

A SURPRISING INGERSOLL TRIBUTE

On March 28, Hal Gordon—a former speechwriter for the Reagan White House and Gen. Colin Powell—paid an unexpected tribute to Ingersoll. In an essay titled “Why Is Blasphemy Still a Crime?” in the online magazine *Highbrow*, he told the story of Ingersoll’s *pro bono* defense of minister-turned-free-thinker Charles B. Reynolds. Reynolds was convicted, but by the time Ingersoll was done, in Gordon’s words, “There would

never be another prosecution for blasphemy in the United States. Ingersoll had shamed such laws from the books.” That’s not completely accurate—blasphemy laws remained on the books, they just weren’t enforced, and there were a handful of prosecutions even into the twentieth century. But Gordon’s piece remains worth reading. Check it out at <http://highbrow-magazine.com/3861-why-blasphemy-still-crime>.

A LECTURE NOT TO MISS



Sally Roesch Wagner

Coinciding with the August Ingersoll conference, historian Sally Roesch Wagner will give an address titled “Matilda Joslyn Gage: Bringing Her into History” at the Center for Inquiry—Transnational (Amherst, New York) on Saturday, August 16, at 7:30 p.m. This lecture is free and open to the public and is sponsored by the New York Council for the Humanities Speakers in the

Humanities Program.

Although she was considered equally important as women’s rights giants Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (the three were called the “triumvirate of the movement”), freethinker Matilda Joslyn Gage (1828–1898) has been all but written out of history. Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, the foremost authority on Gage, enlightens about this amazing woman “lost from history,” who offered her Fayetteville, New York, home as a station on the Underground Railroad; was adopted into the Wolf Clan of the Mohawk Nation; edited a newspaper; encouraged her son-in-law, L. Frank Baum, to write his Oz stories; campaigned for freethought; and worked for the separation of church and state.

Dr. Wagner is founding director of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, which in 2010 opened Gage’s Fayetteville, New York, home to the public as an innovative museum. She is the nation’s foremost authority on Matilda Joslyn Gage and the cofounder of the Freethought Trail.



Sally Roesch Wagner led the restoration of Matilda Joslyn Gage’s residence in Fayetteville, New York. It is now a museum.



The front parlor has been restored and furnished to match a photograph of the room taken by Gage’s son-in-law, L. Frank Baum.

WHO'S BRINGING THE MUSEUM'S NEW LOOK TO LIFE?



The Exhibition Alliance (TEA) of Hamilton, New York, has been retained to redesign the Museum interior and to fabricate new or

updated displays. TEA is a museum service organization that provides professional collections- and exhibitions-related support, including exhibition planning, design, fabrication, and installation. Previous TEA projects have included the Ancient Art Galleries at the Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Rochester, the Robert M. Linsley Geology Museum at Colgate University, and the National Abolition

Hall of Fame in Peterboro, New York (a featured attraction on the Freethought Trail).

Jeff Ingersoll, an Ingersoll family descendant and a painting and historical-renovation contractor, is serving as construction manager for the project, as well as donating most skilled labor associated with the refurbishment and repainting of the Museum interior.

Independent contractor Amanda Ward provided research and organizational assistance and made new digital photographs of the Museum's principal holdings in support of the renovation project.

Center for Inquiry Libraries Director Tim Binga provided invaluable research assistance.

NEW DISPLAY AREA ADDED

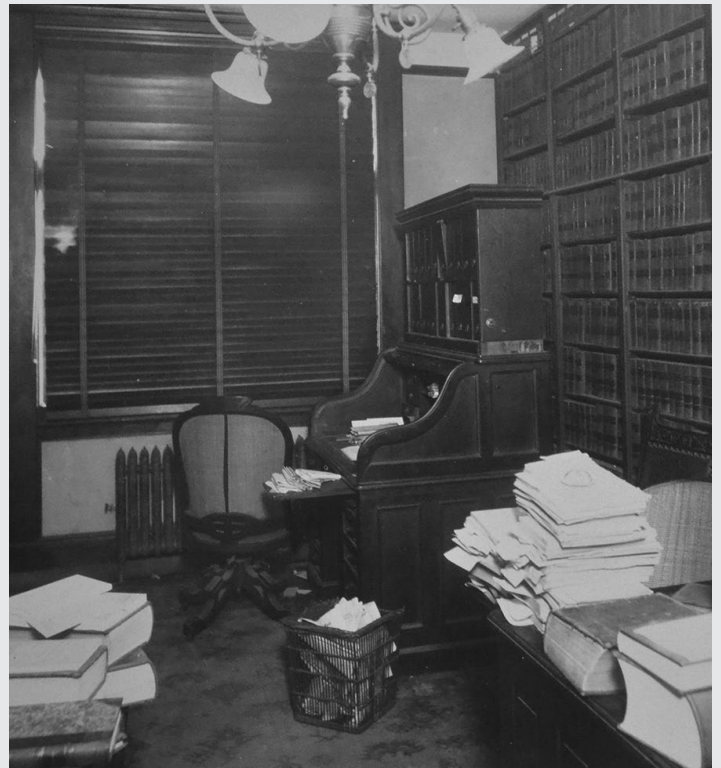
With the debut of the T. M. Scruggs Museum Interior, the Ingersoll Museum gains a new public room. The new room, on the Museum's second floor, previously formed part of the Village of Dresden Historian's private office. By consolidating older materials and finding some alternate storage, Village Historian Linda Jacquot was able to free up part of her space. The result is a new public room adjacent to the upstairs Birth Room. Displays will focus on Ingersoll's birth and early life, his Civil War service, and his law career. Also displayed in the new room will be the Museum's rare full-color newspaper cartoon showing Ingersoll among an "awkward squad" of controversial Gilded Age personalities.

