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Badger Clark program coming to Cultural Heritage Center

PIERRE, S.D. – People will have a chance to learn about South Dakota’s first poet laureate during a program in Pierre.

Pegie Douglas of Custer will present the show “The Life and Music of Badger Clark, South Dakota’s First Poet Laureate” at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, Sept. 8, at the Cultural Heritage Center. Everyone is welcome to attend the free program.

“Pegie has performed shows about Badger Clark throughout the Black Hills. We are pleased that people in central South Dakota will be able to learn more about the cowboy poet through Pegie’s program,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation.

The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and is sponsoring Douglas’s program as part of its History and Heritage Book Club.

In “The Life and Music of Badger Clark,” Douglas will interweave the story of Clark’s life with poems of his that have been set to music. The program ends with “I Must Come Back,” one of Clark’s last poems and a favorite of Black Hills residents.

Douglas grew up in North Carolina, but her roots are on the prairie near Faith. She lives in the Black Hills from May to October and is a volunteer tour guide at Clark’s home in Custer State Park, the Badger Hole. Douglas discovered Clark’s works while visiting South Dakota. Douglas has set about 12 of Clark’s poems to music and created the show, “The Life and Music of Badger Clark,” in 2012 at the Tatanka Theater in Custer State Park.

Clark (1883-1957) was South Dakota’s first poet laureate, an honor he held from 1937 until his death. Clark’s first volume of poetry, “Sun and Saddle Leather,” was first published 100 years ago, in 1915. His other published volumes are “Sky Lines and Wood Smoke,” “boots and bylines,” “When Hot Springs was a Pup” and “Spike.” His biography is “Badger Clark: Cowboy Poet with Universal Appeal” by Jessie Sundstrom.

The foundation oversees the reprinting and distribution of Clark’s work. The books and other items about Badger Clark are available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol and online at <https://sdhsforg.presencehost.net/store/shopnow.html>.

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

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 for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.