

## OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST:

### LADIES RESTROOM

Jeff spent much more time on the ladies' restroom than on the men's. He was fond of women, loved to dance weekly at the Sons of Herman hall, but had little time for them since most of his time was devoted to his obsession, The Orange Show. Jeff's sister Winnie Coleman remembered that Jeff asked a woman for her hand in marriage and was turned down, and he never tried again. When he was older, he fancied that the men in the neighborhood of The Orange Show were afraid they would die and that he would try to steal their wives. Jeff's favorite quote about marriage was made by Helen Rowland, *Marriage is like twirling a baton, turning handsprings, or eating with chopsticks. It looks easy until you try it.*

### "CONFUCIOUS" MOSAIC

A statue of Confucius once stood here, but regardless of the number of times it has been replaced over the years, it remains a favorite target of vandals. *The kids were trying to steal it, but once they broke it off they didn't want it.* Jeff put a cable around it, anchored down so they wouldn't take it, but to no avail. This still proves to be a never ending battle.

### THE OBELISK

The obelisk once graced the Texas State Hotel in downtown Houston. Jeff said they gave it to him because they were afraid that it would fall down and hurt someone. He converted it into a monument to orange growers. It cost him \$42, but he said it would cost architects and builders hundreds of dollars if they tried to make the same thing themselves.

### GIFT SHOP

Jeff intended to sell the perfect juicer at the gift shop,

but could never come up with a design that completely satisfied him.

### TILES OF AUTOMOBILES

*Then here, see on this tile how automobiles looked around 1900's. Some of the first automobiles made.*

### THE MUSEUM

Jeff believed the cure to all life's ills was contained in his philosophy of hard work, good health, and the fruit the orange. The Museum embodies these concepts, in a whimsical, and at times confusing fashion.

The ceiling supports were replaced in 1989. Much to the amusement of the restoration crew, they discovered that Jeff had not totally filled the display with concrete, but had only covered the surface and under this layer of concrete were rusted paint cans, his old steering wheel and his license plate. (Jeff gave up driving after he was in a minor accident. He was deadly afraid that the owners of the car were going to sue him. He never drove again, relying on his bike for transportation purposes.)

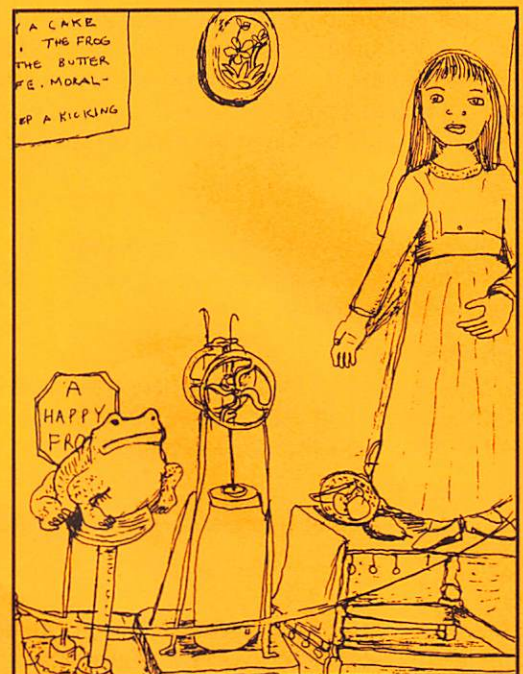
Jeff loved concrete and often used it inappropriately. He used it as insulation in the walls of his house. This structure was located catty-corner from The Orange Show, but had to be demolished after Jeff's death.