The Village Historian will maintain a small office/work-room off of the new room.



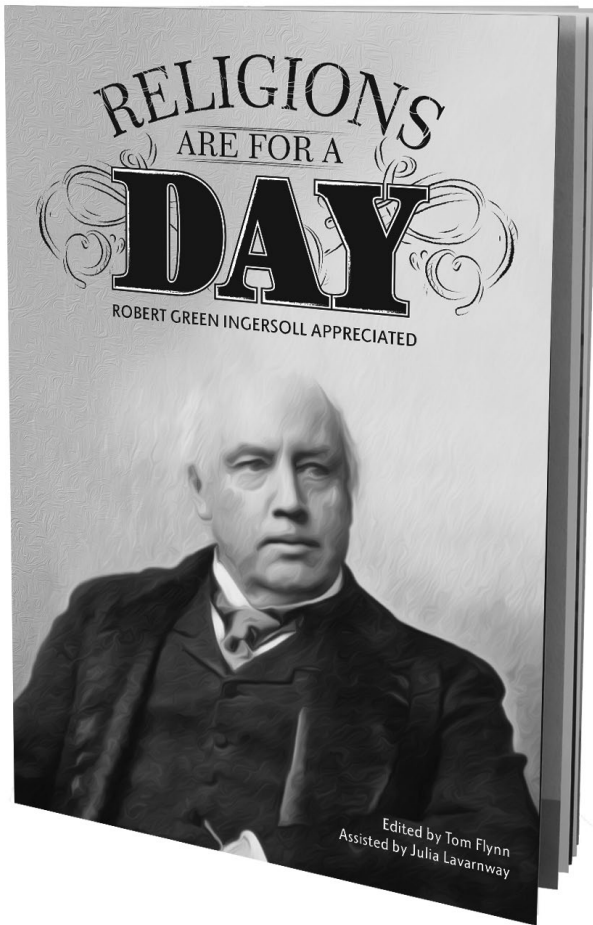
This large cartoon from the Gilded Age satirical newspaper *The Judge* shows Ingersoll (at upper left) sitting in the "Gospel Tent" with preacher Henry Ward Beecher. In front, Uncle Sam musters an "awkward squad" of controversial political figures. Gift of Margaret Downey and George Kelley.

NEW AT THE MUSEUM:



Little is known about the source of this photograph, but a handwritten caption identifies it as depicting Ingersoll's New York City law office.

NEW INGERSOLL BOOK PUBLISHED



A new book about Robert Ingersoll has been published by Inquiry Press, the new imprint of the Center for Inquiry. *Religions Are For a Day: Robert Green Ingersoll Appreciated* was edited by Museum director Tom Flynn, assisted by Julia Lavarney. Its centerpiece is a 13,000-word biography and intellectual history of Ingersoll and his ideas. Flynn drafted this in 2008, but only portions of it could be published in S. T. Joshi's anthology *Icons of Unbelief*. The new book marks the first time the monograph has been published in its entirety.

Filling out the book are brief stories accounts of historical mysteries solved – or in some cases, not yet solved – by staff and volunteers for the Museum and its sibling initiative, the Freethought Trail. (Some of these items are adapted from articles in past issues of the *Ingersoll Report*.) How was Ingersoll, the famous agnostic, awarded a ceremonial sword by the Knights Templar, a Masonic order that requires its members to swear belief in Jesus? Who sculpted a large bust of Ingersoll aged 40, before he gained national prominence? Where was the forgotten opera house where Ingersoll – and also Charles B. Reynolds, whom Ingersoll defended against blasphemy charges – lectured? All are discussed in this new book.

Religions Are For a Day is available at the Museum gift shop and online at the Council for Secular Humanism web site. (Go to www.secularhumanism.org, click Shop in the top menu, and click Books in the left-hand column.) Cost is \$15.00, shipping not included.

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REPORT
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