

THE INGERSOLL

The Newsletter of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum and the Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee

REPORT

IN THIS ISSUE

Museum Marks Twenty-Five Years

Freethought Trail
'Radically' Redesigned

Ingersoll Among the Spiritualists

Ingersoll Conference in August

Endowment Update

Marketplace

MUSEUM HOURS 2018

The Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum will be open for its twenty-fifth anniversary season at 61 Main St., Dresden, N.Y., from noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from May 26–October 28, 2018. Suggested admission is only \$5.00!

INGERSOLL MUSEUM MARKS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

"I remember the Ingersoll Museum's opening day like it was yesterday," noted Museum Director Tom Flynn. "It was Saturday, May 29, 1993, and our first visitor was Jean Millholland, then the executive director emerita of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism, as the Council for Secular Humanism was then called." Millholland would be the first of thousands to visit the two-story wooden house in New York's Finger Lakes district, there encountering the story of Robert Green Ingersoll, "the most remarkable American most people never heard of."



With its 2018 season, North America's only freethought museum will have greeted the traveling public each summer and fall for twenty-five consecutive years. There's a silver anniversary banner hanging in the first—and last—room on the museum tour and a silver anniversary conference planned for August 18–19 (see story in this issue).

"To put this into perspective," Flynn observed, "keep in mind that Ingersoll's birthplace was restored twice before, first in 1921 and again in 1954. Each time, it continued to operate for about a decade before interest—and money—ran out. This silver anniversary means that this third 'incarnation' of the Ingersoll Museum has now operated far longer than its two predecessors combined. Better yet, at age twenty-five the current Ingersoll Museum is going strong. With our ongoing Museum endowment campaign nearing the half-way point [see story in this issue –Eds.], there's every reason to expect that the museum will celebrate a thirty-fifth anniversary—and who knows, maybe a fiftieth as well." ❧

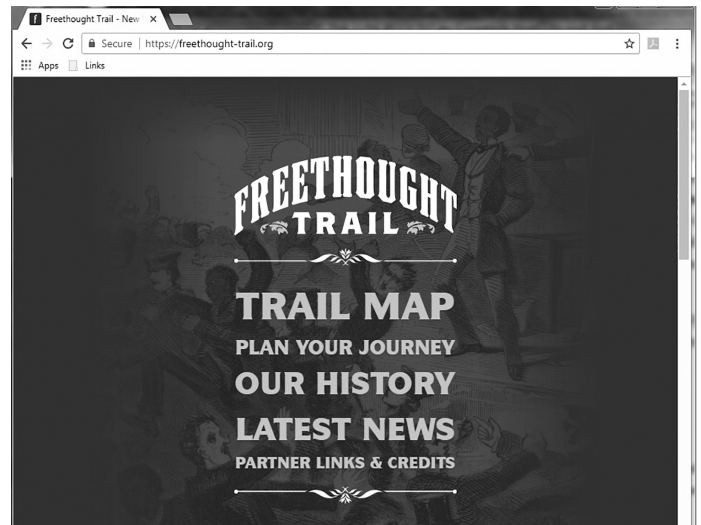
FREETHOUGHT TRAIL IS 'RADICALLY' REDESIGNED

Foundational advancements for progress and equality—secularism and freethought, abolitionism and suffrage, and other radical movements—grew and flourished on the same fertile ground in nineteenth-century west-central New York State.

Today, the legacies of such transformational American reformers as Susan B. Anthony, Robert Green Ingersoll, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Frederick Douglass are honored, and their stories retold, through the 115 historic sites (marked and unmarked) that compose the Freethought Trail, a project of the Center for Inquiry's Council for Secular Humanism.

For 2018, the Freethought Trail website has been radically redesigned. The new Freethought-Trail.org is fresh with gorgeous visuals, simple navigation, and most

continued on page 2



Redesigned by Ingenious, Inc., of Buffalo, New York, the Freethought Trail website sports a new, fresher look and expanded functionality.

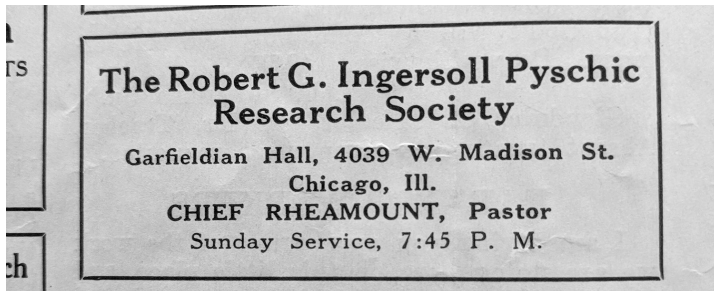
VOL. XXV | 2018 SEASON INGERSOLL REPORT

Published annually by the Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee, a project of the Council for Secular Humanism, a program of the Center for Inquiry, Inc. Official publication of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum, Dresden, NY
Jeff Ingersoll, Chair, RGI Committee
Thomas Flynn, Editor tflynn@centerforinquiry.net