### THE FROG AND CHURN

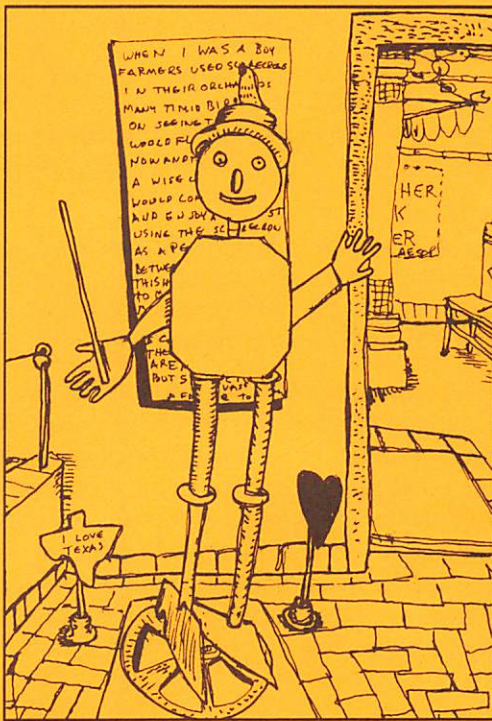
*See this churn? I bought it up in Hot Springs, Arkansas, for thirty five dollars. I got a frog that is going to be a happy frog, don't you see? It's for the kids, the children. You gotta have something for everyone.*

### THE BRIDE

In an interview made shortly after Jeff put up the sign: "Purity. The orange is absolutely pure..." Jeff said, *I'm going to have another mannequin standing by that sign. She'll be dressed up as a bride, representing purity.*







### THE CLOWN

Jeff wanted both clowns to be in the Museum but he ran out of room.

### INDIAN

Jeff bought this Indian in Cleveland, Texas for \$100. He had this to say about the somewhat puzzling story that accompanies this exhibit, *Ain't that something?*

### SCARECROW

Jeff intended to have one bird on top of the Scarecrow and a lot of little birds flying away because they were scared.

### BLACKSMITH SHOP

Apparently a mannequin representing a blacksmith appeared in this exhibit. There is a possibility it may have been so badly damaged by vandals that it had to be removed. Jeff often had trouble with vandals (note the deer head). Once three kids from down the street broke in and vandalized the museum. I bawled them out, but I didn't say nothing to the parents. Ain't no use to worry them. I wouldn't get it back and the kids are worried to death already.

### WOODMAN

This mannequin was a golfer. Note: No matter how unrelated, Jeff tenaciously related everything back to his point of all references. the orange.

### DEER HEADS

Jeff paid \$100 a piece for these. The deer head on the left was badly damaged, and Jeff repaired it after a fashion. Note the the pingpong ball as a replacement for the eye.

### ORANGE TREES

These were purchased at Sears and Roebuck for \$10 each in 1969.

### LAMPS

These wheels were part of a WWI ammunition carriage and were purchased from a Colonial in Lufkin, Texas.

### THE BODY IS A COMPLEX CHEMICAL PLANT...

Jeff felt as though the body was "a marvelous machine" having the capacity to repair itself. He believed the most essential element to repair the body was protein. And that even the most sickly and run-down individual could make a new person of themselves in a year (sic) time by eating the proper and essential foods.

### THE MAP

Note the abbreviation of the word Arizona. Even though Jeff McKissack was a highly intelligent man, with a degree in Commerce from Mercer University, and graduate credit from Columbia in New York, his spelling often verged on the creative.

### THE CLOWN

Jeff bought this clown at a display store for \$60. As a rule, Jeff never hesitated in letting you know how much he paid for things. In fact, he derived a great deal of pleasure in releasing this sort of information.

### THE OASIS

Jeff fully understood the necessity of providing the body with vitamins, especially Vitamin C, since *Vitamin C is considered ... an important agent in assisting the cells to "breathe" the oxygen brought to them by the bloodstream.* Jeff built the oasis so that visitors to The Orange Show could drink orange juice and obtain their daily vitamin C requirements.

Jeff paid \$90 for the water fountain. He found it at a roadside stand 9 miles north of Lufkin at a place called Lanier on the Mountains.

### SANTA'S SON

Jeff found this Santa at the now defunct 11th and 6th Diner. He took the beard off and decided *he looked like a teenager, a little bitty young boy, so I called him Santa's Son.*





## JEFF'S TOUR

Jeff McKissack believed if a person would eat right, work hard, abstain from drinking and smoking, and get plenty of exercise, that one would live to be 100 years old. His philosophy is illustrated, both visually and verbally throughout The Orange Show. These exhibits and quotes are expanded upon in his book:

**How You Can Live 100 Years . . . and still be spry."**

### THE DINOSAUR EXHIBIT

The dinosaur exhibit doesn't look exactly like the one Jeff created. Over the years, many of the original figures have disappeared, and have been difficult to replace. However, our restoration crews try to remain faithful to Mr. McKissack's original designs in all areas of The Orange Show, utilizing slides taken shortly after The Orange Show opened to the public in May 1979.

