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State Historical Society program to focus on Great Depression, New Deal

PIERRE, S.D. -- The Great Depression and “A New Deal for South Dakota” will be the focus of a public program at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

The event will take place at 7 p.m. CST on Tuesday, Jan. 3, as part of the History and Heritage Book Club and will involve several program areas of the South Dakota State Historical Society. Everyone is welcome at the free event, sponsored by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation and the South Dakota Historical Society Press.

“From drought to grasshoppers, many South Dakotans lived through or grew up hearing stories about the Great Depression,” said Foundation President Michael Lewis. “State Historical Society staff and author Alton Lee will talk about aspects of this era and President Roosevelt’s New Deal, which, at its height, supported nearly half of the state’s population.”

Historic preservation, museum and archives staff will discuss the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps; John and Alan Lomax, who helped catalog songs during the Depression era; and photographer John Vachon and the Farm Security Administration.

Author R. Alton Lee is joining the meeting by telephone to discuss his book, “A New Deal for South Dakota: Drought, Depression, and Relief, 1920–1941.” The book was published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press in September 2016.

Lee is professor emeritus of history at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. He has written extensively on the political history of the Great Plains. In “A New Deal for South Dakota,” Lee examines the program’s effect on families, farmers, miners, young people, women, American Indians and others in the state. The book is an evaluation of South Dakota’s effort to avoid both starvation and federal dependence as its people endured the worst natural and economic disaster of modern times.

The book is available at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol.

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

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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 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.