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McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

McFaddins' Fun on River and Beach



Ida and W.P.H. McFaddin, fourth and third from left, pose on the *John Henry Kirby* during the excursion party they gave for Ida's sister Ouida, second from left, and their school friend Minnie Burke Curley, fifth from left, in 1907. The small boy to the right is Caldwell McFaddin, Ida and W.P.H.'s youngest child.

By **Judy Linsley**
Research Assistant

As summer ramps up, southeast Texans head for the water. They always have. Given Beaumont's location on the Neches River, less than 40 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, water is a natural, convenient source of entertainment. The McFaddin family took full advantage of this resource, as evidenced in documents and photographs in the museum's archives.

Steamboat excursions were especially popular in the early 1900s. Ida and W.P.H. McFaddin hosted a 1907 river cruise on a steamboat owned by lum-

ber baron John Henry Kirby. A visit from Ida's sister Ouida and her school friend, Minnie Burke Curley, provided an excuse for the event. On another occasion the McFaddins treated "Curley," as they called her, a frequent visitor to the family, to a "moonlight ride on the river" on the launch *Walkover*. According to the *Beaumont Enterprise*, "The revelers made merry with bright and sparkling wit furnished by the gay coterie which Mrs. McFaddin had assembled around her."

Recreation on, rather than

in, the water was probably more the norm for Victorian-era women. Swimming wasn't considered necessary or even proper for females. Most simply dipped themselves in the water for perceived health benefits—hence the early term "bathing suits" rather than "swimsuits." Ida appears in a circa 1898 photo in garb that would be very cumbersome for swimming—especially when she was wearing her ever-present corset.

About 1913, Ida's daughter Mamie McFaddin began going

out with Carroll Ward, her future husband. Athlete that he was, he enjoyed activities both in and on the water. Mamie recorded in her diary going with Carroll and friends to Village Creek to swim, though she doesn't say whether she went in or not. She recalled in an oral interview that the young men had parties on "an old houseboat" that had once been used at the "fur camp" on the McFaddin ranch but was subsequently brought to Beaumont. An African American band furnished the music. "We'd dance on the boat and

Director's Desk



Hundreds of attendees enjoyed the festive spring activities at the museum's third annual SOAR Family Day in March.

Dear Friends,

It has been a pleasure meeting many of you at onsite events and local civic engagements around town. I am proud to introduce myself as the executive director of the McFaddin-Ward House Museum, and it is gratifying to hear how positively the community speaks of our organization. People typically mention how beautiful the house is and how fortunate we are to have such a site in Beaumont. When I inquire further about their experience, many admit it has been several years since they last visited, a disappointing but not necessarily surprising comment.

Survey data from the American Alliance of Museums provides additional context. According to the "2024 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers," historic sites and historic museums like ours have a lower rate of repeat visitation than other museum types. While the data does not specifically address why, respondents noted that interest,

learning, and fun motivated them to visit, while seeing new things, specific interests, and social time are the leading factors that inspire them to return.

At the McFaddin-Ward House Museum, we strive to provide exactly those incentives. We host a diverse lineup of programs, with recent events ranging from SOAR Family Day and the Lecture Series to the Homeschool Workshop and Museum in a Box. We regularly update exhibitions in the main house and the Visitor Center, and our grounds offer seasonal beauty year-round. We actively post additional content on social media, from artifact spotlights to behind-the-scenes videos, to spur further interest and engagement. Most importantly, our guided and self-guided tours are always free.

While we offer something for just about everyone, regardless of age or demographics, we cannot assume that means we are doing everything possible to serve the local community and encourage repeat visitation. To

that end, I pose a simple yet loaded question: What brings you back to the McFaddin-Ward House Museum? It is wonderful to hear what we are doing right, but it is equally important to know the areas in which we can grow or improve. If there is a program or interpretive agenda you would like us to explore, please let us know.

As the McFaddin-Ward House Museum embarks on a new chapter, we want to make sure we are asking the right questions and listening intently to the answers. We await your reply and look forward to seeing you again (and again and again...)

Jeffrey Richardson
Executive Director

Curator's Corner

A Dish of Creativity



The new Visitor Center exhibition showcases a variety of colorful tableware pieces from the collection.