### CHEMICALS BY THE SEA...

#### FRUIT TREES, NUT TREES, VEGETABLE PLANTS

Jeff believed that all the minerals needed for a good life were contained in the ground. Plants and animals could convert these minerals into nutrients, acting as "chemical converters" and man could obtain all its nutritional needs from fruits, vegetables and animals. Jeff McKissack voraciously read everything he could get his hands on concerning nutrition in his quest to become the oldest man in Houston.



## ELSEWHERE

### WISHING WELL

*Now, this is a wishing well over here. Yeah, I thought I'd put hearts and everybody's standing - I know what they're gonna wish for, I guess they gonna wish for love and money. That's about the only two things everybody seems to want.*

### STEAM ENGINE

Jeff wrote a letter to his nephew Alex Hurst in December 1979 concerning the installation of the steam engines: *Have now 2 steam engines running. One a 5 h.p. engine spinning (sic) two (2) large wheels. The wheels are 5 ft. in diameter. Have another engine, a 3 h.p. center crank just spinning its wheels. I associate orange as energy food with energy. Will kick the boat around the tank with a troller until I can purchase a steam engine.*

The steamboat was originally made out of wood, but the wood rotted so Jeff replaced the hull with steel. *We'll put on a show with this steamboat. I'll have miniature bales of cotton for cargo and a ... man sitting on the bales of cotton - dolls you understand ... and they will fire the cannon ... I've got a monkey that runs by battery and he'll clap his hands. I've also got some frogs that run by batteries. We'll stop the boat and let folks watch the frogs perform. They're not real, but people will think they're real. They won't be able to tell the difference.*

### THE POND

The rocks surrounding the pond, as well as other rocks throughout The Orange Show came from the Hot Springs area in Arkansas. Jeff's niece told us that he accompanied his sisters to the Hot Springs every year, when he lived in Ft. Gaines. Jeff said, *you go to Hot Springs, Arkansas, to drink the hot water and to take the baths is a preventative. The radio active waters stimulate the cells of the body and make them perform their functions. It helps keep the arteries soft and flexible.*

The names of the cities surrounding the inside of the pond were probably very important to Jeff. We do know that he was born in Ft. Gaines, Georgia and went to Mercer College in Columbus, Georgia. What the significance of Eufaula, Alabama and Apalachicola, Florida are we can only surmise. Possibly, they are places where Jeff bought and sold oranges.





## THE MAP

The names on the map are cities that Jeff traveled to during the depression when he bought and sold oranges. He would drive down to Florida, buy a truck load of oranges for \$50 and then sell them at the Atlanta Farmer's Market and points in between.

## WHIRLIGIGS, BIRDS, GRILLWORK

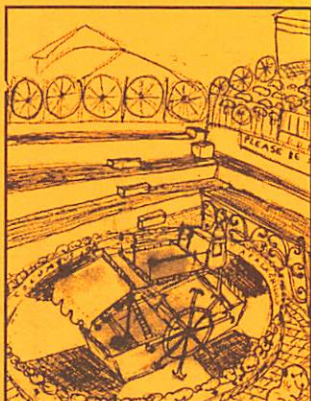
*You know I welded in the shipyard. Like all these birds and things ... and windmills and all this stuff. A lot of steel, you cut it you know, cut it to size, length. Now I built a windmill. Made out of aluminum those blades ... And here's the sun going 'round the moon. You see 45 birds round here all in steel and flocking together. Aesop said birds of a feather flock together. The iron grill came from the old Stower's Furniture in Downtown Houston.*

