Officials say arson not cause of Tezcuco fire

Blaze destroyed 147-year-old plantation Sunday.

GONZALES (AP) — The owner of a 147-year-old plantation destroyed by fire Sunday said she will not try to rebuild Tezcuco but won't be bulldozing away all traces of the antebellum mansion.

"I plan to leave the original foundation and the chimneys, which are still standing," Annette Harland said.

Memorabilia rescued from the blaze will be housed in some type of a museum, she added.

The Greek revival plantation house was completed in 1855 for Benjamin Tureaud, a veteran of the Mexican wars, and named after a lake near Mexico City.

In addition to the 23 guest cottages, two museums, a gift shop, a gazebo, a restaurant, a chapel, the office and dozens of 200-year-old oak trees were untouched. A pair of metal hitching posts and a bell survived the fire.

Harland says Tezcuco is still open for business. The fire did not damage the cottages where guests of the plantation's bed and breakfast business stay.

But the plantation's biggest business was weddings, a source of revenue that will likely vanish now that the stately home is gone, Harland said.

"The loss of income is horrendous. We have no idea exactly what the loss will be," she said.

Harland said Tezcuco was valued at $1 million, and the antiques in the house were valued at $500,000. Fortunately, the house and contents were insured, she said.

The State Fire Marshal's Office has ruled out arson, Harland said. Fire officials could not be reached late Thursday night for comment.