming

Sowing seeds of kindness, homeschool students created sensory bags for the McFaddin-Ward House Museum for guests with sensory issues to use on tour. In honor of Johnny Appleseed's birthday in September, students learned by his example to spread kindness everywhere they go. Younger students studied the tall tale of Johnny Appleseed and made apple slice bird feeders and apple art. Our older students learned about John Chapman, the real man behind the tall tale and his mission to spread kindness and help others everywhere he went. We concluded our workshop with apple tasting and voting on the best tasting apple. Students could vote for: gala, red delicious, granny smith, or honey crisp. Can you believe that the granny smith apple won?

We were also excited to revive an important piece of adult programming with the return of our Craft & Share Workshops for Seniors, the first of which was held in late September. Attendees crafted a fall wreath and enjoyed refreshments and great conversation. Several had never tried their skills

at wreath-making and said they enjoyed the experience immensely, proving a love of learning knows no age!

With a full house, students welcomed Beaumont Mayor Roy West to talk about civic engagement at our October Homeschool Workshop. Mayor West encouraged students to look around their neighborhood to help others. He said his daily goal is to do something good for someone else. Mayor West challenged students to look for solutions when they see a problem in the community. Students also learned how the McFaddin family contributed civically and how contributing to our city benefits everyone.

Feeling festive, seniors enjoyed a very merry Holiday-inspired Craft & Share Workshop in November, taking home a pinecone bird feeder adorned with cranberries and rosemary freshly clipped from the MWH grounds. Participants also painted and decouped holiday-themed oyster shell trinket dishes. Cookies, coffee, and jolly conversation capped off the morning.

Just in time for Thanksgiving, students at our Oral History Interviewing

Workshop learned how to preserve their family history by conducting interviews. Students learned how to seek approval for interviews, ask open-ended questions, and the best ways to record and preserve the interview. Judy Linsley, MWH Historian, shared her wisdom as well as interesting stories she learned conducting interviews for the MWH archives and how these interviews contributed to our interpretation of the house.

Look for us next at the AMSET Tree Lighting, December 5! We will have a table set up with a holiday craft for kids of all ages. We will also have a merry time at Santa's Craft Workshop in the Visitor's Center during our annual Holiday Open House, December 7th and 8th. And capping off the year, we will host our final Homeschool Workshop, December 17. Reservations are required for this event.

If you are interested in participating in one of our Senior Workshops or would like to volunteer to assist with a field trip or Homeschool Workshop, please contact me at jlowrance@mc-faddin-ward.org or 409-832-1906 for more information.



Participants at the September Johnny Appleseed Homeschool Workshop enjoyed a variety of apple-themed activities.



Participants at the September Craft & Share Workshop for Seniors show the festive fall wreaths they created.

'Other Views'

Christmas Snippets

By Arlene Christiansen

Several years ago, a former Curator of Collections, Jessica Foy (Donnelly), proposed the idea of publishing a booklet with "Snippets" about Christmases in Beaumont in first half of the 20th century. Jessica was the second Curator of Collections, and she, along with other early staff members worked hard to amass our research files to be available for use in the future. They collected newspaper stories as well as oral histories from early Beaumonters, family members, and others that were associated with the McFaddins. It makes for some interesting tidbits.

These "Snippets" were taken from reminiscences of Beaumont residents and excerpts from Beaumont Newspapers from 1899-1949. I have been intrigued by them since they were first published so I thought I would share a few of them this Christmas to give a view of what Christmas was like in times past.

