

Hundreds wish Brandon happy birthday

By Ali Flewelling

Correspondent - Published: June 19, 2011

BRANDON — The sidewalks of Brandon were bustling yesterday as the town journeyed back in time, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and celebrating its own 250th birthday.

By early afternoon, hundreds of people were out to participate in the day's events and more were expected.

"We have a full day of activities planned," said John Dilts, steward of the Brandon Museum at the Stephen A. Douglas Birthplace.

Upon entering town, onlookers were immersed in Civil War culture as the Champlain Valley Historic Re-enactors gave demonstrations and provided individuals with historical information.

Many out-of-towners also joined in the celebration.

Keith and Rita Libby, of McIndoe Falls, traveled to Brandon to take part in the action.

"I came over just to see what the Civil War re-enactors were doing," said Keith Libby.

Libby, who heard about the events on the evening news, said that he and his wife knew it would be something fun for them to do together.

"They talked about some of the house tours on the news too so we might try and go to some of those also," he said.

Five historic homes opened their doors to visitors; the purchase of a \$10 ticket granted individuals admission to the privately owned homes as well as two historic lectures which were held in the town hall.

Dilts said that the opportunity to tour the homes is rare.

"It's a unique thing that people are opening up their homes," he said.

According to Dilts, a handful of other events were open to the public including historic presentations, a 250-person choral music performance featuring period and patriotic pieces, and a silent film screening with live piano accompaniment.

Janet Mondlak, executive director of the Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, was busy handing out informational pamphlets and encouraging people to walk around town and see everything.

“There’s a lot going on today,” she said.

Mondlak added that Saturday’s events were one of many that Brandon has planned for the summer.

“The parade is coming up soon too and its theme is also Brandon’s 250th celebration,” she said.

Dilts added that the day’s events were a fun way to get people out and about.

“It’s a great day for Brandon, to celebrate its birth and for folks to come and be a part of it,” he said.