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## **Poet Laureate Badger Clark's first book marks one century in print**

PIERRE, S.D. — His readers rode dusty trails, marveled at nature's wonder, and loved and lost beautiful women.

Badger Clark, former Poet Laureate of South Dakota, captured and expressed the essence of the West in his verses.

"Sun and Saddle Leather," the first collection of Clark's cowboy poetry, was first published in 1915 and has been in print ever since. The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, which is 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 and is observing the centennial of "Sun and Saddle Leather."

"They were simple poems, yet rich with ideas and dreams and passions that spoke to our unsophisticated hearts," Barbara Herigstad of Spearfish is quoted as saying in the introduction to "Sun and Saddle Leather."

Born on Jan. 1, 1883, in Albia, Iowa, Charles Badger Clark moved to Dakota Territory with his family when he was three months old. Clark took a doctor's advice to move to a dry climate after being diagnosed with tuberculosis. He went to Arizona, where he tended a small herd of cattle at a ranch near Tombstone.

Clark turned four years of cowboy life into a career as one of America's most successful cowboy poets. He devoted much of his time in Arizona to writing, with his poems appearing in "Pacific Monthly" and other magazines.

Clark's stepmother, Anna, paid for the cost of publishing a book of his poems. The result was "Sun and Saddle Leather." The book proved popular, and Clark was able to pay back Anna's investment in the first year of its publication. Later printings of "Sun and Saddle Leather" included Clark's second book of poetry, "Grass Grown Trails," and nine additional poems. Various editions have been illustrated with drawings by Southwest artist Edward Borein; photographs of cowboy life by E.L. Huffman; and, currently, drawings by Custer artist Martha Studt.

"Sun and Saddle Leather" contains several of Clark's best-recognized works. "Ridin'" was the first poem written by Clark to be published in a magazine and is the first poem in "Sun and Saddle Leather." Versions of "The Glory Trail," "A Border Affair (Spanish is the Lovin' Tongue)" and "A Roundup Lullaby" have all been set to music.

"A Cowboy's Prayer" from "Sun and Saddle Leather" became one of Clark's most popular poems. It appears on postcards, in greeting cards and is read at rodeos.

For the last years of his life, Clark made his home in The Badger Hole, which he described as “four rooms and a path,” near Legion Lake in the southern Black Hills. Clark died in 1957. Custer State Park officials manage The Badger Hole, which is open to the public from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

In honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its publication, “Sun and Saddle Leather” is being offered at a discount price at The Badger Hole and the Heritage Store at the Cultural Heritage Center, which is managed by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation.

People may call (605) 773-6346 to order the book from the Heritage Store or visit [www.sdhsf.org](http://www.sdhsf.org) for more information about Clark and his books.

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*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.*