Bocage Plantation placed on the market

By STEVEN WARD
River parishes bureau

DARROW — Bocage Plantation, a 203-year-old antebellum home on the River Road in Ascension Parish, is up for sale, one of the house owners said Thursday.

Bocage is the second Ascension Parish plantation home to be offered for sale in two years. Houmas House Plantation, which was owned by the same heirs that own Bocage, was sold in May 2003.

Milan J. Turk of New Canaan, Conn., said the two married couples who own Bocage decided earlier this week to sell after they realized Bocage is too impractical to turn into a private residence for either family.

"We both live outside of Louisiana and are now retired," Turk said of his family and that of his brother-in-law, Phil Lorio of Carrboro, N.C.

"It's not the kind of place you can just spend a night. You have to be there, and we are at the point where we want to be near our children, who also live outside Louisiana," Turk said.

Bocage, which sits on 100 acres of land, has never been open to the public on a regular basis.

Turk said the owners occasionally would allow tourists to see the house and property through special arrangement, though.

Angela Falgoust, executive director of the Southeast Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau of Ascension Parish, said Bocage usually would open up to the public only about once a year.

"So there's always been a mystique about the house.

Milan J. Turk, an owner of Bocage Plantation in the Ascension Parish community of Darrow, pauses Thursday near a portrait of Anita Crozat Kohlsdorf, who in 1941 bought and restored the abandoned and rundown plantation house.

"You can see it, but you can't touch it," Falgoust said.

Falgoust said she hopes someone buys

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The Bocage Plantation house, built in 1801, and 100 acres of surrounding land at Darrow on River Road in Ascension Parish is now up for sale, one of the owners, Milan J. Turk, said Thursday.

Plantation

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Bocage who wants to turn the house into an attraction for tourists who come to Ascension Parish to see plantation homes.

"Bocage is one of the older homes. People have been calling for years to ask if it's open. It would be another great addition to our houses. This is considered Plantation Country," Falgoust said.

Kevin Kelly, a New Orleans real estate developer and preservationist, said Thursday he would love to buy Bocage.

"I'm very interested. It would be wonderful to have two plantation homes so close to one another," Kelly said Thursday in a telephone call from New York.

Kelly paid just under $2.9 million for Houmas House in May 2003, and spent another $2 million on construction and renovation of the 19th-century antebellum home in Burnside.

Noting that Houmas House is just 2 miles down the River Road from Bocage, Kelly said his Houmas House investment has turned into a Saturday night event hot spot.

"Houmas House has been very successful. It went beyond my expectations. I have every Saturday night booked there from August until March," Kelly said.

Kelly said he would want to renovate the house, restore it to its 1801 appearance, then open it up to tourists.

"I feel comfortable that I have a great plan for Bocage," Kelly said.

Turk said the families have not set a price yet for Bocage, but will agree on one within a month.

Bocage was built by Emanuel Marius Pons Bringier as a wedding gift for his 14-year-old daughter Francoise and her husband Christoph Colomb, a Frenchman descended from explorer Christopher Columbus.

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Ownership of Bocage eventually passed to Marguerite Crozat Genre, Anita's niece, and her husband Richard Genre of Port Allen.

Bocage was maintained as a country estate for weekends and entertaining friends by the Genres.

The original architecture of Bocage was French Colonial and West Indies-style.

After a fire in 1837, the house was redesigned by Greek revival architect James Dakin, who added eight square plastered brick columns to the home. Dakin was the architect of the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge.