



March 2025
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McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

Beaumont, a Real Party Town

By Judy Linsley

In a 1974 interview, Mamie McFaddin Ward told Beaumont Enterprise reporter June Smith: "Beaumont, I believe, had more parties than any place I've ever been in my life. And lovely parties. The Beaumont people entertained perfectly beautifully."

She recalled a world of "parties, dances and visitors" in her youth, recalling fond memories of her "wonderful childhood and...girlhood." "We danced all summer long," she remembered, and "Sometimes we'd go to Port Arthur to dances." Members of local social clubs, such as the Elks Club and the Neches Club, frequently held dances, and Mamie saved many of the engraved invitations in her scrapbooks.

Nearly any occasion—holidays, birthdays, parties for out-of-town visitors—warranted a celebration. Card clubs, sewing clubs, and reading clubs hosted luncheons and teas. Parents threw birthday, Halloween, Valentine or Easter parties for young children; as those children entered their late teens, the parents gave them "house parties." Daughters invited out-of-town girl friends to spend several days with the family. During their stay, they were honored with numerous social activities to which local young men were also invited. The object

of the house party, in addition to enhancing social skills, was to foster relationships that might later end in suitable marriages.

Mamie had at least two house parties, one in 1910 and 1911. In 1911, according to the Beaumont Enterprise, her guests arrived by train on Wednesday and Thursday from Brenham, Bryan, Waco, Houston, Dublin, and Allan's Farm. She welcomed them with an "informal reception" on Thursday evening. Friday was a dance at the Neches Club, and

on Saturday her parents gave a "motor party," all driving to Roll-over on Bolivar Peninsula.

The McFaddin family's move to 1906 McFaddin Avenue in 1907 provided a spacious venue for entertainment as well as ample sleeping room for house party guests or visiting family or friends. Mamie recalled that, "We had visitors all the time, the house was just filled with visitors....There was always room for one more. My brothers had guests whenever they wanted

them, to spend the day and night, and so did I."

From Mamie's youthful perspective, life might have indeed been fun and lighthearted. For her mother, Ida Caldwell McFaddin, entertaining was serious business—an extension of hospitality, a deeply ingrained social obligation. As a prominent Beaumont society matron, she was expected to plan and successfully execute social events, whether for Beaumont society, charity, or to further her own



Mamie McFaddin (front row, left center) sits with friends at a luncheon at the McFaddin-Ward House, 1910.



Board Vice President Lane Wilson, Former Executive Director Tony Chauveaux and Board President Leslie Wilson

Dear Friends-

We bid farewell to Tony Chauveaux as Executive Director. He was contacted by President Trump Transition Organization requesting that he assist with one of the cultural agencies – the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). With his departure, Leslie and Lane Wilson agreed to jointly serve as Acting Director, providing leadership and serving as a placeholder until a new director was identified.

The Board of Directors wants to recognize the incredible vision and leadership that Tony provided during his tenure. While most would shy away from tackling the hard and most often considered overwhelming jobs, Tony stepped up with vigor and strength. He started in the gardens by reimagining the original landscape designer Neil Odenwald's plot plan by adding an accessible sidewalk surrounding the gardens, building the side patio which we enjoy every outdoor event and a redesign of the kitchen garden with the Magnolia Garden Club.

He orchestrated the needed rewiring of every fixture and interior wall to replace the original knob and tube to ensure our electrical demands would be safe for the future. He envisioned and encouraged the design of the beautiful ADA ramp that provides access for the curatorial teams and guests and installed the hurricane-proof coverings over every window. Our security also now includes state of the art equipment for protection.

He has surpassed the AAM Standard and positioned us to thrive under the leadership of our new director. We are ready for our next chapter- and wish you well on yours!

Thank you from all of us at the museum-

Leslie Wilson, President
McFaddin-Ward House Museum
Board of Directors

Director's Desk



Welcome New McFaddin-Ward House Executive Director Jeffrey Richardson

Dear Friends,

Being named the next executive director of the McFaddin-Ward House is an honor. I look forward to working with the talented staff and dedicated board as we build upon past success to enhance the reputation and outreach of this remarkable institution. In a biographical sketch published in 1902, W.P.H. McFaddin was said to have "done much to endear himself to his fellow-citizens, and is deserving of all the great fortune he has acquired, because it was all honestly earned." I too hope to endear myself to the Beaumont community through hard work, transparency, and open-mindedness.

Passionate about all aspects of history and preservation, an internship at a museum started me on a journey that has taken me across the country, to cities big and small, from regional history museums and historic houses to Native cultural centers and public gardens. The thematic and interpretive diversity of these organizations has given me in-

sight and a unique skill set that I will use to promote the McFaddin-Ward House's mission, internally and externally.

My career began as the curator of Western history, popular culture, and firearms at the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles. I later served as the curator of exhibits for the municipal museum system in Farmington, New Mexico. Wanting to play a larger role within an organization, I became the director of operations at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History outside Atlanta. Most recently, as director of operations at Historic Columbia in South Carolina, I managed daily activities across six historic buildings, including a National Historic Landmark, and 14 acres of manicured landscapes.

Throughout my career, I have worked on diverse topics across various mediums. Notable exhibitions include "Cowboys and Presidents" (an exploration of cowboy iconography in presidential politics), "Route 66: The Road

and the Romance” (a history of America’s famed highway in fact and fiction), and “The Balance of Power on the American Frontier” (an overview of repeating firearms and their impact as demonstrated in 1844 at the Battle of Walker’s Creek in Texas). I published two books, *Colt: The Revolver of the American West* and *Howard Hughes and the Creation of Modern Hollywood*, and appeared as an expert commentator on over a dozen television programs, such as *Mysteries at the Museum*, *Pawn Stars*, *Storage Wars*, and *History Detectives*. I also conceived and hosted programs and events, including a

film series that has been ongoing for 15 years.

I am excited to use my professional experience to lead this dynamic organization. Working together, we can strategically expand the McFaddin-Ward House’s role and impact in the community and across the region. Again, it is an honor to be named the executive director.

Rest assured, this will be the last time I spend so much time talking about myself! I am but one member of an extraordinary team dedicated to preserving this remarkable house and connecting with all the people

associated with it, including you and your family. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible over the next few months, hopefully at one of the many SOAR events taking place throughout March.

Thank you (in advance) for everything.

Jeffrey Richardson
Executive Director

Curator's Corner

Year of Entertainment Begins

By Victoria Tamez
Curator of Collections

The McFaddin-Ward House welcomes spring early with our newly installed Spring 2025 Interim Installation. Our theme for this year is entertainment, so this topic will be the inspiration for our next set of installations. The base for our spring interpretation revolves around the idea of Mamie getting ready in her room to go out to

the movies with her friends. Based on our earliest set of Mamie’s diary entries from 1913, she mentions going to the “picture show” with a couple of her friends. Throughout the year, she goes to the movies with friends and family quite often. When looking through these entries, we noticed that she shifted to using the word “movies” about halfway through the year. She

only mentions one movie by name that she watched, *Quo Vadis*, for that year, but other movies released in 1913 include *Suspense*, *The Lady and the Mouse*, and *The Student of Prague*.

Downstairs, bright colors and floral patterns meant to evoke thoughts of spring fill our spaces to bring spring to our lovely home. Fewer place settings and utensils along with smaller tables highlight a more casual and intimate atmosphere. The Dining Room table is set with green-rimmed floral plates with floral patterned silverware and a floral tablecloth with matching napkins. The Breakfast Room table is set with a colorful floral tablecloth and matching napkins with a muted colored plate and multi-colored glassware. Be on the lookout for one of our favorite pieces, a glass in the shape of an orange with a leaf-shaped saucer and

opaque glass straw in the Sun Porch.

