

THE INGERSOLL

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



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MUSEUM HOURS 2020

Conditions permitting, the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum will be open at 61 Main St., Dresden, New York, from Noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from May 23 through November 1, 2020. Suggested admission is \$8.00!

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2020?

As this is written, the novel coronavirus has attained pandemic status. So far, the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum plans to open for the 2020 season if summer and fall tourism are permitted in west-central New York State. If so, the season will begin the weekend before Memorial Day and continue until Sunday, November 1.

Visitors will see new interpretive signage describing each of the seventeen venues within 100 miles of Dresden at which Ingersoll lectured. Only one, the Breese Opera House in Norwich, still stands! (There are more details at www.freethought-trail.org.) "Barring the discovery of additional lecture events, our coverage of Robert Ingersoll's activities in west-central New York State is complete," said Trail Director Tom Flynn. "This is the fruit of unprecedented cooperation among Ingersoll aficionados, numerous local historians and historical societies, and the tremendous power of the Ingersoll Chronology (chronology.secularhumanism.org/) for researching the events of Ingersoll's life."

This year is also the centenary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which empowered women nationwide to vote. A large new two-sided graphic will highlight each of the statewide suffrage conventions held between Rochester and Utica between 1890 and 1914. Again, full information is available at www.freethought-trail.org, where almost forty new Site pages (and corresponding Event pages—a new category!) are being added to document this suffrage activism. ✕

INGERSOLL'S LECTURES IN WEST-CENTRAL NEW YORK STATE

ROCHESTER

Corinthian Hall
(lost to fire, 1898)



"The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child" January 11, 1878
"Individuality" February 21, 1878
"Which Way?" January 26, 1885

Lyceum Theatre
(demolished ca. 1934)



"Shakespeare" April 19, 1891
"About the Holy Bible" March 10, 1895
"The Foundations of Faith" February 23, 1896
"Why I Am an Agnostic" January 31, 1897
Unknown topic, January 5, 1898

The Lyceum site is now Midtown Commons, an urban park.

HORNELLVILLE (now Hornell)
Shattuck Opera House
(demolished ca. 1940)



"The Mistakes of Moses" September 5, 1880 – keynote of New Freethinkers Association annual com.
"What Must We Do to Be Saved?" May

ELMIRA

Elmira Opera House
(demolished 1949)



"The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child" February 25, 1878
"About the Holy Bible" April 23, 1895



The opera house site now contains this bank and office building.

AUBURN

Academy of Music/later Burttis Opera House
(demolished ca. 1975)



"Orthodoxy" January 21, 1885
"What Must We Do to Be Saved?" April 28, 1894



A concrete commercial building and a parking lot occupy the opera house site today.

Partial view of the "Ingersoll Spoke Here" supergraphic. It will hang in the Museum and also be available online for those unable to visit Dresden this summer or fall.

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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

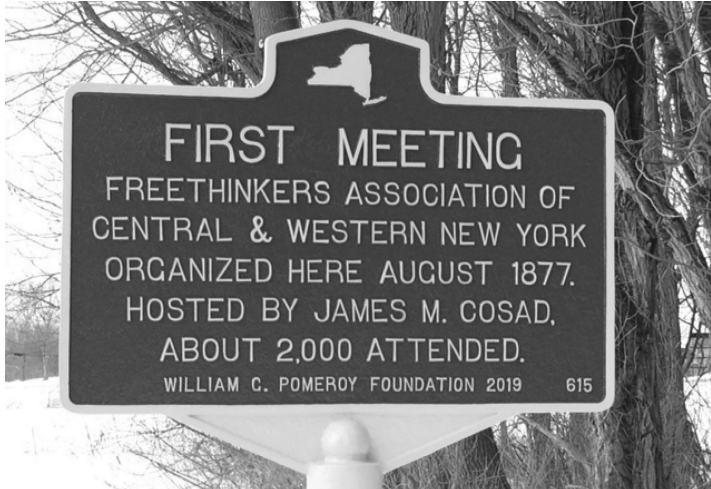
Thomas Flynn, Editor and Museum Director tflynn@centerforinquiry.org