By Victoria Tamez
Curator of Collections

The act of entertaining guests is long thought to be an art form. Ida and Mamie McFaddin were proven artists in this respect. Social occasions of their time included luncheons, bridge parties, teas, receptions, and balls. All were designed to entertain and impress. News coverage from papers, such as the *Beaumont Journal* and the *Beaumont Enterprise*, included terms such as

“elegance,” “fashionable,” and “successful” when discussing these occasions. Various moving parts made up these gatherings, from staffing and guests to food and decorations, and each piece had to be perfect. One seemingly small piece that made up certain events was tableware.

Tableware includes flatware, dishware, and glassware intended for use on the table, as the name implies. While utilitarian, they were also decorative. Dishware

provides one of the larger canvases for this decoration to present itself. Events such as formal dinners had tamer dishware that fit the severity of the event. A luncheon, however, provided a space for creativity, fashion, and whimsy. Dishware and tableware in general could be as creative as the hostess saw fit. The luncheon, although a formal lunch, was not as strict as a dinner and could provide a less constrictive space for more

decorative pieces.

For this spring season, we have pulled a variety of tableware pieces for our newest Visitor Center exhibition. The objects pulled for this exhibition contain bright colors and floral accents that inspire thoughts of spring. Ida and Mamie were collectors of items that caught their eye, and their creativity and whimsy can be seen in their colorful dishware.

Come by and see our newest exhibition!



A luncheon plate, circa 1940, made by Wedgwood in the Fairford pattern featuring a turquoise laurel.



A demitasse cup, circa 1940, that was typically used for serving espresso or other strong, black coffees.

RIVER

Continued from page 1

have something to eat, go down the river late in the afternoon, then come back at night by moonlight. It was lovely.”

With so many natural bodies of water around, there shouldn't have been much demand for man-made swimming facilities, or “natatoriums,” as they were called then. However, Mamie recalled in an oral interview that both Beaumont and Port Arthur had one in the 1910s.

Bolivar Peninsula, on the Gulf, was known to Beaumonters as “the beach.” (Ida, from West Virginia, called it “the coast.”) Those who could afford to bought or rented a beach house and escaped Beaumont's summer heat in the cool Gulf breezes. In early years, the family went by train and stayed at the Rollover Hotel; in 1910, Ida hosted a house party for Mamie there. Photographs show young men performing track and field events on the beach, while young women in white dresses watch them from under canopies that protect them from the sun.

In 1915, Ida and W.P.H. bought a house at Caplen, just in time for the infamous hurricane of that year to wash it away along with other structures on the Peninsula. In 1930, Ida decided to build three beach houses at Caplen, one for her and Mamie and one for each of her

sons, Perry Jr. and Caldwell. The compound also included a house for employees and a four-car garage.

The McFaddins were among a number of Beaumont families who fled to the beach for the summer, forming a colony of Beaumonters. Caldwell McFaddin's family usually spent the entire summer there, from June 1 until Labor Day, “probably the most permanent summer residents,” as Caldwell's daughter, Rosine McFaddin Wilson, recalled. Neither Ida nor Mamie, nor Perry Jr. and his family, stayed the full summer, with Ida and Mamie usually coming down for short stays in July and August. By then, W.P.H. McFaddin was in failing health (he died in 1935); Perry and Caldwell McFaddin and Carroll Ward went back and forth as their work schedules permitted.

McFaddin family members came to Caplen not only to enjoy the cool but also to relax. The men swam, fished, boated, and sailed, while the women joined in some of these activities but also enjoyed luncheons, visiting, and going to Galveston. When not in the water or on the beach, McFaddin children stayed in the cool shade of the house, worked jigsaw puzzles, and played endless card and board games, like *Monopoly* and *Parcheesi*. Older children got an



Mamie McFaddin Ward, circa 1919, in full bathing gear at the beach.

exciting taste of the future by eavesdropping on the adults' functions. From her upstairs bedroom in the house next door, Rosine McFaddin Wilson watched Ida and Mamie's cocktail parties, later recalling, “The buzz of voices, the waiters passing canapés, the lights glowing, the laughter. Oh, to be grown up!”

In some ways, beach life in the 1930s was like going back in time. A gasoline generator provided limited electricity for lighting. There were two cisterns, one filled with rainwater and the other filled by pump from a well. The maids ironed with “flat irons” heated on a charcoal brazier. The daily train that ran the length of the Peninsula to Galveston brought supplies, mail, and 100-pound blocks of ice to chop up and put in residents' ice boxes. A small community of year-round residents operated a few stores and rental cabins. Caplen's only telephone was located in a store next to the train station. A “vegetable man” brought fresh produce.

