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CONTACT: Jeff Mammenga, Media Coordinator, (605) 773-6000,
Jeff.Mammenga@state.sd.us

Literary icon Wilder subject of January History Book Club meeting

PIERRE, S.D. -- American literary icon Laura Ingalls Wilder will be the focus of the January History and Heritage Book Club meeting.

Discussion leader Nancy Tystad Koupal will lead the discussion of Wilder's *The Long Winter* and tell about the Pioneer Girl Project. The book club meeting will begin at 7 p.m. CST on Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

"January is a fitting time to discuss a winter in which the author describes storms that buffeted the little prairie town of De Smet, Dakota Territory, from October until April. That winter of 1880-81 was trying for Laura and the rest of the Ingalls family. No trains could get through with food or coal, and townspeople wondered how they will make it through the winter," said Jay D. Vogt, director of the South Dakota State Historical Society. "We read the book today and wonder how the pioneers could have survived, and wonder if we could survive similar circumstances."

Everyone is welcome to attend the free meeting, sponsored by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation and the South Dakota Historical Society Press. The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the SDSHS.

The Long Winter was first published in 1940. It is the sixth book in Wilder's "Little House" series.

"Millions of people have read the Little House books," said Koupal, director/editor-in-chief of the South Dakota State Historical Society Press. "To many, her stories capture the history of homesteading. But there is one story that those people have never read, and that is Wilder's autobiography."

The Little House Heritage Trust, the administrators of Wilder's estate, has given permission to the SDSHS Press to publish *Pioneer Girl*, Wilder's published autobiography. *Pioneer Girl* was Wilder's first real attempt at writing her childhood story. It was intended for adults to read. It formed the basis of her Little House books.

"The Press' intent in publishing *Pioneer Girl* is to produce a book of lavish quality, full of historical and seldom-seen photographs, with annotation to provide historical context and analysis," Koupal said.

The Long Winter is available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol. Book club members receive a 10-percent discount, and SDSHS members receive an additional 5-percent discount, when they purchase the book club selection at either Heritage Store.

For more information, call (605) 773-6006.

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The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.