

September 2025
Vol. 41/ No. 4

McFADDIN-WARD HOUSE VIEWPOINTS

More Than a Game: The McFaddin Women, Bridge, and Beaumont's Social Clubs

By Judy Linsley
Research Assistant

People have enjoyed card games for centuries, long before the rise of Las Vegas or professional gamblers. Playing cards originated as far back as ninth-century China, eventually spreading westward through trade and conquest. Early European suits varied widely—cups, coins, swords, bells, shields, acorns, even roses. Over time, they evolved into the familiar hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades we know today, a system introduced in France. Interestingly, the club suit was originally drawn as a weapon before softening into the clover-shaped symbol we recognize.

The modern game of bridge was itself the product of centuries of evolution. Whist, a trick-taking game, was popular in England as early as the sixteenth century. By the 1800s, a variation known as “biritch whist” emerged from the east-



The McFaddin's played bridge and other card games with these sets. *Museum Collection*

ern Mediterranean, evolving into bridge whist. This gave way to auction bridge, which, by about 1930, was replaced by the modern form: contract bridge.

Bridge's rising popularity coincided with another social shift—the growth of women's clubs. Men had long gathered in private clubs for cards, but women's card clubs appear to have begun only in the late 1800s. These groups reflected the era's

broader wave of women's organization, which encompassed charitable work, political advocacy, and purely social purposes. By the early twentieth century, women's card clubs were a fixture in cities across the country, including Beaumont.

The *Beaumont Enterprise* and *Beaumont Journal* regularly reported on card club activities, announcing meeting dates and locations and offering post-event write-ups com-

plete with winners, prizes, and refreshments. Some club names were straightforward and reflected the day they met—the Tuesday Card Club, the Friday Afternoon Card Club, the Jeudi Card Club (French for Thursday). Others were more playful: the Merry Wives Club, the Impromptu Club, and the Silk Stocking Club.

In early twentieth-century Beaumont, whist, euchre, and high five were favorites—all trick-taking

games, precursors to bridge. Yet the clubs were about more than cards. Meetings were social events, often with elaborate decorations, favors for members, prizes for winners, and refreshments suited to the season.

Ida Caldwell McFaddin embraced this tradition. In 1902, as president of the Friday Afternoon Card Club, she hosted a Halloween party at Beaumont's Oaks Hotel, then the city's finest. Decorations included chrysanthemums, ribbons, and pumpkins filled with nutshells containing sayings. The *Journal* noted that the hostess—presumably Ida—was “overcome with compliments.” A week later, the club met at the McFaddin home (then at 1316 Calder Avenue), where the newspaper praised Ida's “delightful hospitality” and confirmed her “reputation as a hostess...in Beaumont's social world.”

Director's Desk



“We have traveled and visited many homes, castles and estates. This was one of the best because it had all the original furniture and household items. It was [as] if we snuck in while they were gone. The free tour guided by the local docents was unparalleled! Highly recommend!!”

The glowing review above, left on our Tripadvisor page in April 2025, captures the heart of what we strive for at the McFaddin-Ward House Museum—welcoming visitors into a space where history feels alive. With a 4.8 out of 5 rating, we are proud to be the number one attraction in Beaumont on Tripadvisor. We were also recently recognized among Tripadvisor’s top 10% of listings worldwide in the 2025 Travelers’ Choice Awards, which honors businesses that consistently earn outstanding reviews. This recognition reflects the dedi-

cation of our staff and volunteers, who work tirelessly to ensure that every guest feels welcomed, informed, and inspired by their visit.

That same spirit of hospitality and excellence will carry us into the months ahead, as the heat of summer gives way—at least on the calen-

dar—to the warmth of fall. Our ongoing installation, “Three Cheers for the Home Team: A Sporting Summer with the McFaddins,” offers a nostalgic look at sporting life in the early twentieth century and features artifacts familiar to households across America. Beyond the galleries, our

grounds will soon echo with live music, engaging lectures, and hands-on workshops designed for guests of all ages. Each experience offers a unique way to connect with the history and heritage of the McFaddin-Ward House Museum.

Additional details can be found in this issue, and we invite you to explore the full calendar of events on our website. Also, be sure to follow us on social media for updates and behind-the-scenes content.

