



The Gramercy plaque (bottom center) anchors a wholly redesigned introductory presentation in the museum's front hallway, including all-new interpretive signage. To left of the plaque is an actual invitation to the original Gramercy plaque's 1925 unveiling; at that time the new hotel's name had not yet been announced!



THE INGERSOLL

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

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MUSEUM HOURS 2008

The Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum will be open at 61 Main St., Dresden, N.Y., from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from Memorial Day weekend through Hallowe'en (May 24–October 26, 2008). Suggested admission is only \$2.00!

MUSEUM WELCOMES GRAMERCY PLAQUE

New for 2008, the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum proudly displays the bronze memorial tablet that once marked Manhattan's famed Gramercy Park Hotel as the former site of Robert Ingersoll's New York residence. The tablet now hangs in the Museum's central hallway, surrounded by all-new multicolor interpretive signage. "The hallway is where each visitor's experience of the museum really begins," explained Museum director Tom Flynn. "We added a five-foot-wide welcome sign in full color, plus two other large color signs that introduce Ingersoll and describe his birth and youth. One of those signs has a lengthy caption giving the story of the tablet."

Quite a story it is. From 1889 until his death in 1899, Ingersoll's

primary residence was a New York City brownstone at 25 Gramercy Park. It and several neighbors (one a former residence of prominent architect Stanford White) were razed to make way for the stylish Gramercy Park Hotel, which opened in 1925. Ingersoll admirers including Thomas Edison, Luther Burbank, Margaret Sanger, and others donated a bronze tablet to mark the hotel as an Ingersoll residence site. Damaged by vandals, the 1925 tablet was replaced in 1988 by the Secular Humanist Society of New York (SHSNY) and the Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee. When real estate mogul Ian Schrager lavishly rehabilitated the hotel in 2006, historical markers were disallowed. Past SHSNY presidents Warren Allen Smith and Dennis Middlebrooks retrieved the 1988 tablet and, after a national search to identify its best resting place, donated it to the Birthplace Museum.

At the unveiling of the 1925 tablet, Edgar Lee Masters (author of *Spoon River Anthology*) recited a brief poem he composed for the occasion. Three of its lines seem unusually appropriate today, as the tablet's successor settles into its new Dresden home:

*We mark with bronze the vanished walls
Of houses famed. But with the passing years
The city changes and the tablet falls.*

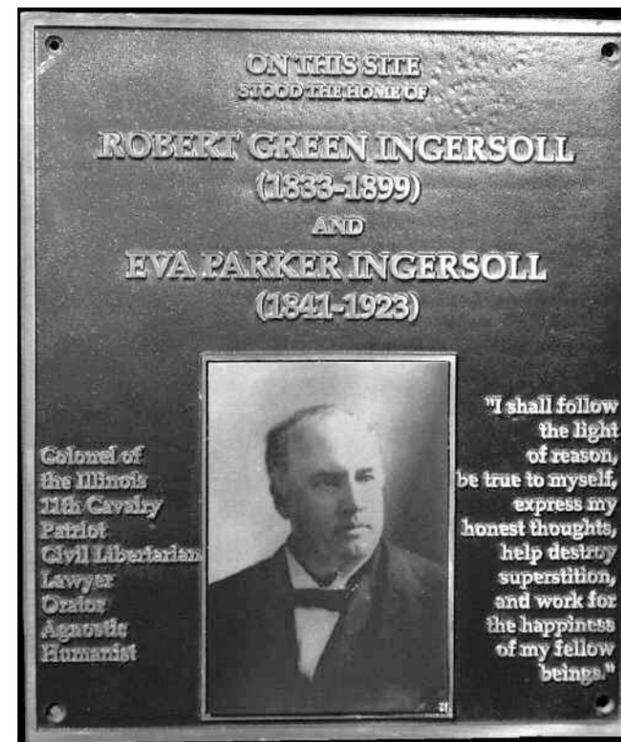
The Gramercy Park Hotel tablet has fallen ... but the Ingersoll Museum is delighted to offer it a soft landing.

FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON BEGINS

Can it really be fifteen years since the Ingersoll Museum first opened to the public (in its current incarnation, at least)? Yes, it was during Memorial Day weekend of 1993 that the Museum first opened to the public.

"The Ingersoll Birthplace operated as a museum twice before," noted director Tom Flynn, "in the 1920s and again in the 1960s. With fifteen years of continuous operation, the Council for Secular Humanism has operated Ingersoll's birthplace longer than both previous incarnations combined."

If you find yourself in New York's Finger Lakes region this summer or fall, we look forward to welcoming you.



Displayed outdoors in New York since 1988, this bronze tablet now hangs inside the Ingersoll Museum.

THANK YOU!

to our extraordinary sponsors:

RAYMOND NELSON, who sponsored the Museum's 2007 season,
and GORDON B. ASSELSTINE, sponsor of the 2008 15th Anniversary season!

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REPORT

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Lectures of Col. R. G. Ingersoll, Vol. 1

by Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899)

Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll (1833-1899) was a Civil War veteran, American political leader and orator during the Golden Age of Freethought, noted for his defense of atheism. This book is the first of two volumes collecting Ingersoll's speeches.

- Gutenberg e-text
- Wikipedia - Robert G. Ingersoll
- LibriVox's Lectures of Col. R. G. Ingersoll, Vol. 1 Internet Archive page
- Zip file of the entire book (407 MB)
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ering a lecture, I stood for this entire reading. Because there was no crowd to read to, I didn't go for a theatrical orator's voice, but concentrated on keeping the passion behind the words while using a more intimate tone.

IR: How has this recording been received?

TD: The Ingersoll audio book has a smaller audience than my others, but it is a very enthusiastic one. It's obviously subject matter that many people take seriously, and I'm flattered that they seem to enjoy my rendition. One writer did mention that my pronunciation of a few French names and terms was marginally criminal, but *c'est la vie...*

IR: What's next for you?

TD: I've just recorded Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories*, and I'm now doing the preparations for the second volume of Ingersoll. That will be out later this year.

RGI RECITATIONS ONLINE ... FREE!

Want to hear some Ingersoll lectures? The complete text of Volume I of *The Lectures of Col. R. G. Ingersoll*—including “The Gods,” “The Ghosts,” and “The Great Infidels” — is yours to listen to (or download) online. We're talking more than *fourteen hours* of spoken-word audio. And it's *free*.

Chalk it up to www.LibriVox.org, a remarkable all-volunteer website that posts recitations of literary works in the public domain. Hundreds of books have already been recorded — including Volume I of the *Lectures* recited in its entirety by volunteer Ted Delorme, a South Carolina resident who has been a cartoonist and an improv comedian, and is also active in amateur theater.

Ingersoll Report interviewed Mr. Delorme via email:

IR: How often are your recordings downloaded by LibriVox users?

TED DELORME: I've recorded four solo books for LibriVox which pick up around 300 downloads a day. Voltaire's *Candide* is the biggest “hit” of the group; the Ingersoll recording draws about 600 downloads per month — more than 5,000 hits overall. Also, it's among the *top ten* of 1,400 LibriVox recordings in terms of listener rankings.

IR: Was it your decision to record Ingersoll?

TD: At LibriVox, everyone is free to choose any work which can be verified as in the public domain. I'd seen a few quotes from Ingersoll online; a little web research made him sound like someone whose ideas should be shared with a wider audience.

IR: What prompted you to record this particular book?

TD: To be honest, *Lectures of Col. R. G. Ingersoll, Vol. 1* was the first book that showed up in my search. Usually I record sitting at my computer, but to get the feel of deliv-

To hear more — lots more — visit LibriVox.org and search on “Ingersoll.”

WHAT A DIFFERENCE SEVEN GENERATIONS MAKES!

I was one that went about to Establish mine own Righteousness, & to have something of mine own to Carry me to Christ. Wherefore I Studied upon what terms Christ was to be had, I prayed, Searched the Scriptures, & attended all duties; but could find no way to get a pardon, of Sin & peace with God, but by Repentance of all sin, & a closing with Jesus Christ by Faith. ... Whereupon I found myself willing, & was inabled to Cast myselfe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, to give up myselfe & all unto him; to leave my Sins, & Corruptions to him to do as he pleased.