1899

"The sleigh bell drill given under the management of Mrs. Frank Andrews at the opera house last night was attended by a small but appreciative audience." (12/21/1899, Beaumont Enterprise)

1900-1909

"We hung our stockings on chairs because our house did not have a fireplace. Each of us had a stocking containing one apple, one orange, and nuts - pecans, English and black wal-

nuts, and Brazil nuts. We ate the pecans and English walnuts avidly, because they were so easy to get into, but saved the black walnuts (which we got only at Christmas) and the Brazil nuts until last because they were so hard to crack. Each stocking also contained small toys and a peppermint candy cane that stuck out the top." - Charlsie E. Berly

"All the men who were serving sentences of various lengths were liberated today and set on their way rejoicing that on Christmas day they were set at liberty and permitted to go without a day of return. There were about fifteen men in the convict crew representing the convictions for the past ten days and Captain Walsh will have to hustle a new crew when Christmas is over." (12/25/1903, Beaumont Journal)

"The most elaborate card party that this season has offered was one given by Mr. and Mrs. W.P.H. McFaddin last Friday night...Each score card was a hand painted Santa Claus to which a small sled was attached every time a game was won." (12/31/1905, Journal)

"The scene at Pearl and Bonham streets last night was one of great beauty. Szafir's was profusely decorated with bunting and a myriad of colored lights so disposed as to present a fairy scene in color and illumination. The Alamo block was beautifully illuminated by festoons of vari-colored electric globes and the splendid stores below were

ablaze with electric brilliance." (12/2/06, Enterprise)

"There was a notable absence of fireworks this Christmas eve and the tendency is undoubtedly to eliminate the fireworks as means of celebrating Christmas...It was in the main a sober, cheerful, contented and happy people who celebrated Christmas eve in Beaumont." (12/25/1908, Enterprise)

1910-1919

"In 1912 my parents went to New York and took me...We went to F.A.O. Schwartz and got electric lights for the tree; before that we had candles. My mother always said that we had the first electric tree lights in town." - Eleanor Wier Heartfield

"This morning Desk Sergeant Sheffield was kept busy answering calls from parties whose Christmas dinner had either walked or flown away. The first was from a lady...who had lost a fat turkey hen with one wing cropped. No information was given regarding which wing had been abbreviated, and it is presumed that a turkey minus either propeller will do." (12/23/1916, Journal)

"America today celebrated a victory Christmas. With the world at peace for the first Christmas since 1913 because of the victories of the military forces of the United States and the allies the American people appeared determined to make today's celebration memorable." (12/25/1918, Journal)

1920-1929

"Every year I had basically the same thing under the tree: a baseball, either a glove or a bat, and above all marbles. Marbles were my #1 present because I was a marbles champion. One of the marbles was always an agate (from Szafir's) that I used for a shooter." - C. L. Penetecost

"We didn't have lights on our Christmas tree until I was in the second grade. That Christmas morning our parents wouldn't let us out of bed until they were right ready, and we went in the living room and there were eight lights in a string on our tree. Six of them were plain colored bulbs, but one was a white Santa Claus and the other was a red cross. We used only that string until I grew up and left home." - William T. Faucett

"There's but one thing I can wish for you today. That's a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Lots to eat, lots to—but there's the Volstead Act (Prohibition)—so that's all." (12/24/1927, Journal)

1930-1939

"They always had a big Christmas parade downtown and Mrs. J. Frank Keith rode in her electric. Jane Luginbuhl led the parade because she was such a wonderful prancer."

- Marjery Adams Moorhouse

"My mother had a boarding house and on Christmas fed our family and the people at the boarding house who couldn't afford to go home. We had turkey and dressing and

all the fixings and afterward we sat around and listened to the radio. There were Christmas music and programs, and Roosevelt gave his fireside chat where he told us everything was going to get better. We cut a tree and gave each other little gifts—if you spent \$2.98 you had really done something special.” — Sue Buck Boyt

“Beaumont’s most prominent Christmas decoration, an Easter star some 10 feet high, appeared atop the Edson hotel on Tuesday night to greet all comers to the city approaching from the west.” (12/19/1934, Journal)

“The New Deal supplied the financial wherewithal for much of today’s Christmas cheer. Families in an estimated 3,500,000 homes across the country were eating dinners paid for by wages from the \$4,000,000,000 work-re-

lief program. Some 1,000,000 children were playing with toys made by relief workers and distributed free-of-charge by the government to other needy.” (12/25/1935, Journal)

