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NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 8, 2008

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‘A.J. AND MAUD GIBSON DAY’ HONORS MONTANA COUPLE

MISSOULA—

Missoula Mayor John Engen and the Missoula County Board of Commissioners have declared Wednesday, Aug. 13, “A.J. and Maud Gibson Day” to celebrate the lives of the renowned architect and his wife.

The proclamation honors Albert John “A.J.” Gibson as “Missoula’s most prominent and beloved architect” and describes the Gibsons as “spirited public servants and philanthropists who gave freely of their time, talent and treasure to the city and state they so loved.”

Born in Ohio in 1862, Gibson moved to **Butte** in 1883 after his father’s death. By 1889 he was in the carpentry business in Missoula.

Gibson defined great architecture in Western Montana and Northern Idaho, reshaping 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.

His legacy and work have endured for more than a century and include the first five buildings on The University of Montana campus, the Daly Mansion near **Hamilton** and the Ravalli County and Missoula County courthouses.

Gibson’s meteoric rise as an architect/builder in the 1890s was remarkable, given that

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.

In 1909, Gibson retired to travel with his wife in one of the first automobiles in Missoula. The next year, the two made the first cross-country trip by automobile from Montana to New York. They were the first Montanans to drive across the Canadian and Mexican borders.

A.J. and Maud Gibson died Dec. 31, 1927, when their automobile was struck by a train in Missoula. The Missoulian reported that Gibson was partially deaf at the time, preventing him from hearing the oncoming train, and that the windows of the automobile were frosted over, preventing him from seeing the train approaching.

The first complete biography of Gibson, “The Original Man: The Life and Work of Montana Architect A.J. Gibson” by UM Professor Hipólito Rafael Chacón, was released last month. The book was published by the Montana Museum of Art & Culture and The University of Montana Press.

The book’s rich portrayal of Gibson’s life and his impact on Montana towns brings together photographs from UM’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library’s K. Ross Toole Archives, as well as other materials from public and private collections. It includes recently discovered unpublished archival materials, drawings, documents and photographs from the architect’s life.

“The Original Man” is available through the Montana Museum of Art & Culture, located in UM’s Performing Arts and Radio-Television Center, or by calling 406-243-2019 or

e-mailing museum@umontana.edu. It is distributed statewide through Far Country Press in Helena, 800-821-3874.

Book signings will be held in Missoula at University Congregational Church of Christ at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 14, and at Fact & Fiction downtown at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 16. Both events are free and open to the public.

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NOTE TO THE MEDIA: Digital images of select items included in an upcoming exhibition featuring architectural models, facsimiles of drawings and photographs are available upon request by calling 406-243-2019.

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