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

FIRST MARKER FOR FREETHOUGHT MEETING SITE

For the first time, a freethinkers' meeting site has received an official historical marker. The William G. Pomeroy Foundation funds roadside historical markers in New York (the state has discontinued doing so). Working with Town of Huron Historian Rosa Fox,



This 2019 historic marker (installed 2020) commemorates the Grove Meeting of the New York Freethinkers Association. Photo courtesy of Rosa Fox.

in 2019 the Pomeroy Foundation delivered a marker for the James Madison Cosad farmstead at 11060 Lummisville Road, Huron, New York. It was the site of an August 1877 "Grove Meeting" that attracted some two thousand persons. So far as is known, this is the only site of a freethought event acknowledged as such with an official marker anywhere in the United States.

The Huron meeting gave rise to the New York Freethinkers Association, which held seven important freethought conventions between 1878 and 1886. At the 1878 convention held in Watkins (now Watkins Glen), freethought publisher D. M. Bennett was arrested with two others for selling a sex-radical tract. The resulting scandal involved both freethought orator Robert Green Ingersoll and U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes and indirectly led to the adoption of the so-called Hicklin standard that defined obscenity under U.S. law until 1957.

Other New York Freethinkers Association conference sites included Chautauqua Lake (1879), Hornellsville (1880, 1881), Watkins again (1882), Rochester (1883), Cassadaga (1884), and Albany (1885). ❧

ENDOWMENT FUND ADDS 33,000+!

The Ingersoll Museum endowment fund stands at \$234,793.20—up from last year by \$33,309.99. Progress continues toward the fund's target of \$400,000. With an endowment fund of that size, 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 in 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 Development Director Connie Skingel at cskingel@centerforinquiry.org or call her direct at (716) 300-8311. ❧

**MUSEUM
ENDOWMENT
NOW**

\$234,793

TARGET

\$400,000

FOLLOW IN INGERSOLL'S FOOTSTEPS

A new Curated Trail added to the Freethought Trail website brings together the seventeen historic sites where Robert Green Ingersoll lectured in west-central New York State.