One convenience that the summer crowd did not forgo, however, was the household employees, whom employers depended on heavily to keep daily life at the beach running smoothly, just as they did in

Beaumont. While the work schedule was similar to that in Beaumont, employees benefited some from the more relaxed lifestyle, described by one as being like a “little vacation.”

The McFaddins' beach world gradually faded, as adults aged and children grew up. In 1943, a storm took Perry Jr.'s house; in 1961, Hurricane Carla took the remaining structures and everything in them. The families didn't rebuild.

Of Ida and W.P.H. McFaddin's children, Caldwell, the youngest, probably enjoyed the water the most. “He always had a boat,” his daughter Rosine recalled. He started with a small motor boat and gradually worked up to a 35-foot cruiser named *Romeda* (an anagram of his three older children's names, ROsine, JaMEs, and IDA), which he used both on the river and at the beach. It was on the *Romeda* in 1947 that Caldwell, *Beaumont Enterprise* editor T.T. Hunt, and Chamber of Commerce officer Clarence DeBusk pitched the idea of the Neches River Festival (NRF), to celebrate the river and also showcase Beaumont business and industry. It was a fitting honor for the resource that gave life and enjoyment to a city; some 78 years later, the NRF is still going strong.



This photo was taken of Rollover (near Caplen) on Bolivar Peninsula as the 1915 storm approached.

Education

Department Happenings

By Jennifer Lowrance

Director of Educational Programming

The vision of the McFaddin-Ward House Museum is to encourage life-long learning, inspire an appreciation for the past, and encourage commitment for future civic engagement. The Education Department is key to achieving those goals. Three homeschool groups enjoyed tours and activities in April, and during the month of May, we reached over 1,200 students on-site and through our Museum in a Box program! This included over 500 seventh graders from Beaumont Independent School District who toured the house and Carriage House on field trips. Students also completed a curriculum packet that taught about the history of Beaumont and the McFaddin family's contributions to the region.

During our Museum in a Box program at Hamshire-Fannett Elementary, 175 third-grade students and their teachers learned about civic engagement via the McFaddin-Ward family. Students were taught about Mamie McFaddin Ward co-founding the Magnolia Garden Club and some of the organization's recent contributions to Beaumont. As part of the conser-

vation-themed lesson, students made wildflower seed bombs and painted garden rocks. They also visited an educational table with school supplies and popular toys from 1900 to 1950, where students learned to play Jacks. Teachers received a lesson plan aligned with third-grade TEKS for Science and Social Studies to incorporate into their classrooms.

Programmatically, homeschoolers enjoyed a beautiful spring morning at our Victorian Era Etiquette Workshop on the McFaddin-Ward House porch. Participants, some of whom were dressed in Victorian attire, learned and practiced their newly acquired skills.

Coming up in June, we are dipping our toes in the saltwater and painting seashells at our Craft & Share Workshop for Seniors on June 3. Adults will use cerulean blue acrylic paint to outline the natural beauty of the seashells to create charming conversational pieces for summer. We are also tipping our cowboy hats to Ranching Round-up Summer Camp, taking place from June 10 to 12,

where kids will enjoy a full range of activities.

The Education Department will cap off the summer with a Teacher Appreciation Happy Hour on July 31, where the McFaddin-Ward House Museum will thank area teachers as we share information about field trip opportunities and the Museum in a Box program.

Finally, three individuals completed docent training this spring. We are happy to welcome Peggy Fletcher, Judy Williamson, and Renee Turk! If you are interested in volunteering or becoming a docent, please contact Jennifer Lowrance at jlowrance@mc-faddin-ward.org or 409-832-1906.



This spring, over 500 BISD seventh graders took field trips to the McFaddin-Ward House.



Hamshire-Fannett third graders learn to play Jacks during a Museum in a Box lesson.



Homeschoolers enjoy the Victorian Era Etiquette Workshop.