## TRACTOR SEATS AND CARRIAGE WHEELS

*Got 80 tractor seats and 80 wheels and they don't make them today. Like over there you see made out of steel. They put them in dies and put them in hydraulic presses and just press them out. This way it's poured. Cut out a piece of wood just the shape of this and put it down in sand, pour molted metal in there called castons. You can't find these seats today. These tractor seats and wheels I got at roadside stands between here and Hot Springs and now out here on Hempstead Highway. And these wheels and tractor seats I bought from anywhere from one to 14 dollars a piece. I got 80 tractors seats and 80 wheels. They don't make wheels like this today. All these wheels probably were made 80 or 150 years ago. Even though Jeff was adamant about the number of wheels and seats he had, in reality there are 102 carriage wheels and 97 tractor seats.*

## SIDE SHOW AND TERRAZO TILE BENCHES

*And then I had the idea of the side show. I figured on building a turntable and having to put an organ on it and have a young lady play round and round on the turntable. Then I made steps like where they can sit down there. I made benches out of this terraza (sic) tile from Mexico. So I seat 175 people on this side to see the side show. Then I have a stage here ... and have shows. People want to rent it and have shows. I just let them come in here for a dollar a piece. They want to have a show they can just pay me a dollar a piece, just the regular admission.*



Shortly afterwards, Jeff McKissack decided to build The Orange Show. There are several accounts about how he reached this decision. Once Jeff was standing across the street when a voice came to him and said "The Orange Show." He also accredited his meeting with Thomas Edison and his quest to design the perfect orange juicer as reasons for the show.

Although building of the existing structure began in 1954, and continued through the years, he began thinking of it as The Orange Show in 1968, and continued building the structure until 1979. *"I started working on it in 1968 and I worked on it every day ... For two years, I was completely lost, but I knew I had a good idea. Then it began to make a pattern and it grew and grew, until now, without fear or hesitation, I say it is the most beautiful show on earth, the most colorful show on earth and the most unique show on earth."* The Orange Show is made almost entirely out of found objects that Jeff collected his entire life. In all Jeff claims to have spent \$40,000 building the place. I live right across [the street], see and I walk over here and work ... two, three hours a day when I had my job. I worked at the post office and after I retired I finished it up.

Jeff built The Orange Show for a number of reasons, to satisfy his urge to create, to inform others about his personal vision, but in his own words, The main purpose of The Orange Show is to encourage people to eat oranges, drink oranges, and be highly amused.



# JEFF MCKISSACK

## 1902-1980

*"I've been in training for 60 years to build this show."*

The Orange Show is indeed a personal reflection of the life of Jeff McKissack. McKissack was born on January 28, 1902 in Fort Gaines, Georgia. He grew up along the banks of Chattahoochee River watching steamboats fly by, wishing he could own one. His summers were spent traveling with his sisters and mother to the Hot Springs in Arkansas, bathing in the waters known for their rejuvenative powers.

In 1925, he obtained his bachelors degree in commerce from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Jeff moved to New York, worked in a bank, interviewed with Thomas Edison, and attempted graduate studies at Columbia University. These studies terminated after a disagreement with a professor. During the Depression, he opened up a dance hall and trucked oranges, buying them at \$50 a truckload in Florida and selling them at different farmer's markets between Apalachicola, Florida and Atlanta, Georgia.

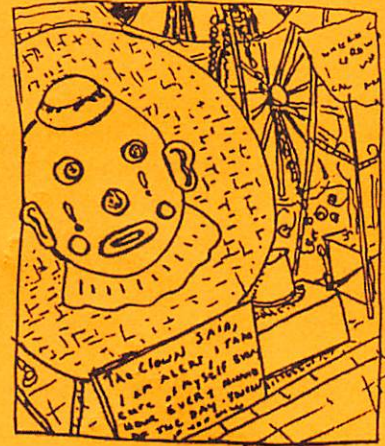
McKissack joined the Army Air Force in October of 1942 and was honorably discharged 6 months later. During his term of service he learned how to weld and with the help of the G.I. bill, McKissack later obtained his beautician's license.

After his stint in the military, Jeff worked for the St. John's Liberty Ship Building Company, built a nursery and a home out of concrete blocks in Ft. Gaines, and ran a cafe. In 1952, Jeff McKissack moved to Houston and worked for the downtown post office making special deliveries. About this same time he purchased his home on Munger Street, and two years later bought the lot across the street. This lot was to be the future home of The Orange Show.