Whether you join us for a guided tour, an evening under the stars, or a deep dive into regional history, we can’t wait to welcome you to the McFaddin-Ward House Museum.

Jeffrey Richardson
Executive Director

The McFaddin-Ward House Museum Lecture Series
Presents:
HOWARD HUGHES
AND
THE CREATION OF MODERN HOLLYWOOD
Lecture By: Jeffrey Richardson
Author & McFaddin-Ward House Museum Executive Director
Thursday, September 18
6:30 p.m.
Museum Lecture Hall | 1906 Calder Ave | Beaumont, TX

Curator's Corner

A Summer of Activity



Several of the golf clubs were owned by Carroll Ward and feature a "CEW" monogram.



A lovely lace dress, ideal for summer, is featured in the Primary Bedroom.

By Victoria Tamez
Curator of Collections

The summer season opened with a fresh installation from the Curatorial Department, tying into this year's interpretive theme of entertainment. For the summer months, we chose to spotlight sports, a form of leisure that held both personal significance for the McFaddin family and broader cultural resonance in the community.

Our newest interpretation, "Three Cheers for the Home Team: A Sporting Summer with the McFaddins," highlights the ways athletics touched daily life in the McFaddin household. The family enjoyed golf, football, tennis, ice skating, and roller skating, and the exhibition brings these pursuits into focus through objects placed throughout the home.

On the first floor, visitors will find golf clubs, practice balls, head covers, and a marking kit in the Sun Porch. Most of the McFaddin family enjoyed playing golf, including Mamie McFaddin Ward. After her first lesson, she confessed in her diary that she was "crazy about it." In the Library, a 1941 Philco radio rep-

resents the excitement of national sports, recalling Mamie's 1937 diary entry about listening to the World Series.

Moving upstairs, football comes to life in the North Bedroom, where a pair of uniform pants and a leather helmet recall Carroll Ward's years as a Texas A&M football star in 1909 and 1910. In the Pink Bedroom, a diary entry places Mamie at a 1916 charity baseball game between doctors and lawyers, staged for the benefit of the suffrage movement. These moments—some personal, others civic—remind us that sports were as much about community as competition.

Objects throughout the house continue the story, encouraging visitors to keep an eye out for more sporting surprises.

This summer also brought new energy to the department with the arrival of our curatorial intern, Igor Romashets. Igor has been busy digitizing sections of the archival records and pursuing research for an exhibition in the Visitor Center. We look forward to his end-of-summer presentation and sharing the results of his work with visitors.

Alongside interpretation and research,

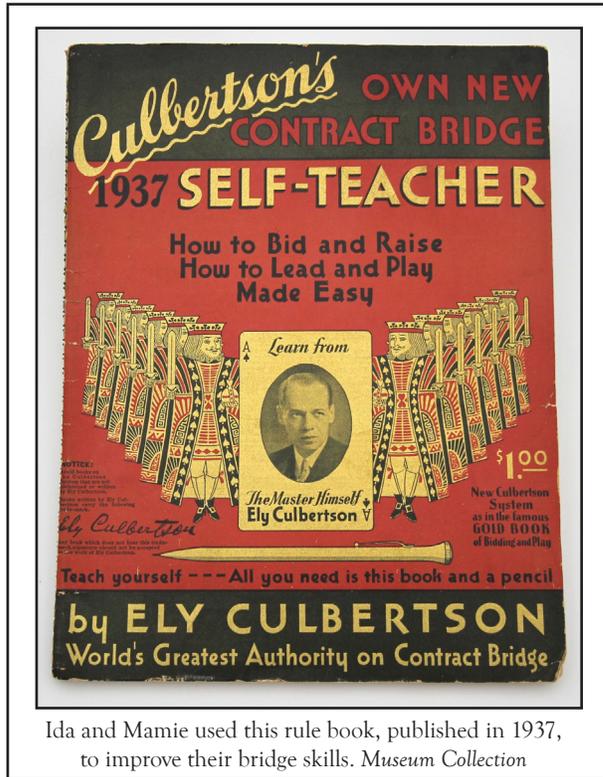
stewardship of the McFaddin-Ward House remains at the heart of the curatorial mission. This summer, the department is preparing for a major wallpaper project on the third floor. The ceiling paper in the Hallways, Billiard Room, and Bathroom will be replaced—a careful undertaking that has required temporarily relocating objects and furnishings to protect them during the work. The project is expected to take about two weeks, and we eagerly anticipate unveiling the refreshed interiors once complete.



