Officials Tour Kent House Grounds To Lay Plans for Its Restoration

By John Marsh
(Town Talk Staff Writer)

The Kent House project moved toward the restoration stage Tuesday as state and Kent House Inc. officials toured the grounds.

Lamar Gibson, director of the State Parks and Recreation Commission, said the commission is now studying how to get the most for the $15,000 allocated for the restoration of the oldest existing structure in Central Louisiana.

Gibson said he hopes to develop a time schedule for work on the plans, advertisement for bids, and restoration work as soon as possible.

The home, built in the 1790s by Pierre Baillio, was moved from its original site at Rapides and Texas avenue last January to a site on Rapides facing Bayou Rapides.

The move kept the house on the original Kent Plantation property. Alexandre Gervais Compton made the land available for the new location.

The home was moved in two sections after the American Legion donated it to the Kent House Inc. The legion members had used the building as its headquarters since 1947, but had planned to demolish it after building its new headquarters.

Work started in March, 1963, to organize a group dedicated to saving the building as an historical landmark. Mrs. Ward T. Jones now serves as president of Kent House Inc.

Irving Ward-Steinman and Hunter Pierson, board members, joined Tuesday's inspection. Mrs. Drew Lacroix, member of the commission and a Pineville resident, also looked at the building.

Mrs. Ethel Hynson and Mrs. Hynson Andrews joined the group. Mrs. Hynson was born in the house on Dec. 1, 1894. She talked with group members about how the original house looked.

Mrs. R. P. Eglin of Alexandria, Governor McKeithen's aunt and long active in historical preservation, was at the informal session. Wallace King, assistant to Gibson, also attended.

Before making the tour of the building and grounds, which were cleared last week, the group had an informal luncheon.