

Holiday Traditions highlights numerous local attractions in one day

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In many years, said Sheila Mikkelsen, library director. The library's open house featured tours, a presentation on how to use the library's Web site, a workshop on genealogy and music by harpist Chris Molloy.

Library staff directed some visitors to the Mary Vansickle Wait History Room, which is filled with local history. The room contains city directories that date back to 1857, a newspaper collection that dates back to 1859 and local school yearbooks.

"We're trying to get people to know what we have," said Mary Popovich, research aid. "We're highlighting what Auburn has to offer its citizens."

Patsy Myers, secretary of Friends of the Seymour Public Library District, said free books and other resources in the community are important.

"We're trying to promote reading in the community," she said. "If you have books, you have access to everything."

One visitor from Syracuse, Monica Gullotta, said she took the tour and was fascinated by the glass floors in parts of the building.

"I was very much taken by many things," she said. "We've never been here, so this was a treat."

The Harriet Tubman Home also participated. They included tours, music from the Auburn Choir, crafts for children and refreshments.

Christine Carter, tour coordinator and tour guide, said normally about 200 people come through the museum during Holiday Traditions, but the number is dependent on the weather.

Carter explained that Tubman used Christmas as the time to free her slave brothers, as the holiday marked a day when slaves were allowed to travel to see their families without suspicion.

"This is crucial simply because Harriet Tubman rescued her brothers on Christmas of 1854," Carter explained. "It's something people don't know about. (Tubman) didn't let a holiday stop her from rescuing her family. (Christmas) was the time that slaves were free to move about."

One visitor was Pablo Ruiz, from Honduras. Ruiz was there with his partner, two children and friend.

"I (wanted to come) to understand more about the history of this woman who was involved in the struggle of freeing her sisters and brothers," he said. "I want our children to be able to understand that we haven't always been free."

St. Mary's Church also participated with a concert by

the vocal group Musica Transatlantica. The group performed "Ave Maria" in Latin, along with other Renaissance pieces. Group director and soprano Colleen Liggett, who is also the cantor and choir director at St. Mary's,

said people were able to come and enjoy both music and spirituality Sunday. Gene Donofrio, of Auburn, a regular singer in the church choir, said he's been a member for 60 years. He showed up to support his choir director,

and because he enjoys music in Latin.

"We like the old Latin," he said. "This type of music goes back to the ancient times." The Rev. Frank Lioi said this was St. Mary's second year participating.

"St. Mary's is a downtown church," he said. "We feel very much a part of (downtown Auburn)."

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