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Laura Ingalls Wilder's birthday to be celebrated at Cultural Heritage Center

PIERRE, S.D. – A special program will mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of author Laura Ingalls Wilder.

The free program will begin at 7 p.m. CST on Tuesday, Feb. 7. The program will take place at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre and will be broadcast to the De Smet Middle School using the state's video conference network. People at both locations will be able to see, hear and talk to each other and the guest speaker. People at other locations are welcome to join the program by telephone or through the state's video conference network. Please call (605) 773-6006 for more information.

"February 7 marks the author's 150th birthday. Through Wilder's books, readers of all ages have experienced what it was like to be a pioneer in the late 1800s," said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. "Her books have captivated readers with the story of the Ingalls family since the first one was published in 1932."

The program is sponsored by the foundation and the South Dakota Historical Society Press as part of the History and Heritage Book Club, and also the Ingalls Homestead and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society, both of De Smet. Birthday cake and several recipes from "The Little House Cookbook" will be served. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Wilder was born in 1867 in Pepin, Wis., and died on Feb. 10, 1957, in Mansfield, Mo. In a speech published in "A Little House Sampler" edited by William T. Anderson, Wilder said she realized that her life represented a period of American history in which the frontier had gone and agricultural settlements had taken their place. She had lived in the phases of the frontiersman, the pioneer, the farmer and the towns.

Wilder's first attempt at writing her life story was meant for adults. "Pioneer Girl" went unpublished until 2014, when published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press. Wilder said she rewrote her story for children as a memorial to her father. The resulting "Little House in the Big Woods" was an instant success. It was followed by seven more books that told the story of Wilder's growing up, courtship and marriage.

Joining the program by telephone will be Anderson. The award-winning historian and author has written extensively about the Ingalls and Wilder families. Like many, he became fascinated with Wilder when he was a youngster. His third-grade teacher read Wilder's "Little House on the Prairie" to the class and made it interesting. He later contacted Wilder's daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, for information and visited sites where

the Wilders had lived. His first published writing, "The Story of the Ingalls," was published when he was 15.

Anderson's talk will focus on his most recent book about Wilder, "The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder." The letters span from 1894 to 1956 and include correspondence to her editor, readers, husband and daughter.

"The Selected Letters of Laura Ingalls Wilder," "Pioneer Girl" and the Little House books are available at the Heritage Store at the Cultural Heritage Center.

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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.