In 1954, Jeff began building a nursery on this lot, the exterior walls of which became The Orange Show's. He called it The American Tree Nursery. He grew his own plants and operated the nursery when he wasn't making postal deliveries. In 1956, he took out a building permit to build a beauty salon. Deciding the nursery was more trouble than it was worth, he closed it down in 1964. At the same time, he decided against the beauty salon, believing that salons were becoming a thing of the past.

### VOTE DROP

Jeff felt like he was a building genius and wanted people to confirm his opinion. He passed out this voting ballot determined of his success. He even planned to send the complete ballots to Ripley's Believe It or Not. *It's the biggest thing to hit Houston since the Domed Stadium. Take 100,000 architects and 100,000 engineers and not one of them or all of them could come up with a show like The Orange Show.*

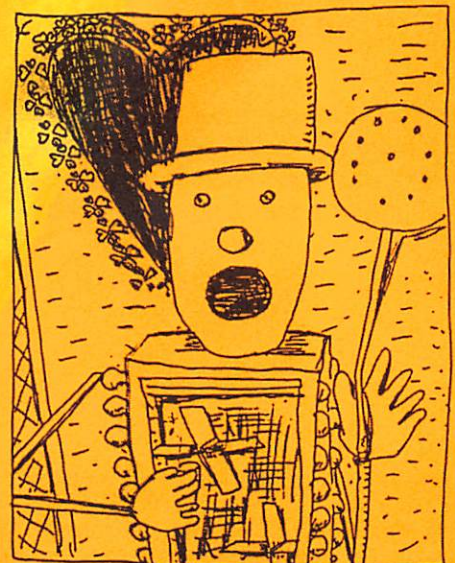


Jeff felt sure that eight out of every ten Americans would come to The Orange Show, preferring it to the Grand Canyon, or Disneyland or Astroworld. He was sadly disappointed when the crowds he predicted never really materialized. Jeff McKissack died eight short months after The Orange Show opened, just a week before his 78th birthday.

Thanks to the formation of The Orange Show Foundation and the thousands of people who visit each year, his artistic vision, his wit and wisdom live on.

Thank you!

*We are glad you are here.*





The Orange Show Foundation preserves and presents the extraordinary artistic expressions of ordinary people. At the heart of our effort is the physical preservation, operation and programming of The Orange Show, a landmark environment constructed by Jeff McKissack, a postman and self-taught artist in Houston's East End. From 1956 until his death in 1980, he transformed found objects and the mundane tools of daily life into the means to communicate the truths of this life and times as he saw them.

The Foundation is known internationally for pioneering community-based preservation and programming of a visionary landmark environment. More than a million people have visited and participated in 11 years of events and a strong, diverse volunteer force of more than 600 are involved in every phase of the development and implementation of programs. Program goals are to develop public appreciation for the work of self-taught, visionary and folk artists and to encourage people to experience the creative process.

Major programs of The Orange Show include the following:

**Eyeopeners** - documents and conducts public tours of Texas art environments and sites which define human creativity.

**The Library and Archive** - catalogue and organize this information for use by students and scholars from all over the country.

**The Brown Lectures at The Orange Show** - an annual series in which nationally-regarded scholars and artists discuss traditional artistic expressions of cultural communities and contemporary, self-taught visionary artists. More than 100,000 children have participated in The Orange Show's Children's Education Program since our public opening in 1982. Educators use The Orange Show to teach the basic elements of art and as a superb laboratory to explore imagination and creativity. Special projects with nearby East End schools, such as the Mural Project, provide intensive "creativity camps."

**The Art Car Parade** - a public art exhibit of an art form in which more than 1,000 academically-trained artists, self-taught artists and the general public of all ages and backgrounds participate and more than 150,000 view as part of the Houston International Festival.

The Orange Show is supported by private contributions and support from the City of Houston and the Texas Commission for the Arts. Additional support has been received by the Brown Foundation and Coca Cola Foods, makers of Minute Maid Orange Juice.

# VISITORS GUIDE

## TO THE ORANGE SHOW FOUNDATION

\$1.00



An Annotated Tour



**The Orange Show**

2401 Munger  
Houston, Texas 77023  
(713) 926-6368

[orange@insync.net](mailto:orange@insync.net)

<http://www.insync.net/~orange>