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Author Richard Gibson to give presentations about capitols in Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. – Richard R. Gibson will give presentations in Pierre about state houses and world capitals on Monday and Tuesday, Aug. 14 and 15.

Gibson is the author of “A Celebration of State Capitols,” considered by some to be the definitive resource on state capitols. The book is arranged alphabetically by state, with four pages of information, photographs and things to look for when visiting each capitol. The book makes a detailed presentation of not only each state capitol, but also former capitols, governors’ mansions, state timelines, close-up views of domes and more.

While traveling from Colorado to Illinois, Gibson stopped to visit and photograph a state capitol. Visits to other capitols soon followed. He spent more than two decades photographing and collecting memorabilia about each capitol. He collaborated with historians, curators and archivists from each state, unearthing unusual quotes, stories and statistics about each state house. The result was “A Celebration of State Capitols.”

“Gibson is a man who clearly loves capitols and will be a terrific tour guide during his presentations,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation.

The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society. The foundation and Rawlins Library are sponsoring Gibson’s appearances in Pierre.

Gibson’s first presentation will be at 7 p.m. CDT on Monday, Aug. 14, at Rawlins Library. His topic will be “Capitals of the World.”

“These aren’t capitals like London or Paris,” said Rawlins Library Director Robin Schrupp. “These are towns that claim to be ‘Frog Capital of the World’ or ‘Pheasant Capital of the World.’ These towns want to be known or recognized for their unique claim to fame.”

By one account, there are more than 400 communities making a claim as a “capital,” Gibson said. Many towns hold a festival to celebrate their claim to fame. In his program, he will tell why the town makes this claim to be a world capital and show photographs of how this is celebrated.

Gibson will present the program, “The State Capitols,” at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, Aug. 15, at the Cultural Heritage Center. He will tell about the development of capitols and share unique features and interesting stories of the state houses and show photographs of the interior and exterior of the capitols.

What intrigues Gibson about South Dakota's capitol, he said, is the tile floors and the stories behind them, which he learned from the late historian Harold Schuler. He also finds interesting the dome, which is copper that has oxidized black.

Each program will be about an hour long and is free.

Gibson will sign copies of "A Celebration of State Capitols" from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, Aug. 15, at the Heritage Store at the Capitol. The gift shop is located on the first floor of the Capitol, near the first ladies' gown display.

The book will be available for sale at the programs and the book signing.

Please call 605-773-6006 for more information.

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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.