Igor Romashets, a graduate student at Lamar University, is the 2025 curatorial intern.

BRIDGE

Continued from page 1



Ida and Mamie used this rule book, published in 1937, to improve their bridge skills. Museum Collection

That October, Ida joined fifteen other matrons in forming the Wednesday Afternoon Euchre Club, serving as secretary-treasurer. The *Journal* reported its meeting as “very pleasant” and commended its hostesses. Even after leaving the club, in 1907, Ida welcomed its members to her new residence at 1906 McFaddin Avenue, to which the *Journal* remarked: “The rose design was carried out in both the decorations and score cards. The McFaddin home, so magnificent in itself, needs no other decoration.”

Following national trends, Beaumont’s card players gradually shifted to bridge. Ida was already ahead of the curve: in 1907, she hosted the Married Ladies Bridge Club. The *Enterprise* noted, “Everything was most delightfully infor-

mal...Three tables were placed in the music room and library for the players.” Ida served refreshments included brandy peaches stuffed with pecans, alongside ice cream and cake—a spread worthy of her reputation.

Mamie McFaddin Ward, Ida’s daughter, also became a devoted card player. Her diaries, which begin in 1913, record a wide variety of games played with family and friends: poker, bridge, red dog (a betting game), Fan Tan (a casino-style game), and solitaire, which despite its name, was often played in groups. Like her mother, Mamie eventually settled on bridge.

Bridge clubs typically met weekly on the same day, rotating among members’ homes or at venues such as the Beaumont Country Club.

Both Ida and Mamie hosted meetings at the McFaddin home, staggering their dates as hostess when their clubs met on the same weekday. On December 15, 1915, Mamie recorded: “Fixed for my club. [In the afternoon] had club with three tables. Mama went to her club.”

After 1925, Mamie’s diaries fall silent until 1936. By then, bridge had become part of her weekly routine, listed alongside housekeeping, shopping, and, later, Magnolia Garden Club meetings. Her entries detail not only who attended and who hosted, but also how much she won—often just a few cents.

One entry from January 20, 1938, reads: “[I] dressed & went to Etta Jess’ to club - I walked over - she had nice lunch - I played with Emma, Bertha & Ruth & won 40 cts - home at 4:45.”

Another, from March 31, lingers lovingly on the menu: “Creamed Chicken on ham & pie dough - tomato aspic jelly with avocado pears & asparagus - pickles & biscuit - Ice cream on meringues & Strawberries.”

Mamie and Ida took their game seriously. The museum’s library includes six books on contract bridge (alongside volumes on Canasta and gin rummy), suggesting study as well as play. Even in friendly local clubs, competition was intense.

World events, however, sometimes interrupted even the most dedicated players. During World War II, bridge took a back seat. From May 1941 to January 1945, Mamie recorded no card club meetings, devoting herself instead to Red Cross service and other wartime efforts.

When she and Ida returned to the card table in 1945, they sought to brush up on their skills. Mamie

noted, “Mother Tassie & I went to Agnes Davis & she coached & played bridge with us.” Two years later, Mamie was still revisiting the basics: “Read over Bridge rules” before attending club.

At first glance, the story of the McFaddin family’s bridge clubs might seem to be just that: a glimpse of their leisure activities. Yet, like so much of the museum’s research, it reveals deeper truths. For both Ida and Mamie, even recreation was approached with discipline and determination. Hosting was done with care and pride; games were played to win, or at least to improve.

In their devotion to bridge, Ida and Mamie showed the same traits that marked other areas of their lives: a commitment to excellence, a respect for tradition, and an eagerness to give their best efforts—even when the occasion was meant for fun.



When this photo was taken, circa 1935, Mamie was paying bridge weekly.

Museum Collection

Education Spotlight

Making Memories



Campers learn fishing techniques from Village Creek State Park at the Ranching Roundup summer camp.



