Yellow fever victim honored at Alexandria plantation

By JODI BELGARD

The Times-Tribune

ALEXANDRIA — Traditional tradi-
tions are the last to die.

Kent Plantation House in Alex-
andria is spending the month in mourning — a custom deeply rooted in tradition and strict regulations — as the mansion would have been in 1853, when Sosthene Baillio succumbed to yellow fever.

The 210-year-old house has been transformed into a fantas-
tic world of remembrance of Family’s Oct. 8 death.

“They were very regulated in the period of mourning,” said tour guide Bobby Hynson.

“We're maintaining the whole house and presenting the life of the people here,” Hynson said. “This was a house that was lived in by those people. We try to pass on to these visitors something about the people, and I think that makes the spirits happy.”

In this undated photo, Kent Plantation House tour guide, Bobby Hynson wears traditional black mourning clothes and kneels before a coffin in the parlor of Kent House in Alexandria. The 210-year-old plantation is in mourning this month, practicing traditional mourning customs of antebellum Louisiana.

Some funeral customs still exist.

“Mourning rites alive at Kent,” according to a news report.

In this undated photo, Kent Plantation House tour guide, Bobby Hynson wears traditional black mourning clothes and kneels before a coffin in the parlor of Kent House in Alexandria. The 210-year-old plantation is in mourning this month, practicing traditional mourning customs of antebellum Louisiana.

According to mourning rituals, if a woman lost her husband, she was not expected to cook for a year. It was the responsibility of friends and family members to provide her with food.

“During that time, the de-
sent ones would find out at home and the funeral was held at home,” Hynson said.

Portraits of the deceased were covered up and not displayed, and mirrors were covered for a few months.

Some funeral customs still practiced began during the era of home funerals.

Back then, there was no embalming,” Hynson said. “So, the body was brought to the home where it was dependent upon the weather. In warm weather, they buried the de-

cessed as fast as they could. In cooler weather, they may have kept the body for several days.

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Hynson believes they must be doing something right.

“We've had tour guides who've said they heard people speaking French, and they've heard a little girl's foot-
steps, but no proof,” Hynson said.

“I believe there is a presence in the house, but the spirits are amiable,” Hynson said. “We’re maintaining the whole house and presenting the life of the people here.”

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