Currently, the team is working on a small exhibit inspired by our upcoming SOAR event. We have scoured the reserve collection for pieces with butterfly details to match our butterfly themed event. These pieces will be installed in the front case at our Visitor Center by March 2nd for SOAR. Come on by and take a look at a variety of pieces of variable uses with their butterfly details. There may even be a few surprises among them!



The Pink Bedroom Installation for Spring 2025 revolves around Mamie getting ready to go out with friends.



Orange-shaped glass with leaf-shaped saucer

PARTY

Continued from page 1



Mamie McFaddin (in the back window) and friends pile into Ida McFaddin's electric car at Mamie's 1910 house party.

children's entries into society.

Fortunately, Ida was very organized and enjoyed planning functions. Her granddaughter, Rosine McFaddin Wilson, described her parties as "memorable." "She loved to plan the decorations, often around a theme," she recalled. "Her large home lent itself well to the elaborate parties with flowers everywhere, and delicious food, served in two dining rooms, waiters at every elbow. [Ida] used her own silver, china, glassware, and linens, since she had several sets of each, and numerous trays and dishes."

Mamie recalled her mother's "card parties of 35 tables" on the front porch. "One spring...

we had trellises all around with roses growing up the trellis on the porch and the covers of the tables were all made to match the setting." Another time, table covers "were white with Mother's monogram in yellow."

While Ida held some dances on the porch at the McFaddin home, she also used the private club rooms in town. In November, 1910 she hosted a dance at the Neches Club honoring two of Mamie's friends, Signora Wiess and Tassie Polk. Mamie wasn't even there, being off at school at Gunston Hall in Washington, D.C. Ida was very generous with the use of her house, however. The

newspaper mentioned that she and W.P.H. held an "enviable position in the realm of first-class entertainers" and praised her "ever-resourceful methods of achieving artistic effects," before launching into an elaborate description of the decorations:

Tall crystal vases held immense clusters of queen chrysanthemums.... From the ceiling of the dancing hall were suspended festoons of moss, and the chandeliers were twined with ivy and wild bamboo...The programs were daintily done in white and gold. [In the dining room] massive brass brackets held all manner of fruit, and silver dishes filled with confections were placed about the oblong reflectors, each table lighted with tapers mounted in candelabra of yellow chrysanthemums.

Even allowing for the usual society reporter's hyperbole, the decorations must have been impressive. The food was also out of the ordinary. While Mamie remembered sandwiches and punch being the usual refreshment at dances in her youth, the above event featured a "buffet luncheon... served during the dancing hours and the finale." Buffets were still a relatively new way to serve guests. In the early 1900s, Beaumont had no professional caterer, so this was

quite a feat. The food would have been prepared by domestic staff or by private groups, such as the St. Mark's Episcopal Church Guild.

Music was live, of course; "Victrola" and other record players were still unamplified. For formal balls, string ensembles played dignified music, while for less formal gatherings, African American musicians were able to provide the latest Ragtime tunes, doubtless to the dismay of the older generation.

To pull together the separate components of décor, food, and music for a successful dance required yet another of Ida's skills: finding the best people to help her. This included her excellent household staff, professional florists and musicians, and even her Guild friends, who frequently prepared food for social events. She knew who she could call on for optimum service.

In her 1974 interview, Mamie concluded, "I don't think the young people [today] have as good a time as we had." Entertainment, like other pleasures, often lies in the eyes of the beholder, but it does seem as if Mamie's generation had a generous share of fun.



Mamie and Ida McFaddin (third and fifth from left) line up with Mamie's guests at her 1910 house party.

Education

Education Department Happenings

By Jennifer Lowrance

Director of Educational Programming

We were busy elves in December during our annual Holiday Open House. The rain didn't slow us down. We provided vintage-inspired Christmas tree ornaments as well as wooden beaded snowmen ornaments for children in Santa's Craft workshop during the two-night event.



Children enjoy activities at Santa's Craft Workshop.

January is a wonderful opportunity to set new goals and prepare for programming in the new year. We are off to a great start and a busy spring season!