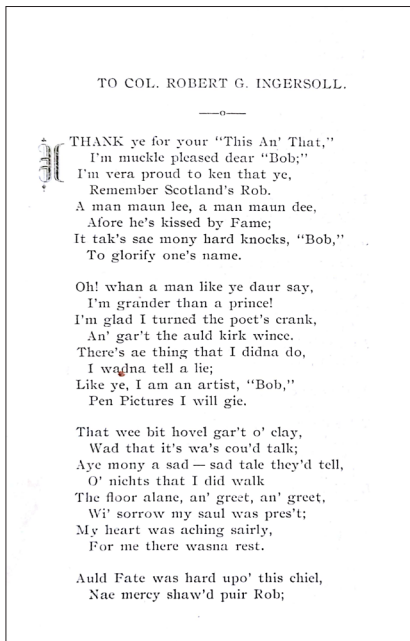
The Museum is located at 61 Main Street, Dresden, NY (315) 536-1074, seasonal only. Send correspondence to Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee, PO Box 664, Amherst, NY 14226-0664 • (716) 636-7571, ext. 213, fax (716) 636-1733
The Council for Secular Humanism is a program of the Center for Inquiry, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization. Contributions are fully tax-deductible as allowed by law. www.secularhumanism.org/ingersoll

INGERSOLL AMONG THE SPIRITUALISTS

You may have heard of a small 1904 booklet purporting to transmit Robert Ingersoll's greetings from the next life, *A Message from Robert G. Ingersoll Transmitted by Automatic Writing through a Philadelphia Psychic*. (A copy of this rare and idiosyncratic work is in the collection of the Center for Inquiry Libraries.) It would be surprising if this were the only spiritualist work referencing Ingersoll; as paranormal investigator Joe Nickell wrote in 2007, "Ingersoll was a tempting target for spiritualists. Although a confirmed atheist, he had cordial relations with many American spiritualists. His acknowledgment of the 'other side' would have been greatly valued—if believed."



An early twentieth-century spiritualist group chose an audacious name!



Robert Burns allegedly "dictated" this message (published 1900) to Robert Ingersoll on Earth. Ingersoll having died in 1899, Burns could have saved himself the trouble and placed a "local call."

he "chose" to send a message to Ingersoll by "composing" a booklet to be published on Earth in 1900 when Ingersoll had already died on July 21, 1899. (Yes, Burns and Ingersoll each died on July 21. Coincidence? You decide!)

Former CFI intern and librarian Mandi Shepp (now librarian at, of all places, the Lily Dale spiritualist community) has shared with us two other examples. *Pen Pictures* is a 1900 booklet by medium Mina S. Seymour. In it, Scots poet Robert Burns directs a poem of greeting to his admirer Robert Ingersoll. The poetry is florid doggerel, a heavy-handed burlesque of Burns's Scots-dialect style. But the booklet itself suggests that despite being dead since July 21, 1796, Bobby Burns acquired few psychic powers on the "other side"—because

FREETHOUGHT TRAIL
IS 'RADICALLY' REDESIGNED *cont'd. from page 1*

importantly, an even richer trove of information on the individuals, groups, places, and social movements that made nineteenth-century west-central New York State such a flashpoint of progressivism and radical reform.

Deeply researched and painstakingly organized, the new Freethought Trail website is a way to delve into another era, to be enlightened by historical scholarship and surprised by the discovery of facts and stories too seldom told.

Redesign of the Freethought Trail website—and the design and publication of a companion brochure for distribution at tourist information centers along the New York Thruway—were made possible by a generous grant from the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust. Visit www.freethought-trail.org today! ❧

ENDOWMENT UPDATE

The Ingersoll Museum endowment fund stands at \$182,963.67—up \$38,444.83 from last year. "This pace of growth in endowment giving brings us closer to the path toward the fund's target of \$400,000," said Museum Director Tom Flynn. "But we have yet to reach the half-way point." With a \$400,000 endowment, the Museum could meet its routine operating costs from investment income and would no longer require subsidies from the Center for Inquiry.

Considering a gift, large or small, to the Museum's endowment fund? The professionals at the Center for Inquiry's Development Department can assist you in arranging your gift in the way that can achieve your charitable objectives while achieving maximum tax advantage. Contact Vice President for Philanthropy Martina Fern at mfern@centerforinquiry.net or call (800) 818-7071. ❧

**MUSEUM
ENDOWMENT**

NOW

\$182,963.67

TARGET

\$400,000

Shepp also sent us a page from what appears to be a national directory of psychic practitioners, undated but surely early twentieth century, showing that a Chicago Spiritualist group had named itself after Ingersoll. Its pastor, Chief Rheamount, was a regionally prominent Native American medium and medical quack active between 1900 and 1930 or so. ❧

ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL Birthplace Museum

SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

AUGUST 18-19, 2018

Crowne Plaza Hotel Syracuse, New York



Crowne Plaza Hotel, Syracuse, N.Y.

The Ingersoll Museum's Silver Anniversary Celebration will be held on August 18-19—one week after Robert Ingersoll's birthday—at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown Syracuse, New York. The weekend event includes one day of lecture presentations and one day touring key Freethought Trail sites via luxury motor coach.