Archaic spellings and all, those are the words of John Ingersoll (1615-1684), cofounder of a Puritan church in Westfield, Massachusetts. He made this statement in 1679 to further establish his Christian bona fides. (Thanks to *Free Inquiry* reader Rich Hite for bringing this obscure text to our attention.)

John Ingersoll was the younger brother of Richard Ingersoll (d. 1644); born in England, the two landed in Salem, Massachusetts, on June 29, 1629. Richard remained in Salem; John relocated to Woronoco (later Westfield) in 1666, where he took spiritual instruction from Eleazer Mather. Eleazer was a brother of the influential Puritan divine Increase Mather, whose son Cotton would advise and write in defense of the Salem Witch Trials.

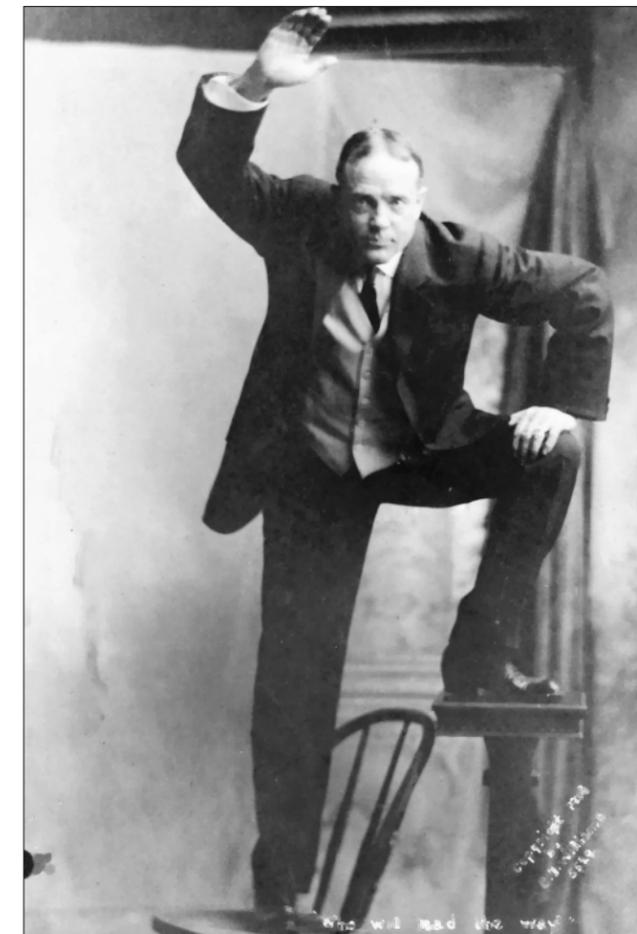
Speaking of brothers with famous descendants, John Ingersoll's brother Richard fathered the line that seven generations later would produce Robert Green Ingersoll. That would make the soulful and devout John Ingersoll the Great Agnostic's seven-time-great uncle. Indeed, what a difference seven generations makes!

INGERSOLL SAID IT FIRST

Early in the twentieth century, Billy Sunday (1862-1935) was America's most popular and successful evangelist. His frenetic revival sermons brought forward more than a million people for altar calls and helped to pass Prohibition in 1919. The single phrase for which Sunday may be best remembered is “long-haired men and short-haired women,” a derogatory reference to socialists, anarchists, and similar godless reformers. But Sunday only borrowed the phrase. It was apparently coined by, you guessed it, Robert Green Ingersoll. Despite his advanced religious and scientific opinions, Ingersoll was in some areas a conservative. Defending marriage and the family against nineteenth century “sex radicals” like Moses Harman and Victoria Woodhull, in his lecture “The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child” he declared:

I believe in marriage, and I hold in utter contempt the opinions of those long-haired men and short-haired women who denounce the institution of marriage.

It's in the Dresden Edition, Volume 1, page 357. Perhaps someone should have had a talk with Billy Sunday about taking the things that are his neighbor's!



Billy Sunday

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