Contact: Kaycie Timm
806-651-5238
ktimm@wtamu.edu

**CSAW welcomes Western author John Erickson to WTAMU**

Canyon, Texas—Award-winning Western author John Erickson, creator of *Hank the Cowdog*, will discuss how he combines personal and Panhandle history in works like his classic book, *Prairie Gothic*, at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20 in the Hazlewood Lecture Hall at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. Sponsored by the Center for the Study of the American West (CSAW), Erickson’s presentation, titled “Prairie Gothic: Writing Regional History,” will be followed by a book signing and reception with coffee sponsored by Palace Coffee, desserts courtesy of Joe’s Catering and champagne donated by Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits.

Throughout his career, Erickson has written and published more than 75 books and 600 articles. Although he is best known as the author of the *Hank the Cowdog* series, his collection of work also includes numerous non-fiction works, including *Prairie Gothic, Through Time and the Valley* and *Story Craft.* Erickson’s stories have received recognition including the Audie, Oppenheimer, Wrangler and Lamplighter Awards.The *Hank* series, which began in 1983 through Erickson’s garage-based publishing company, Maverick Books, has become one of the nation’s most popular children’s series. Through the voice of Hank, a witty, smart-aleck cowdog, Erickson provides readers with a palatable yet well-documented chronicle of ranch life in the West Texas Panhandle.

Erickson, born in Midland, Texas to Joseph and Anna Beth Erickson, graduated from Perryton high school before spending a year at the University of Denver. After finishing his bachelor’s degree at the University of Texas, he studied theology at Harvard Divinity School for two years, before moving back to Texas only three hours short of earning a master’s degree. Upon returning, John worked as a cowboy in the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. During this time, he began seriously pursuing his career as an author, dedicating four hours to writing each morning. After receiving rejection slips from numerous publishers, Erickson and his wife Kris started Maverick Books in 1982, and released the first *Hank* book the following year.

Today, Maverick Books continues to serve as publisher for the *Hank* series, which Publishers Weekly calls a "grassroots publishing phenomena.” Erickson still resides in Perryton, has appeared in numerous schools and has spoken at conventions of teachers, librarians and homeschoolers.

For more information about Erickson’s appearance at WTAMU, please contact Kaycie Timm at ktimm@wtamu.edu or CSAW director Alex Hunt at ahunt@wtamu.edu.

**About the Center for the Study of the American West**
CSAW formed in the fall of 2016 with a mission of fostering the study of the American West at WTAMU and building bridges between the university, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and the regional populace. CSAW seeks to promote the American West both as a culturally unique region and a product of broad historical forces. Through this endeavor, CSAW remains dedicated to cultivating a critical vision of region and place in a globalized era. For more information about CSAW, please visit wtamu.edu/csaw.