'Other Views'

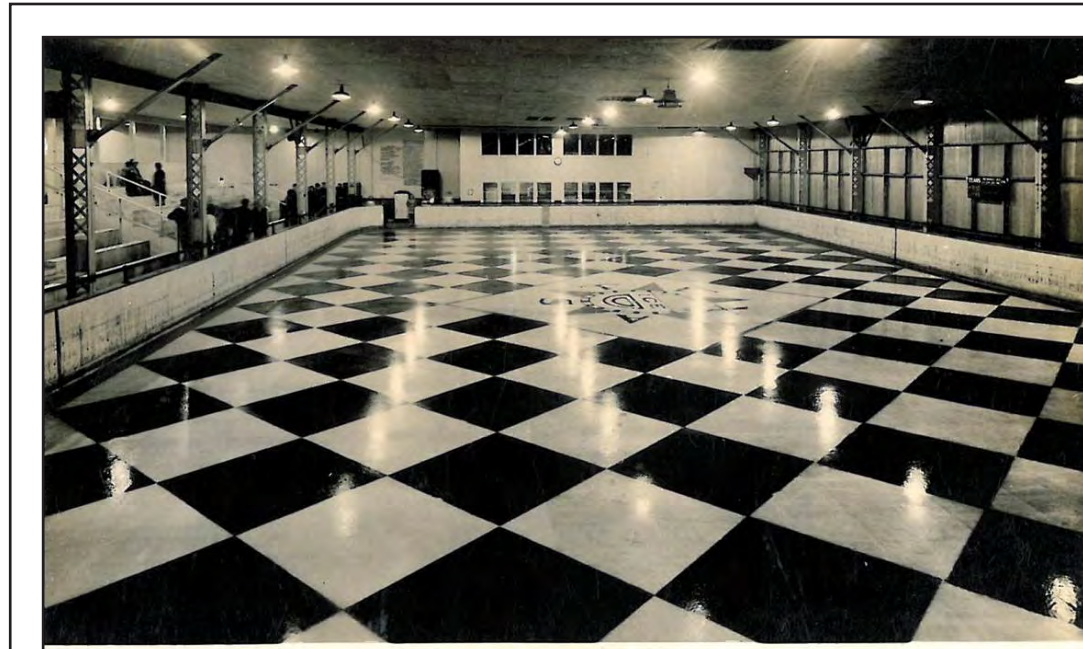
Texas Ice Palace

By Arlene Christiansen
Assistant Director

When Carroll Ward returned to Beaumont from Texas A&M in 1910, he went to work for his family's business, the Texas Ice Company, which had originally been called the Beaumont Ice, Light and Refrigerating Company. Carroll was a lover of sports and had himself been a football star while attending Texas A&M. In 1939, he built an ice-skating rink, called the Texas Ice Palace, on the corner of Neches and Franklin Streets, next to the Texas Ice Company's manufacturing plant.

To ensure that the ice-skating rink was a first-class operation, Carroll brought in expert designers. The ice was made by placing two-inch coils six inches apart and running them back and forth and pumping refrigeration through the coils. A dirt floor lay under the coils, and water was put on the coils and frozen. Layers were built up until the ice was thick enough to skate on. The finished rink measured 70 by 125 feet, with a design of huge red and white checkerboard squares and a Texas Ice Palace logo in the center. The squares were actually painted on the ice with colored water, which quickly froze and was covered with more layers of ice. About an inch of ice ultimately built up on top of the coloring.

It was indeed a first-class operation. There were galleries on one side of the rink that held about 400 spectators. At one end was a heated, glassed-in observation platform. A conces-



The floor design for the Texas Ice Palace, pictured circa 1939, was painted on and protected with subsequent layers of ice.

sion stand served both hot and cold drinks, hamburgers, and other food. The rink opened with 300 pairs of rental skates. Patrons could skate for 25 cents during the day and 40 cents in the evening. Tuesday mornings were for ladies only, and no spectators were allowed into the rink. Between skating sessions, boys were hired to plane off the ice and spray water on it to make it smooth for the next session.

Mamie wrote in her diary about preparations for the opening of the new skating rink on November 29, 1939:

[I] saw to planting of shrubs in front of new Ice rink. I spent all morning there, everyone working to open tonight—lots to do after carpenters leave. [Afternoon]—dressed & went to the Ice rink at 5—everything looking fine for opening, frowlers around & everything ready—we rushed home ate & [came] back at 6:45; the street [was] lined with

people for opening at 7:30....about 1500 & about 500 skated—a real success. We all worked hard with all new help did not leave till 2 bed at 3 AM dead tired[.]

Carroll imported professional skaters to manage the rink and give exhibitions and lessons. The opening night featured comic skating, barrel jumping, racing, and fancy skating, as well as open skating, which allowed many Beaumonters to get on the ice for the first time. Merita Mills, a feature writer for the *Beaumont Journal*, covered the opening. She wrote that “a good nine-tenths” of the skaters were skating for the first time. “Belly busters were taken by the hundreds. A certain other part of the anatomy came in for considerable punishment, too.” A few Beaumont skaters who had relocated from colder climates still retained basic skills, even if they were somewhat rusty. Car-

roll also invited some skaters from Houston for the opening. Mills noted one particularly handsome couple who “swung, dipped, cut, curved.”