1940-1949

“During World War II the main difference was that we didn’t have firecrackers. Also, the sugar rationing made Christmas candy in short supply. My mother and my Aunt Nena made candy out of cane syrup.” — John H. Walker

“Being cut off from Japan and Germany nearly cut off our Christmas decorations; lights and tinsel were usually made in Japan, and the pretty delicate blown glass ornaments came from Germany. We had a string of lights that looked like little Japanese lanterns; if one burned out, all burned out. We didn’t even have tinsel. My mother bought some during

the war, but it wasn’t nearly as pretty as the pre-war tinsel. I always felt that Japan stole Christmas from us.” — Mildred Powell Hall

“Harking to the mauve decade when social entertaining was on an elaborate scale, when Sunday afternoon at homes were part of every representative family, and when the genteel art of hostessing was in the curricula [of] every well-ordered lady’s life, was the reception held Sunday afternoon in the W.P.H. McFaddin home...” (12/30/1940, Journal)

“If it has feathers and if it can cackle, gobble, quack, or honk, it had better stay away from poultry hungry Beaumont until the holidays are over; a poultry dealer said Sunday. ‘I have never seen such a healthy demand, healthy for the people and unhealthy for the poultry.’” (12/22/1947, Journal)

“By the end of the week, there shouldn’t be a 50-cent article left in town. Authority for this statement is one of the society editors...and she says every club and Sunday School class in town has set a 50-cent limit on the gifts to be exchanged at the Christmas trees.” (12/21/1949, Journal)

I picked an overview from the Snippets that we have in our research materials. Times were much simpler back then; children were happy to get an apple or an orange and maybe some marbles or a doll for Christmas. The important thing was to spend time with family and just enjoy the holiday.

I just love the newspaper articles; some were written formally, and others were just funny. I enjoyed putting these together, and I hope you have enjoyed reading them. I wish you and yours Happy Holidays!

Public Programming Perspectives

By Bel Morian

Docent Trip Highlights:

This October, the McFaddin-Ward House docents enjoyed a trip to Galveston to visit historic sites and share a weekend together.

The group made special memories staying in the Grand Galvez Hotel—Queen of the Gulf, touring the Moody Mansion and the Bryan Museum and exploring the Historic Strand District.



McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS



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(409) 832-1906: Office
(409) 832-2134: Visitor Center
www.mcfaddin-ward.org

The
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Upcoming Lectures & Events

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

Holiday Open House Weekend | Saturday Event
Begin at the Visitor Center

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

Holiday Open House Weekend | Sunday Event
Begin at the Visitor Center

Thursday, January 16
6:30 p.m.

Lecture featuring Anita McBride, Author
“First Ladies Impact and Legacies”
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Thursday, February 20
6:30 p.m.

Lecture featuring Danny Michael, Cody Firearms Museum
“History With A Bang: Firearms of America From the Well-Known to the Where’d It Come From?”
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Thursday, February 20
TBD

Firearms Clinic with Danny Michael, Cody Firearms Museum
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Sunday, March 2
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

SOAR Family Day 2025
McFaddin-Ward House Lawn

Saturday, March 8, 15, 22 & 29
Normal Tour Hours

SOAR Saturdays: Live Piano Music During Tours
McFaddin-Ward House

Saturday, March 8, 15 & 22
TBD

SOAR Ceramics: China Painting Classes
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Friday, March 28
6 p.m. gates/6:30 p.m. music

Music at the McFaddins’ featuring String Benders
East Lawn

Thursday, April 10
6:30 p.m.

Lecture featuring Robert Wittman, Retired FBI and Author
“Rembrandt or Rem-Burned: The 3 F’s of Art Crime: Frauds, Forgeries, and Fakes”
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Thursday, May 8
6:30 p.m.

Lecture featuring Matt Anderson, Henry Ford Museum
“Wheels of Progress: How Detroit and Ford Motor Company Put the World on Wheels”
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

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.