Area educators enjoy a tour of the first floor during Teacher Appreciation Happy Hour.

By Jennifer Lowrance

Director of Educational Programming

Ranching Roundup proved a memorable success this summer—even the inclement weather added to the adventure! Twenty-seven campers spent a week in June learning new skills, from roping a calf to identifying Southeast Texas reptiles with help from our friends at Gator Country. They also tried their hands at sourdough breadmaking and picked up practical gardening know-how, all while making memories that will last beyond the summer.

In July, we turned our focus to teachers, welcoming them back to a new school year with a Teacher Appreciation Happy Hour. Guests enjoyed refreshments, a first-floor walk-through of the house, and information on how the McFaddin-Ward House can help create memory-making field trips

for their students. Teachers from across Southeast Texas attended, reconnecting with colleagues and making new connections across districts.

Our outreach continued at the BISD Curriculum Fair, where staff met educators across two days, sharing details about upcoming fall programming and school tour opportunities. We wish all our area educators a wonderful school year and look forward to partnering with them in the months ahead.

Looking ahead to fall, the department will continue its Homeschool Workshops and Senior Craft Workshops beginning in September. The “Speak Your Spark” homeschool session will encourage students to explore the value of journaling, while “Calming Hues” will introduce seniors to watercolor painting as a way to capture the beauty of nature.

From roping calves to wielding paintbrushes, the education department is proud to support lifelong learning for all ages.

Fall 2025

Educational Programming Schedule:

September 9 – “Speak Your Spark: Journaling for Confidence & Creativity” Homeschool Workshop

September 16 – “Gentle Hues: Exploring Watercolors’ Calming Beauty” Senior Craft & Share Workshop

October 14 – “Kick it Right! Kickball Skills & Sportsmanship” Homeschool Workshop

October 28 – “Picture Perfect: Mastering Your Cell Phone Camera” Senior Craft & Share Workshop

November 11 – “Brushstroke Explorers” Homeschool Workshop

November 18 – “A Joyful Advent: Wreath Making” Senior Craft & Share Workshop

December 16 – “Snap Happy Holidays” Homeschool Workshop

For more information and to register for one of these workshops, please visit www.mcfaddin-ward.org/events or email jlowrance@mcfaddin-ward.org.

'Other Views'

Entertainment in the Twenties



The McFaddin and Ward families enjoy a day together, circa 1920s. Museum Collection

By Arlene Christiansen
Assistant Director

When we think of entertainment in the 1920s, images of speakeasies, flappers, and jazz-filled parties usually come to mind. Yet in Beaumont, leisure took many other forms—live theater, daring outdoor stunts, and grand circuses. Together, they created a vibrant cultural scene that locals remembered for decades.

The founding of the Little Theater on June 4, 1925, was a notable event in local culture during the decade. The ensemble's first play was performed that December in the home of Mrs. Frank Keith. The Little Theater was forced to stage their plays at borrowed venues for several years as funds were raised for a per-

manent home, which eventually opened in the early 1930s.

National touring acts also brought thrills to town. One memorable spectacle was staged by "The Houston Houdini," Ralph A. Miller, who escaped from a straitjacket while hanging upside down from the sixth floor of the Perlstein Building.

For sheer excitement, though, nothing compared to the circus. Beaumont was a regular stop for big troupes in the 1920s, including the Gentry Brothers ("two hundred ponies"), the Carl Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus (with three herds of elephants), the Shrine Circus, the Sells-Floto Circus, and of course the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey Circus. When the Ringling Brothers parade marched through town in 1920, an esti-

mated 20,000 spectators turned out. The Christie Brothers Circus even wintered in Beaumont for several years, loaning their animals for use in a seasonal zoo at the fairgrounds.

In an oral interview, Mamie McFaddin Ward recalled the thrill of circus days: there was always a parade, and her family never missed it—elephants, ponies, and all the animals included. "So many times they unloaded here on Fourth Street, came down Fourth Street onto North Street, out to the Fairgrounds where the circus was," she said. "I used to stop housecleaning, whatever I was doing, so we could all go and watch them unload." The circus stayed in Beaumont for only an afternoon and evening performance before moving on to

the next town.