In February 1940, Carroll introduced ice hockey to Beaumont. The Texas Ice Palace's team was called the Rangers. They wore red and white uniforms. Most of the players were from outside the region, including the northeastern United States and Canada. Ray Vick was the only native Beaumont on the team. He had never played hockey before but really took to the game and could “bat away flying pucks.”

The Texas Ice Palace and the hockey team were popular attractions in Beaumont for several years. Carroll staged ice reviews using both local talent and guest performers. According to Rosine McFaddin Wilson, Mamie Ward's niece, the Ice Palace

sponsored the Texas Ice Palace Review each year. It was an ice show featuring figure skating, clowns, and a large company of local, unskilled youths who performed a carefully rehearsed chorus number. Rosine remembered being in the chorus one year. The costumes were red, white, and blue, with mock epaulets from which long red and blue streamers flew behind the skaters when they went fast.

While the Ice Palace was a great winter attraction, it didn't operate in the summer heat. Instead, a roller-skating floor was installed on top of the coils, giving Beaumont a roller rink. The roller rink stayed open for about three years.

Ice skating, roller skating, and hockey were popular in Beaumont for a few years. Then, as often happens with sports and



The Rangers were Beaumont's first ice hockey team. Owner Carroll Ward is pictured in a suit on the back row, far left.

other forms of entertainment, people's interests shifted elsewhere. We don't have the exact

date of the closing of the ice rink, but it probably happened sometime after 1948. Though

roller skating rinks opened in later years, Beaumont's ice hockey days were over.

Public Programming Perspectives

By Bel Morian

Director of Public Programming

Spring Highlights

March

The third annual SOAR Family Day took place on March 2. Over 700 guests enjoyed butterfly kites soaring over the museum grounds, the artist butterfly garden, visits with the Houston Museum of Natural Science bug cart, rides on Bike Zoo butterfly bikes, and butterfly face painting. Community partners included the Sabine-Neches Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists, Magnolia Garden Club, Tyrrell Park Nature Center, Big Thicket National Preserve, Moore Honey, All Saints Episcopal School, and the Beaumont Public Library System. The McFaddin-Ward House created additional hands-on activities. Del Papa Distributing donated free drinks for the public. *Fire & Rain* and *Crossroads Band*, two local groups, provided live music.

SOAR festivities continued throughout March. Artists of all ages were invited to paint a garden rock and add it to Mac the Caterpillar who "grew" along Calder Avenue. SOARing Sounds featured local musician Rachel Stiles playing piano as visitors toured the house on Saturdays. Master porcelain artist Paula Quick also led two classes as they learned how to paint porcelain butterfly dishes, a cherished pastime of Ida and Mamie McFaddin.

The McFaddin-Ward House hosted the Neches River Festival Mother-Daughter Tea honoring the 2025 Princesses and our own lovely McFaddin-Ward House Princess, Lila Bourgeois. One hundred and thirty-six guests enjoyed a beautiful afternoon on the front porch.

April

Group Tours were especially popular in April.

The museum was honored to host Bob Wittman for a return visit to lecture on "The Three Fs of Art Crime: Frauds, Forgeries, and Fakes." A full house of guests was intrigued by Mr. Wittman's fascinating stories.

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Public Programming Perspectives Continued

By Bel Morian

Spring Programming Highlights Continued

May

Our wonderful docents were very busy with many school and group tours. The BISD school tours alone consisted of over 500 seventh-grade visitors. What a delight it is to have so many students enjoy the museum.

Our final lecture for the season featured Matt Anderson, curator of transportation at The Henry Ford in Dearborn, Michigan, with a fabulous glimpse into “Wheels of Progress: How Detroit and Ford Motor Company Put the World on Wheels.” Mr. Anderson’s lecture was complemented with a classic and vintage car display, arranged by Greg Riley, that also featured food from 1701 Barbecue.

Fall Programming

Fall programming resumes on September 18, 2025, with the first lecture of the season featuring our own McFaddin-Ward House Museum Executive Director Jeffrey Richardson, who will provide an overview of Howard Hughes’s tenure as a motion picture producer.

Jimmy Simmons and Friends will be back with us on October 17.

Additional lectures and live music, along with dates for the Holiday Open House and other fall events, will be announced later this summer.

JOIN IN:

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



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