The Mount Horeb Area Historical Society is premiering three major Mt. Horeb Sesquicentennial events on Saturday, April 16 at the Mount Horeb Area Museum, 100 S. Second Street. The open house will take place from 1 to 4 p.m.

The afternoon will feature the premiere of the Society’s new book, “Mt. Horeb Area Then & Now” and the opening of two exhibits, “Stories in Stitches: Quilts of Southwestern Dane County” and “Ethnicity and Civil War.”

“To my knowledge, there has never been another local history book like this, one that combines both an artistic approach and a scholarly text,” Historical Society President Brian Bigler, said of “Mt. Horeb Area Then & Now.”

“We had a great committee and a fantastic artist, Joy Martinson, who pulled this all together in a year and a half,” Bigler added.

The book’s 128 pages combine historic photos with artistic reshoots in contemporary views, many in color. Along with the photos is a well-researched text describing the development of southwestern Dane County, the area’s townships and incorporated and unincorporated villages. If all goes as scheduled with the printers, the book will be available for sale at the open house.

The new exhibit “Stories in Stitches” fills the museum’s Centennial Gallery with colorful bed coverings and wall hangings dating from 1855 to 1998. Most importantly these everyday crafted objects tell the stories of their makers and the events that surrounded them; stories of anniversaries and celebrations, settlement and war, invention and industrialization, mortality and the Great Depression.

 The quilts were all selected from the museum’s extensive textile collection and the exhibit honors the 175th anniversary of Dane County. There will be demonstrations of the quilting process during the open house.

The other new exhibit, “Ethnicity and Civil War” was created to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War.

“It may be a small exhibit, but it has a lot to say,” Bigler said. “We wanted to create this section in 1998 when the museum’s larger exhibition opened, but ran out of time. With this year being the anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War we figured it was time to research and install this.”

 The exhibit takes a different approach to the Civil War, telling the reactions of local and state participants from the point of view of their ethnic backgrounds.

“You have these individuals arriving here in the 1850s, coming from Norway, Ireland, Germany, Scotland and Switzerland, and suddenly they are all faced with national conflict, a war that would become very personal,” Bigler said. “In a limited amount of space, with a lot of time and effort, with and equally small amount of resource material we were able to present some remarkable findings to tell this story for the very first time.”

Due to construction on South Second Street visitors are encouraged to enter through the rear door of the museum and park on the Society’s lot on Front Street.