



WHAT HAPPENED

Edgar Degas came to New Orleans in 1872 to stay with his brother and his uncle for five months.

DEGAS' IMPRESSIONS OF NEW ORLEANS:

DECEMBER 1872, TO ARTIST HENRI ROUART

"ONE DOES NOTHING HERE, it lies in the climate, nothing but cotton, one lives

for and from cotton ... Oh well, it will be a journey I have done and very little else. Manet would see lovely things here..."



FEBRUARY 1873, TO ARTIST JAMES TISSOT

"WHAT A LOT OF GOOD THIS ABSENCE from Paris has done me. In any case, my dear friend, I have made the most of it. I have made certain good resolutions which (you will laugh) I honestly feel capable of carrying out."



The former Musson home along Esplanade Avenue, where Degas stayed, has been turned into a bed and breakfast that features a Degas tour.

During Edgar Degas' brief stint in New Orleans, the artist's opinion of the city changed dramatically.

He was originally bored by the city and expected to do nothing. But by the time he had left, he had painted his first great impressionist work.

Degas, at the time an unrecognized artist, came to New Orleans in 1872 to visit his brother, René, and his mother's family, the Mussons. He stayed at his uncle's home on Esplanade Avenue for five months.

New Orleans influenced Degas from birth. His mother, Celestine Musson Degas, was born in New Orleans into a Creole family comprising of some of the city's original French and Spanish settlers. Degas was further impacted during his visit to New Orleans, which was then in the middle of Reconstruction.

While here, he painted "A Cotton Office in New Orleans," a family portrait of sorts, in his uncle's cotton office. The painting appeared in the second Impressionist show in Paris in 1876 and cemented Degas as one of the original artists of that movement. He also created works including "The Song Rehearsal," which features stylistic references to Degas' future works.

Today, Degas' tenure in New Orleans is still evident. His uncle's former house has been made into a Degas museum and bed and breakfast, a café on Esplanade Avenue carries his name, and the New Orleans Museum of Art permanent collection includes some of Degas' work.



Degas' "A Cotton Office in New Orleans," 1873, featured his uncle Michel Musson, at his cotton brokerage, and Degas' brothers Achille and Rene. The office was in Factors Row on Carondelet Street at Perdido Street, below right. The building is still there.



NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART



THE CHARLES FRANK STUPPIDO COLLECTION AT THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

Degas painted a 'Portrait of Estelle Musson Degas,' left, of his cousin in 1872. The piece is in the New Orleans Museum of Art's permanent collection.