Mamie's diaries are full of similar entries, showing just how central the circus was to her life.

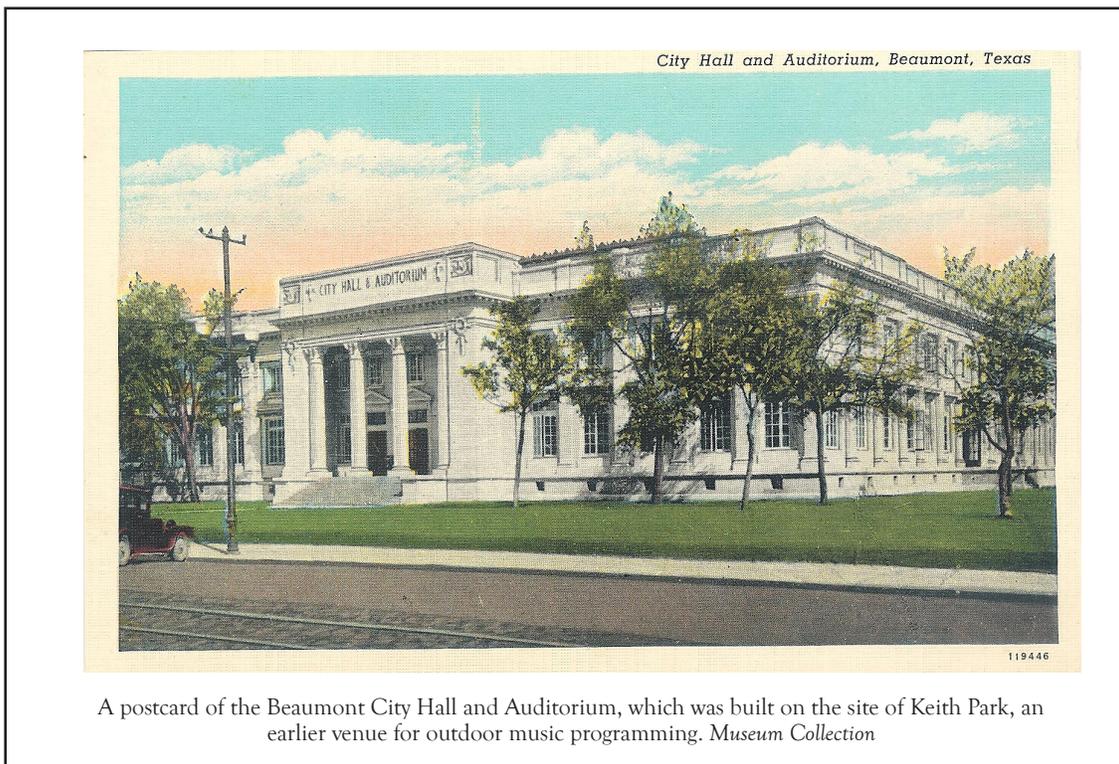
On September 24, 1913, she wrote: "Circus day. Out all day to see the parade with Carroll. Marie & I went to the circus with I.D. and Carroll."

On October 18, 1916, she documented a full day of circus-going: "Lottie, Jodie & I down to see parade. [In the afternoon] I went to the circus with Papa. [At] Night. Jodie & I went to circus with Carroll. Lottie & Jim & son went along with us. Barnum & Bailey's Circus."

By October 1, 1920, the excitement continued: "Ringling Bros & Barnum & Bailey's [Circus here.] Mama, Grandma Polk, Carroll & I went to circus parade. [In afternoon] Mama Papa, Peb, Carroll & I went to circus [At] night Ma, Pa, Carroll & I went to movie."

Even smaller circuses left their mark. On November 30, 1922, Mamie recorded: "[At night] Carroll & I at Wards then to Shrine Circus—won a chicken."

Beyond theater and the circus, the people of Beaumont filled their leisure hours with a variety of activities. The Jefferson Amusement Company opened a performing arts and movie palace on Fannin Street in downtown Beaumont on November 14, 1927, at a cost of nearly a million dollars. On one afternoon, Mamie recorded seeing three different movies in succession, a



A postcard of the Beaumont City Hall and Auditorium, which was built on the site of Keith Park, an earlier venue for outdoor music programming. *Museum Collection*

testament to both her enthusiasm and the abundance of theaters in the city. The Beau-

mont City Hall and Auditorium, built in 1928, was another venue for entertainment.