The event is underwritten in part by a generous grant from the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust, making possible an exceptionally low registration fee of \$105. That price includes the lectures, the motor coach tour and all meals except the Saturday banquet (\$65 additional), which includes the keynote address. Bestselling author and scholar Susan Jacoby will deliver the evening keynote address, "Reason Embattled in a Culture of Lies: Why Robert Ingersoll Wouldn't Recognize Trump's America."

The event also spotlights the Freethought Trail, which celebrates west-central New York State's unique contribution to a spectrum of nineteenth-century radical reform causes including abolitionism, woman's rights, and freethought.

On Saturday, August 18, presentations will feature experts in each of these areas of history.

On Sunday, August 19, attendees will board luxury motor coaches to visit Freethought Trail sites that embody three principal reform traditions:

Freethought: The Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum (Dresden), a coanchor of the Freethought Trail;

Woman's Rights: The Matilda Joslyn Gage Center (Fayetteville), a coanchor of the Freethought Trail; and

Abolitionism: The Gerrit Smith estate, home of the philanthropist whose gifts helped fund abolition work in New York State, and the National Abolition Hall of Fame (both Peterboro).

Plan now to celebrate the Museum's twenty-fifth anniversary season and to explore irreplaceable sites along the Trail. Attendance is strictly limited to 150 persons, so register today! **Register online at www.secularhumanism.org/silver** or fill out the form below.

REGISTRATION

Conference registration, per person: \$105 includes Saturday luncheon, motor coach transportation, and Sunday luncheon.

_____ persons at \$105: \$ _____

Saturday evening banquet, per person: \$65. Alcoholic beverages additional.

_____ persons at \$65: \$ _____ Make a Contribution: \$ _____

Name(s) _____ Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____ Phone _____ E-mail _____

TOTAL: \$ _____ **PAYMENT:** Check/M.O. payable to the Council for Secular Humanism or Charge to my: AmEx Discover MC Visa

Card Number: _____ Expiration: _____ Signature: _____ CSC Code: _____

Paying by check/money order? Mail this form with your payment to: Council for Secular Humanism, P.O. Box 664, Amherst, NY 14226-0664.

Paying by credit card? Mail this form to the address above, or call toll-free **1-800-458-1366**. Online registration is available at: www.secularhumanism.org/silver.

**ROBERT GREEN
INGERSOLL
Birthplace Museum**
SILVER ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION

HOTEL INFORMATION

Rooms are available at the Crowne Plaza Syracuse at the discounted conference rate of \$119 per night (includes complimentary WiFi and parking).

Room accommodation is not included in conference registration. You must reserve your room(s) directly with the hotel by or before July 25, 2018, to receive this discounted conference rate. Telephone the Crowne Plaza Syracuse at (toll free) 888-227-6393 or (Syracuse area) 315-479-7000. **Mention "Center for Inquiry" when making your reservation.**

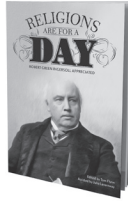
TRAVEL INFORMATION

Syracuse is located in Central New York State. By car, it is four hours west of New York City and two hours east of Buffalo. It is served by Hancock International Airport (SYR); carriers include Air Canada, Allegiant, American Airlines, Delta, JetBlue, and United Airlines. For airport information, visit <http://www.syrairport.org>.

MARKETPLACE



Ingersoll Museum Mug: A three-color ceramic mug features drawings of Ingersoll and his birthplace museum. Around the rim is the bold Ingersoll quote, "The clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know." 11 oz. mug, hand-washing recommended. \$14.00



Religions Are for a Day: Robert Green Ingersoll Appreciated: Museum Director Tom Flynn chronicles Ingersoll's life and impact with many never-before-published details. Plus numerous accounts of historical mysteries solved during the Museum's more than twenty years of operation. \$15.00



American Freethought: Four-part video documentary extends from Paine to the early twentieth century. 3 hr. 43 min. 4 DVDs. \$39.99



The Faith I Left Behind: First-person deconversion stories written by freethinkers from many walks of life that appeared in *Free Inquiry* during 2014, plus fourteen more pieces never before published. \$20.00

Museum Brochures: Museum visitors pick up these five fact-packed brochures about Ingersoll's public life, his Civil War service, and more. Now you can enjoy them at home! \$8.00



<input type="checkbox"/> Ingersoll Mug	x _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Religions Are for a Day	x _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Museum Brochures Set	x _____
<input type="checkbox"/> American Freethought	x _____
<input type="checkbox"/> The Faith I Left Behind	x _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Check enclosed (U.S. checks only drawn on U.S. bank and denominated in U.S. dollars. Payable to the Council for Secular Humanism.)

Charge my: AmEx Discover MasterCard Visa Credit card # _____

Exp. _____ / _____ Signature _____ CSC _____

Mail to: Council Products, Council for Secular Humanism, P.O. Box 664, Amherst, NY 14226-0664.

Credit-card orders may be faxed to (716)636-1733 or called in toll-free to (800)458-1366 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time.

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

AMHERST NY 14226-0664
PO BOX 664
VOL. XXX