February has been a great month for our educational programming. Our homeschool community took advantage of our hand-stitched embroidery workshop taught by local artisan, Allison Cribbs, of HollynGraceCo., where they learned basic stitches such as the back stitch, satin stitch and chain stitch. They also created a classic valentine using lacing techniques and crochet yarn.

Our Senior Craft and Share Workshop was another success. Floral De-



February Homeschool Workshop participants made handcrafted Valentines and learned basic embroidery stitches.

signer Casey Winslow, of Fig & Ivy, volunteered her time with us teaching the basics to floral design. She also shared great tips such as how to keep your tulips from falling over—stick a straight pin just between the bloom and the stem to open up more opportunity for water to reach the bloom and strengthen the flower! Our Seniors had a lovely time creating their original arrangements using Alstroemeria, lavender Spider Mums, purple Waxflower, Hypnosis Carnations, and Variegated Pittosporum. Variegated Pittosporum is found readily in our

landscaping. Casey encouraged our Seniors to not be afraid to use clippings from their own yard! Our next Homeschool and Senior Workshops are in April! Look for registration on Facebook or www.mcfaddin-ward.org.

That floral design Senior Craft workshop really got us in the mood for spring! And what better way to kick off the season than with SOAR! Last year was such a success with our six educational craft and activity tables that we have added three more this year! In addition to several local groups like Moore Honey, Master Nat-

uralists, and Beaumont Botanical Gardens, there will be live music, food trucks, and a beautiful butterfly art installation in the garden! Make plans now to join us Sunday, Mar. 2 at SOAR Family Day from 11AM - 3PM!

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@mcfaddin-ward.org or 409-832-1906 for more information.



Seniors learn basics of floral design at February Craft & Share Workshop.

'Other Views'

Florence Stratton aka Susie Spindletop



Florence Stratton poses by a sign for the town of Florence along the Beaumont, Sour Lake and Western Railroad, 1907.

By Arlene Christiansen

Across McFaddin Avenue from the McFaddin-Ward House, next to the Visitor Center, stands a brick house that looks like a New England cottage. It should, because 1929 McFaddin was once the home of Florence Stratton, who built it in 1929, using the plans from a home she had admired in Maine. The bricks used in the construction of the home were local, taken from the 1892 Jefferson County courthouse.

Florence Stratton was a writer, historian, editor, folklorist, journalist, educator, and socialite. She was born in Brazoria County, TX, on March 21, 1881, but grew up in Montgomery, Alabama. She graduated in 1900 as valedictorian from Troy Formal College in Troy, Alabama.

In 1903 Florence came to Beaumont to teach, and in 1907 she became a reporter for the *Beaumont Daily Journal*, beginning a 31-year career as a newspaper woman. In 1914 she became the *Journal's* society editor, and in 1916 its city editor, continuing work as a reporter. During this time, she also founded two philanthropic organizations: The Milk and Ice Fund, which assisted needy families

with food, and The Empty Stocking Fund, which assisted families with presents during the holidays. The Empty Stocking Fund is still active through the *Beaumont Enterprise*, collaborating with the Southeast Texas Food Bank to provide food and gifts to low-income families.

In 1920, Texas Governor W. P. Hobby, owner of the *Beaumont Enterprise*, bought out the *Beaumont Journal* and hired Florence as society, food, and garden editor, and occasional music editor. Florence was already close friends with Governor Hobby's wife, Willie Cooper Hobby.

In addition to her newspaper work, she wrote or edited five books. *The Story of Beaumont*, published in 1925, was the first book-length history of the city and made her the town's first official historian. Another book, a fictionalized collection of Hasinai folklore titled *When the Storm God Rides: Tejas and Other Indian Legends*, was compiled by naturalist Bessie M. Reid and retold by Florence. It was later used by the Texas Textbook Commission as a school reader.

In 1926 Florence began writing the popular "Susie Spindletop's Weekly Letter" cov-

ering many topics, including society gossip, entertainment, movies, and local events in Beaumont. The feature was published in the *Sunday Enterprise* for twelve years. During that time, Florence's neighbors, the McFaddins and Wards, had also become her friends, and the family made occasional appearances in Susie's newspaper "letters" to her fictional friend, Della.

