The Tezcuco Plantation home, as it appeared Feb. 27, 1998. The plantation was named Tezcuco by the builder, Benjamin Tureaud, after a lake near Mexico City. Tezcuco means resting place in the Aztec language.

Members of a state fire marshal’s inspection team examine the ruins of the Tezcuco Plantation home May 12, a few hours after the antebellum landmark in Ascension Parish caught fire and burned down.

Oil company buys Tezcuco Plantation site

By STEVEN WARD
River parishes bureau

BURNSIDE — The landmark Tezcuco Plantation, an Ascension Parish tourist attraction for more than 30 years, has been closed and sold to an oil company because of poor business since the site’s antebellum centerpiece burned down in May.

Tezcuco Plantation, a 21-acre plot on La. 44 in Burnsise that was the site of a 147-year-old plantation home, now belongs to Motiva Enterprises LLC, Gary Miller, external affairs manager at Convent-based Motiva, said Tuesday.

The sale of Tezcuco became final on Friday.

The site’s owner, Annette Harland, sold the property and everything on it to Motiva because tourism business fell off sharply after the plantation home burned down, according to a letter from Harland to Ascension Parish Tourism Executive Director Angela Falgoust.

Harland could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

“This is definitely going to have an economic impact on Ascension Parish tourism,” Falgoust said Tuesday.

Miller said the restaurant will be transformed into a meeting center for Motiva officials.

Artifacts and memorabilia at the site will be donated to nonprofit organizations and items in the gift shop will be sold in the near future at a “garage sale,” Miller said.

“We also hope to find homes for the small buildings on the site, like the cottages,” Miller said.

Miller said Motiva plans to keep the 21 acres as “green space” and not build anything industrial on the land.

Debra Mayhew, a co-owner of Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie and a former co-owner of Tezcuco, said the loss of Tezcuco signals the end of an era in Ascension Parish tourism.

“It just wasn’t the same after the main house burned down. We thought maybe, they could rebuild something, but I guess that’s just something Annette (Harland) was not interested in doing,” Mayhew said.

The Tezcuco Plantation house was a Greek-revival structure built in 1855 and valued at $1 million. The antiques inside the house were valued at $500,000.

Miller said Motiva has no plans to operate any of the Tezcuco area as a tourist attraction.

The River Road African American Museum, which is on the Tezcuco property, will remain open to visitors until museum director Kathe Hambrick moves her operation to Donaldsonville.

“We are going to work with Kathe on that so they can remain open. We love the museum and the work that Kathe does,” Miller said.

Since the Mother’s Day blaze that gutted the 4,500-square-foot main plantation house, Harland tried to attract tourists to Tezcuco by operating a bed and breakfast in cottages remaining on the land. In addition to Civil War memorabilia on display, the site also housed a restaurant and gift shop.

Motiva bought all 21 acres for $725,000, Miller said.

Motiva plans to keep the 21 acres as “green space” and not build anything industrial on the land.

Debra Mayhew, a co-owner of Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie and a former co-owner of Tezcuco, said the loss of Tezcuco signals the end of an era in Ascension Parish tourism.

“I saw it coming,” Mayhew said Tuesday, referring to the sale of Tezcuco.

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