

A HOME ON THE MISSISSIPPI

1871, Chromolithograph, 8.5" × 13.5"

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Back in the 1800s, there were few ways to get the news about what was happening across America. Without Internet, television, or radio—long before “Google” became a verb—people relied heavily on newspapers and magazines for information.

Photography was relatively new at the time, so the print media often turned to artists for paintings or quick, detailed sketches to accompany magazine or newspaper articles. And that is how talented British illustrator and painter Alfred Rudolph Waud built a successful career in America’s Deep South.

Waud was born in London in 1828 and studied at the Government School of Design and the Royal Academy of Arts. He immigrated to the United States in 1850, working as an illustrator for a humor magazine and a travel guidebook before joining the staff of *New York Illustrated News* in 1860. When the Civil War began in 1861, Waud was sent to cover the Army of the Potomac, the primary

Union military contingent. As a special artist for the paper, he served as a kind of on-the-battlefield press correspondent, sketching what he witnessed with drama and intensity.

Later, Waud joined the staff of *Harper’s Weekly* magazine, but continued his work with the army. His artwork included scenes from the First Battle of Bull Run, Battle of Gettysburg, and other important military actions. Waud played an instrumental role as a chronicler of the Civil War: His detailed battlefield scenes were sometimes the only glimpses that Americans had of what the war actually looked like. This earned him notoriety as one of the leading artist-journalists of his time. After the war, he continued working as a freelance illustrator.

In 1871, the US government commissioned Waud to paint Woodland Plantation, an antebellum mansion located in West Pointe à la Hache, Louisiana. The artwork would be included in a documentary about the Mississippi River.

Woodland Plantation, built in 1834 by magnate William Johnson as an 11,000-acre working sugar cane plantation, was spared the damage of the Civil War. Waud traveled to the site, about forty minutes south of New Orleans in the region known as the Deep Mississippi Delta, and went about sketching the red-tile-roofed mansion, the horse-drawn carriages, the trees.

His creation, *A Home on the Mississippi*, has stood the test of time. If the image looks somewhat familiar, it’s for good reason:



Woodland Plantation (1834)

21997 LA-23 • Port Sulphur, Louisiana 70083 • (504) 656-9990 • woodlandplantation.com

In 1871, printmaking company Currier & Ives published a chromolithograph of the piece in its popular *Homes Across the Country* series, adding touches of its own to Waud's work. At the end of Prohibition, Currier & Ives licensed the image to the makers of Southern Comfort bourbon, and for seventy-five years, Waud's art graced the label of the Southern Comfort bottle.

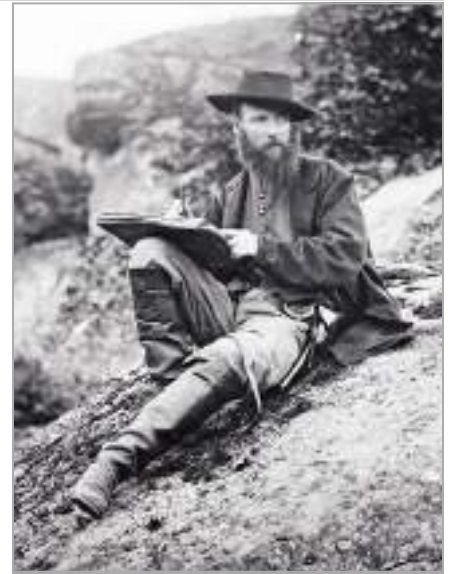
Woodland Plantation underwent renovations beginning in 1997 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in



1998; the following year, it opened as a country inn. Today's fifty-acre property, comprised of five buildings, is a bed-and-breakfast and a restaurant, Spirits Hall, that serves up Louisiana oysters and traditional Cajun and Creole dishes. The beautiful natural setting on the Mississippi River offers a peaceful spot to soak up some of the history and culture of the South. Stroll the property to see wildlife and flora, including a wide variety of birds and Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy #4, one of the oldest cypress trees in Louisiana. On summer afternoons, Buddy, the resident alligator, might make an appearance.

Devoted anglers will be pleased to know that the Deep Delta is one of the top fisheries in North America. Take a 45-minute boat tour or just relax on the porch with a glass of Southern Comfort, natch. The place still has the kind of slow-down-and-take-it-easy vibe that Waud captured nearly 150 years ago.

—MELISSA BRANDZEL



UNCIVIL SERVANT: Alfred Waud (1828–1891) dodged snipers' bullets during his days as a field artist accompanying the Army of the Potomac. Although he sketched other subjects after the war's end, he continually returned to the scenes of devastation. Waud was stricken by a heart attack while sketching battlefields in Georgia at age 62.



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