

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** June 3, 2016

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

## **Legendary Hugh Glass to be explored at History Book Club Meeting**

PIERRE, S.D. – A South Dakota historian will shed light on one of the most famous grizzly-bear attacks in the history of the American West at the June meeting of the History and Heritage Book Club.

James McLaird of Mitchell will discuss his new biography of Hugh Glass, “Hugh Glass: Grizzly Survivor,” when the book club meets at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, June 14, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. Everyone is welcome at the free program.

The program will be broadcast live to Lemmon High School via the Digital Dakota Network, a videoconferencing network. Those at the Lemmon site will be able to see, hear and talk to McLaird. People interested in participating in the discussion at a location other than the Cultural Heritage Center are encouraged to call the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation at (605) 773-6006. It may be possible to use the Digital Dakota Network at a public facility such as a school to enable people to see, hear and talk to McLaird.

Glass was a frontiersman who was left struggling for his life after being attacked by a grizzly bear in August 1823 along the Grand River near what is now Lemmon. According to popular legend, Glass crawled across the plains on a 200-mile journey back to civilization, intent on revenge upon the men who left him for dead.

“The Hollywood blockbuster ‘The Revenant’ sparked interest in the story of Hugh Glass. McLaird has searched for the true story behind Glass,” said Michael Lewis, president of the foundation.

The History and Heritage Book Club is sponsored by the foundation and the South Dakota Historical Society Press, publisher of “Hugh Glass: Grizzly Survivor.”

McLaird is professor emeritus of history at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell. He is the author of “Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane: Deadwood Legends,” also published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press, and numerous articles about the Black Hills and the American West.

Glass intrigued him, McLaird said, because of his interest in legendary people and events in the American West.

McLaird said writing the story was a daunting task because few documents exist about Glass.

“For example, we do not know with certainty when and where he was born, or what he did prior to joining the Ashley-Henry fur trapping party in 1823 when he encountered the grizzly bear. To add to the difficulty, there are no reliable eyewitness accounts of his mauling; those by Glass and other trappers are second- and even third-hand, and, to add to the difficulty, they were written down by writers interested in creating heroic tales,” McLaird said. “Thus, we do not know the circumstances of the encounter, the extent of the injuries, and whether Glass crawled, walked, rafted or was hauled by others to a fur trade post to recover. Nor can we be certain he sought revenge or forgave the men who purportedly deserted him.”

Much of the book relates to how the popular tale emerged and has changed over time, McLaird said.

“Hugh Glass: Grizzly Survivor” is the latest addition to the South Dakota Biography Series published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press. The book is available for \$14.95, plus shipping and tax. It can be purchased directly from the South Dakota Historical Society Press at [www.sdhspress.com](http://www.sdhspress.com) or by calling (605) 773-6009. The book is also available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and state Capitol and from bookstores and online retailers.

Call (605) 773-6006 for more information about the program.

-30-

***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.*