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### **Celebration of Badger Clark to take place in Custer State Park**

PIERRE, S.D. – Cowboy poet Badger Clark will be celebrated in song and stories at special free events on Sept. 2 in Custer State Park.

“This year marks three milestones in Clark’s life,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. “2017 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of his volume of poetry, ‘Grass Grown Trails.’ It’s the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clark’s being appointed South Dakota’s first poet laureate and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cowboy poet’s death.”

The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre, oversees the reprinting and distribution of Clark’s work as well as other materials about Clark.

Clark was born on Jan. 1, 1883, in Albia, Iowa, but moved with his family to a homestead south of Plankinton when he was three months old. Clark turned four years of being a cowboy in Arizona into a career as one of America’s most successful cowboy poets. His first volume of poetry, “Sun and Saddle Leather,” was published in 1915. “Grass Grown Trails” was Clark’s second volume of poetry and was later included in the reprinting of “Sun and Saddle Leather.” Gov. Leslie Jensen named Clark the first poet laureate of South Dakota in 1937, a title he held until his death 20 years later.

Performers and presenters on Sept. 2 are Pegie Douglas and the Badger Sett Band, Rex Rideout, Greg Scott and Kenn Pierson.

The Badger Sett Band formed in 2012 to present the life and music of Clark. Douglas, the leader, has set Clark’s poems to music and discusses Clark’s life.

Rideout is a historical musician and entertainer. He has been studying the song and verse of the Old West for more than 30 years. He was the cowboy fiddler in the movie “Cowboys and Aliens.”

Scott is the editor of “Cowboy Poetry: Classic Poems & Prose by Badger Clark.” Scott is a fourth-generation Arizonian and a retired history teacher. He spent decades studying Clark’s life in Arizona Territory and beyond. As a scholar for the Arizona Humanities Council, his most popular program was about Clark. He presented programs about Clark in Arizona, other states and at the annual cowboy poetry and music gathering in Elko, Nev.

Pierson adapted the stage play “Mountain Thunder: A Ballad of Badger Clark” from the letters and poems of Clark while attending Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell as an undergraduate. Later, he was involved in completing the filming of South Dakota Public Broadcasting’s version of “Mountain Thunder” on site at The Badger Hole, Clark’s home near Legion Lake, following the death of his theater professor and friend Darryl F. Patten, who portrayed Clark on stage and screen. Pierson lives with his family in Los Angeles, where he teaches English and American literature at Rio Hondo College.

On Sept. 2, all the presenters will take turns sharing stories about Clark or playing music beginning at 10 a.m. MDT at The Badger Hole.

At 3:30 p.m. MDT, there will be a viewing of “Mountain Thunder: A Ballad of Badger Clark” at the Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center. Pierson will discuss the movie.

The special events will conclude at 7 p.m. MDT with a program at the Tatanka Theatre at the Game Lodge Campground that will be mostly music. The Badger Sett band will be performing some of Clark’s poems set to music from “Grass Grown Trails” along with the other presenters sharing stories about Clark.

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### ***About the South Dakota State Historical Society***

*The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, 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](http://www.history.sd.gov) for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call 605-394-1936 for more information.*

### ***About the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation***

*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.*