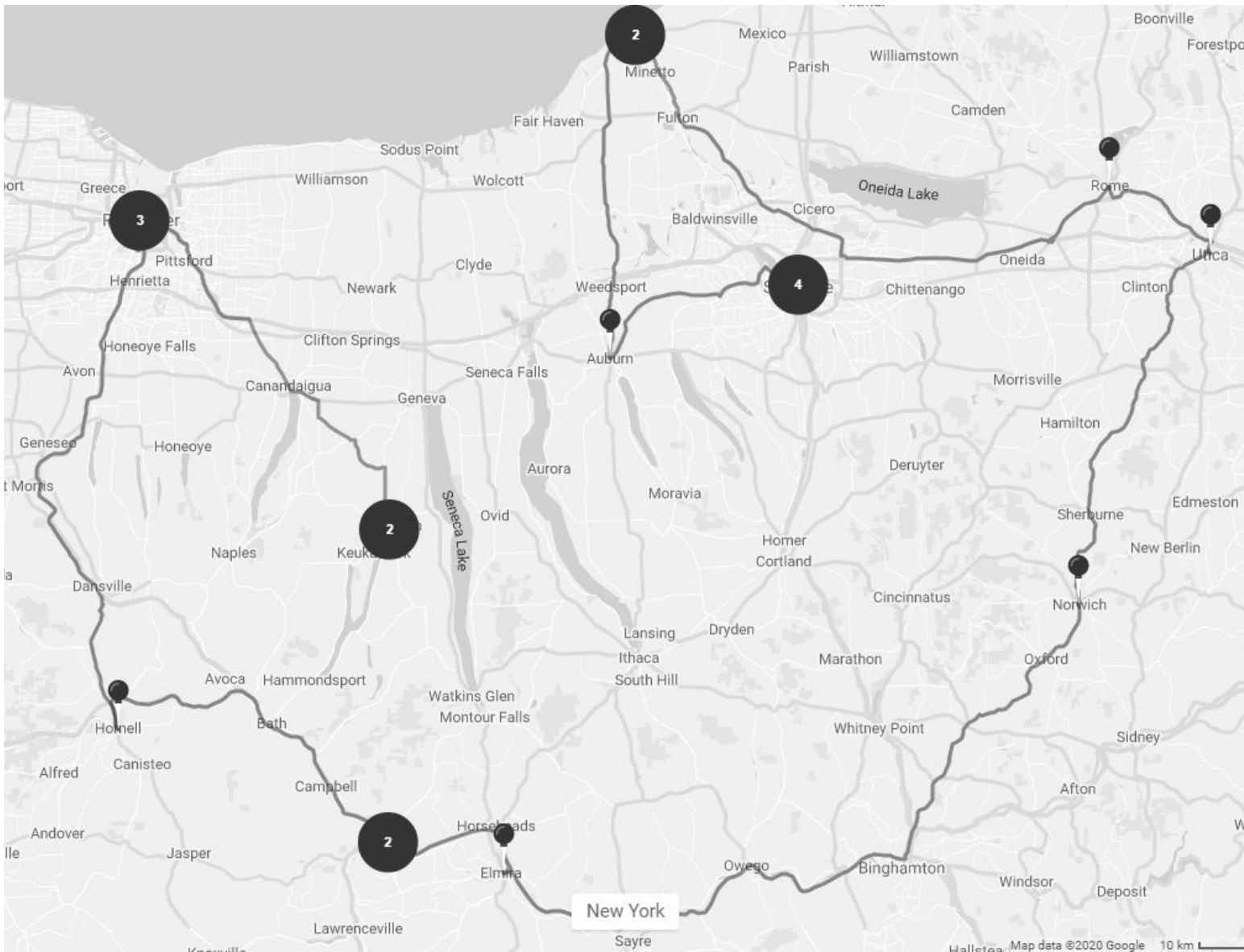
"Ingersoll delivered some thirty-three lectures at seventeen venues within the Freethought Trail's coverage area—roughly, between Rochester and Utica, New York," said Freethought Trail Director Tom Flynn. "We are confident we've located all the places where Ingersoll spoke within 100 miles of the Birthplace Museum in Dresden. Now they are gathered into a new Curated Trail, which Ingersoll admirers can use to visit some or all of these sites and stand where history happened."

The new Curated Trail begins at Penn Yan, seven miles west of Dresden. There, Ingersoll spoke at a county fair at his only visit to his birthplace. It then proceeds to Rochester, Hornell (then called Hornellsville), Corning, Elmira, Norwich, Utica, Rome, and Oswego. The Curated

Trail concludes in Syracuse. Some locations have multiple sites while others have only one.

"It's a lengthy Curated Trail," said Flynn, "478 miles in all. And the Ingersoll fan who follows it will see a lot of parking lots and office buildings, as few of the nineteenth-century theaters and opera houses where Ingersoll spoke still stand today. Still, it's the most thorough reconstruction of Ingersoll's lecture sites for any region in America." Of course, Ingersoll aficionados not eager to spend a day or two driving around west-central New York can study the sites through the website on their favorite device.

To check out the new Ingersoll Lectures Curated Trail, go to www.freethought-trail.org and click on Plan Your Journey, then click on the Ingersoll Lectures Trail from the list. It is one of sixteen Curated Trails that bring together sites associated with special historical interests.



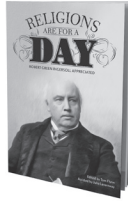
The Ingersoll Lectures Trail starts at Penn Yan and concludes in Syracuse after travelling 478 miles and visiting seventeen historic sites.

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

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