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### Book traces life, work of Montana architect A.J. Gibson

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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July 17, 2008

**Contact:** Barbara Koostra, director, Montana Museum of Art & Culture, 406-243-2019, barbara.koostra@mso.umt.edu.

**BOOK TRACES LIFE, WORK OF MONTANA ARCHITECT A.J. GIBSON**

**MISSOULA—**

The Montana Museum of Art & Culture, in partnership with The University of Montana Press, announces the publication of the book “The Original Man: The Life and Work of Montana Architect A.J. Gibson” by Hipólito Rafael Chacón.

Chacón, a UM professor of art history and art criticism, worked with the UM’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library K. Ross Toole Archives and the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula to create the first complete biography of Albert John Gibson, Missoula County’s best-known and most beloved architect.

Photographs from the museum and architectural drawings from the library’s archives, as well as other materials from public and private collections, have been brought together for a rich portrayal of Gibson’s life and his impact on Montana towns.

The book’s catalog of Gibson’s buildings includes recent discoveries and materials from unpublished archival material, documents, drawings and photographs from the architect’s life.

From the 1880s to the 1910s, Gibson defined great architecture in Western Montana and Northern Idaho. He reshaped the Western town from a rustic accumulation of buildings to a rational and civilized space and was an integral figure in the development of architecture, urbanism and society.



Gibson's legacy and work have endured for more than a century and include the first five buildings on the UM campus in **Missoula**, the Daly Mansion near **Hamilton**, and the Ravalli County and Missoula County courthouses.

His meteoric rise as an architect/builder in the 1890s was remarkable, since he had no professional training in the field. A self-made individual, he designed and built a broad range of buildings -- from modest private homes to grand residences and significant civic structures.

Gibson's other great passion was automobile travel. He and his wife, Maud, set many records and earned a reputation as Montana's automotive pioneers. Their lives ended tragically in an automobile accident on New Year's Eve 1927.

"The Original Man" is available for purchase at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture's Meloy and Paxson galleries, located in UM's Performing Arts and Radio-Television Center, or by calling 406-243-2019 or e-mailing [museum@umontana.edu](mailto:museum@umontana.edu). The book also can be purchased by calling The Bookstore at UM at 888-333-1995 or Far Country Press in **Helena**, which is distributing the book statewide, at 800-821-3874.

A book signing will be held at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 14, at the University Congregational Church of Christ, located at 405 University Ave. in Missoula. For more information, call 406-543-6952. A signing also will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 16, at Fact & Fiction, located at 220 N. Higgins in Missoula. Both events are free and open to the public.



The book will accompany a traveling exhibition of the same title that features architectural models, facsimiles of drawings and photographs. Organized by the Montana Museum of Art & Culture, the exhibition will be on view Sept. 18-Oct. 19 at the Holter Museum of Art in Helena. The Holter Museum viewing will be held during the annual conference of the American Institute of Architects, Montana chapter, which is sponsoring the traveling exhibition.

During 2009, the exhibition will be on view at the Daly Mansion to celebrate the mansion's centennial. In March and April 2010, the exhibition will be at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture to mark the centennial of the Missoula County Courthouse.

Publication of "The Original Man" was sponsored by Jackson Contractor Group Inc., UM President George Dennison, the Mansfield Library, the Gibson Mansion Bed and Breakfast, the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, the Missoula Construction Council, Ed and Janet House, Christine Wilcox and Mike Boehme of Western Montana Development.

For more information, call 406-243-2019 or go online to <http://www.umt.edu/montanamuseum>.

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**NOTE TO MEDIA:** Digital images of select items included in the exhibition are available upon request by calling 406-243-2019.

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