Who remembers when Calder Avenue ended at the East Texas railroad at a large gate entering the William McFaddin homestead?... There was a rope to pull that opened the gate and when you passed through you pulled another rope that shut the gate. Within the enclosure roamed 20 tame deer.

When W.P.H. McFaddin died in 1935, "Susie" wrote an affectionate tribute, describing him as someone who would "rather ride between a herd of lowing longhorns than eat;" "an outstanding figure" and "a man who lived his own life." Mamie saved that newspaper clipping in a scrapbook.

Florence Stratton died on January 28, 1938, from surgical complications after a stroke. Mamie McFaddin Ward wrote in her diary that she died in New Orleans after an operation "for high blood pressure—something new," apparently referring to a new medical procedure. The next day Mamie and Ida went to Florence's house to pay their respects.

Florence's funeral was held at her home, with more than 200 guests in attendance, including prominent Beaumonters and those who had worked with her at the newspaper. Calls and telegrams came from all around the country. Even though it was January, the *Enterprise* reported that her home was filled with flowers from people "all over Texas." The casket cover was a "gorgeous blanket of white carnations" from her fellow newspaper employees. Even at her desk at the *Enterprise*, "several red camellias lay on her stilled typewriter." The procession of cars from her home to Magnolia cemetery, escorted by motorcycle police, was more than a mile long.

Congratulations

2025 Volunteer Service Award Recipients

We are honored to recognize our very deserving 2024 Volunteer Service Award recipients: Nat Hallmark, VIP (Volunteer Innovation Personified) Award; Jerry Melancon, 500 Hours of Service Award; Kent Hartel, 125 Hours of Service Award; and Laurel Lancaster (not pictured), 125 Hours of Service Award.

The annual VIP Award is our most prestigious award and is presented to a volunteer who loves their role, enjoys interaction and welcoming visitors and conducts volunteer activities at the museum with a positive, supportive attitude. A museum Docent for more than 20 years, Nat Hallmark truly embodies the essence of this award, and it is our sincere honor and privilege to recognize her incredible service and commitment!

We are also delighted to celebrate the key milestones reached by this year's Service Hour Award Recipients, Jerry Melancon, Kent Hartel and Laurel Lancaster!

Our Docents are an invaluable part of our team, and we could not do what we do at the McFaddin-Ward House without them.

We are so very grateful to this year's award recipients, and our entire team of Docents, for their continued commitment to sharing their love and knowledge of the McFaddin-Ward House!



Board President Leslie Wilson presents Jerry Melancon with the 500 Hours of Service Award.



Board President Leslie Wilson presents Nat Hallmark with the VIP (Volunteer Innovation Personified) Award.



Board President Leslie Wilson presents Kent Hartel with the 125 Hours of Service Award.

McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS



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www.mcfaddin-ward.org

The
McFADDIN-WARD
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Upcoming Lectures & Events

March 1-31

SOAR Community Art Project "Mac the Caterpillar"
Visitor Center

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

SOAR Family Day 2025
McFaddin-Ward House Lawn

Saturday, March 8, 15 & 22
Normal Tour Hours

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

Saturday, March 8, 15 & 22

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 *The Stringbenders*
McFaddin-Ward House East Lawn

Thursday, April 10
6 p.m. doors/6:30 p.m. lecture

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 p.m. doors/6:30 p.m. lecture

Lecture featuring Matt Anderson, Henry Ford Museum
"Wheels of Progress: How Detroit and Ford Motor Company Put the World on Wheels"
-and- Classic Car Exhibition
Visitor Center Lecture Hall

Spring Lecture Series generously supported by Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

JOIN IN:

The McFaddin-Ward House is actively recruiting Docents and volunteers in several different museum areas.

Please call 409-832-2134 or email visitorcenter@mcfaddin-ward.org for information.

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.