In addition, dances, staged at locations across town, offered lively evenings of music

and socializing. Families and friends also took joyrides in their automobiles, which were still relatively new and exciting for many Americans, as they explored the city and surrounding countryside. At home, card games and small social gatherings provided entertainment and comradery.

As documented in Mamie's journal entries, Beaumont had a variety of entertainment options in the 1920s. Every parade, movie matinee, or evening at the theater was more than a passing amusement; it was an occasion to gather with friends and family, share experiences, and participate in the communal joys of the era.

Public Programming Perspectives

The McFaddin-Ward House Museum is excited to announce our Fall 2025 programming lineup, offering a variety of admission-free events open to the community. Highlights include the return of the museum's popular Lecture Series, *Music at the McFaddins'*, and the annual Holiday Open House, all designed to combine education, history, and entertainment in an unparalleled setting.

The Lecture Series kicks off on September 18 with "Howard Hughes and the Creation of Modern Hollywood," by author and McFaddin-Ward Executive Director Jeffrey Richardson. Hughes was an aviator, industrialist, and eccentric, but he was also the most important movie producer during the golden age of Hollywood. From starlets to scandals, Richardson will show how Hughes used his enormous wealth to revolutionize the industry, onscreen and off.

On October 9, the series continues with Shelly Kelly and Judge Jeff Branick discussing the 1900 Galveston hurricane and its lasting lessons. Kelly, an archivist and historian, shares compelling stories from the devastating storm, while Judge Branick offers insights into modern hurricane forecasting, emergency preparedness, and coastal protection efforts in Southeast Texas. Their combined expertise highlights the importance of historical reflection and contemporary disaster readiness.

The Lecture Series concludes for the year on November 13 with maritime archaeologist James Delgado and "Lost, Unknown, and Then Found: The Great Museum of the Sea." Delgado will share stories of famous shipwrecks, undersea exploration, and the discovery of long-lost vessels, illustrating the ocean as the world's largest museum.

Music at the McFaddins' concerts provide lively entertainment in the muse-

um's gardens. On October 17, Jimmy Simmons and his ensemble will perform a range of styles, from big band classics to modern hits, while on November 7, local favorite Midlife Crisis will bring decades of popular music to the grounds. Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets, chairs, and refreshments to enjoy the performances in the beautiful, historic outdoor setting.

The Holiday Open House will take place on December 6 and 7. Visitors will enjoy live music, treats, and a special visit from Santa under twinkling lights, creating a joyful holiday atmosphere. Stay tuned for additional information on the event.

Collectively, the Fall 2025 programming combines historical insight, cultural enrichment, and live entertainment, inviting the public to engage with the McFaddin-Ward House Museum in meaningful and memorable ways. And as always, all of these events are admission-free.

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www.mcfaddin-ward.org

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Fall 2025 Upcoming Events

The McFaddin-Ward House Museum invites you to join us for our exciting lineup of lectures, music, and holiday wonder!

Thursday, September 18
6 p.m. doors / 6:30 p.m. lecture

Lecture featuring Jeffrey Richardson, McFaddin-Ward House Museum Executive Director
"Howard Hughes & the Creation of Modern Hollywood"
Visitor Center

Thursday, October 9
6 p.m. doors / 6:30 p.m. lecture

Lecture featuring Shelly Kelly, independent researcher, and Jefferson Co. Judge Jeff Branick
"Stories of the 1900 Galveston Storm: What We Have Learned"
Visitor Center

Friday, October 17
6 p.m. gates / 6:30 p.m. music

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

Friday, November 7
6 p.m. gates / 6:30 p.m. music

Music at the McFaddins' featuring Midlife Crisis
East Lawn

Thursday, November 13
6 p.m. doors / 6:30 p.m. lecture

Lecture featuring James Delgado, maritime archaeologist
"Lost, Unknown, and Then Found: The Great Museum of the Sea"
Visitor Center

Saturday December 6
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 7
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

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 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.

