

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 25, 2015

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

State Historical Society Book Focuses on North Dakota Community before Big Oil

PIERRE, S.D. — The latest book from the South Dakota State Historical Society contrasts small-town values of the last century with the trials of a modern oil town, telling the stories of those who built and sustained a community on the plains of western North Dakota prior to the Bakken oil boom.

In “Natives of a Dry Place: Stories of Dakota before the Oil Boom,” author Richard Edwards takes a deeply personal look at his childhood home, focusing on a not-so-distant past and reflecting on a time that precedes big oil.

“‘Natives of a Dry Place’ is a book that will resonate with readers across the United States, because it goes to the heart of our communal identities, especially in the Midwest,” says Nancy Tystad Koupal, director of the South Dakota Historical Society Press. “Edwards uses his experience as both a historian and an economist to create a compelling story, showcasing a small town’s virtues and examining how a community may survive during times of great upheaval.”

Richard Edwards, who grew up in Stanley, North Dakota, is director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Before the oil industry transformed western North Dakota, he remembers a time when the natives of Stanley went about their normal, everyday lives. Edwards tells the stories of the postmen, farmers, housewives, doctors and other residents of the bustling town whose lives were centered around certain qualities. With resoluteness, steadfastness, devotion to the community, and ever-present modesty, these people helped cultivate the cultural fabric of the Great Plains. Through “Natives of a Dry Place,” Edwards revisits Stanley and discovers something exceptional about the place he once considered “ordinary.”

“Natives of a Dry Place: Stories of Dakota before the Oil Boom” will be featured at the South Dakota Festival of Books in Deadwood on Sept. 25. Readers can order it for \$16.95, plus shipping and tax, directly from the South Dakota Historical Society Press. Visit www.sdshspress.com or call (605) 773-6009. “Natives of a Dry Place” will be available through most bookstores and online retailers by early October.

Editor's Note: A JPG of the book's cover is attached. Please contact jennifer.mcintyre@state.sd.us for publicity information or to schedule an interview or event with the author.

-30-

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.