

FREETHOUGHT TRAIL

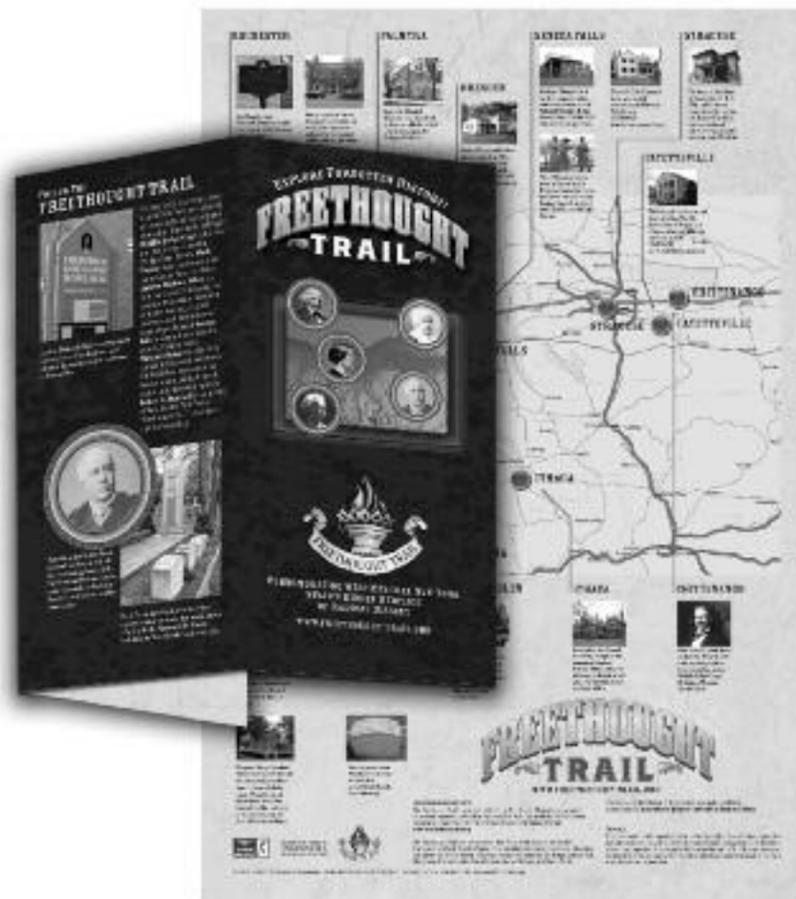
The Ingersoll Museum is proud to be a founding attraction of the Freethought Trail! In the 19th century, west-central New York was a hotbed of social, political, and religious innovation.

Fayetteville suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage called religion the enemy of women. Writing from Elmira, Mark Twain raised irreverence to an American art form. At Ithaca, Andrew Dickson White co-founded Cornell University, the nation's first secular institution of higher learning. In 1848 reformers and freethinkers of every stripe thronged Seneca Falls to demand new roles for women.

Corning native Margaret Sanger led the 20th-century birth control movement. Online at www.freethought-trail.org (note the hyphen), the informal Freethought Trail now includes about eighty sites, marked and unmarked. All are within a two-hour drive of the

Ingersoll Museum and all pertain to the region's rich history of radical reform: freethought, women's rights, abolitionism, sex radicalism, anarchism, and more. Visiting west-central New York this summer or fall? Let the Freethought Trail site be your guide to a fascinating, historical, and fuel-efficient visit. Choose the attractions you want to visit in the order you wish to visit them, and receive reliable turn-by-turn directions for your entire trip.

JOIN US ... ON THE FREETHOUGHT TRAIL!
WWW.FREETHOUGHT-TRAIL.ORG



THE INGERSOLL

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

REPORT

MUSEUM HOURS 2011

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 29–October 31, 2011). Suggested admission is only \$2.00!

IN THIS ISSUE

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MUSEUM SURVIVES 2010 — AND MUCH MORE!

2010 was a year of trials for the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum. In early spring the Museum's furnace needed to be replaced at a cost of \$3,000. In the fall, it was the roof's turn for replacement. No small project on a historic house as structurally quirky as the Ingersoll Birthplace, the job drew estimates as high as \$19,000 but was ultimately completed for just \$5,000 – thanks to generous in-kind contributions by Museum National Advisory Board member Jeff Ingersoll. (In real life, Jeff helms a company that specializes in painting and construction, especially of historic buildings.)

“Most of the building rehabilitation work was concluded a few years before the Museum opened in 1993, so the furnace and roof were more than 20 years old,” said Museum director Tom Flynn. “Still, no one expected them to fail in the same year!”

These unplanned expenditures were equivalent to more than half of the Museum's annual operating budget. (Also, early in fall 2010 it seemed likely the roof work would cost substantially more than was finally needed.) So 2010 also marked a year of active fundraising.

The Museum's friends and supporters came through, contributing a record total of \$42,903.84. That covered operating costs plus all the repairs, eliminating the need to draw funds from the Museum's endowment for the repairs. Fundraising even generated a surplus, some of which was added to the Museum's endowment.

“Admissions and gift shop purchases generate only a fraction of what the Museum requires to operate and maintain its historic structure,” said Flynn. “Year in and year out we depend on the generosity of Ingersoll's admirers across the nation in order to keep his memory alive. 2010 will go into the annals as a year when they really came through for us – and for Bob Ingersoll.”

NEW TOURISM PUBLICATION FEATURES MUSEUM AD

A new annual magazine, *Finger Lakes Wine Country*, will be distributed free at hundreds of locations throughout central New York throughout the 2011 tourism season. While aimed at tourists visiting the region's many wineries, it actually covers almost all of the Finger Lakes region's attractions. It's also the focus of the Ingersoll Museum's 2011 marketing plan.

“When I saw the new publication's prospectus, I recognized the possibility that *Finger Lakes Wine Country* could be the most informative single reference for area visitors, especially as budget cuts have limited the state's ‘I Love New York’ program,” said Museum director Tom Flynn. “Now that I've seen the actual magazine, I think it's fulfilled its potential, and I'm very glad that the Museum's major advertising expenditure for the 2011 season was invested there.”

Principal promotional avenues for the Museum include the full-color ad in *Finger Lakes Wine Country*, a full-color brochure distributed at tourism information booths at New York Thruway rest areas near the Museum, and the Museum and Freethought Trail websites.

LEARN MORE ONLINE

www.secularhumanism.org/ingersoll
www.rgi-museum.org (virtual tour)
www.freethought-trail.org

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

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INGERSOLL PLAY CHARMS S.R.O. CROWD AT MANHATTAN THEATER LANDMARK

A live reading performance of a full-length play about Robert Green Ingersoll delighted a standing-room crowd at Manhattan's historic Players Club on the evening of January 31, 2011. Defying a gathering winter storm, more than 200 people packed the landmark theater to experience a reading of Richard Stockton's play *Speak of the Devil*. The audience consisted of New York theater insiders and a solid turnout of Ingersoll aficionados, drawn by a publicity campaign to the freethought community coordinated by the Ingersoll Memorial Committee in Amherst, Ingersoll historian Steve Lowe from Center for Inquiry – Washington, D. C., and Michael DeDora from Center for Inquiry – New York City.

The production was produced by Irene Stockton, widow of the late playwright, and directed by Chelsea Theatre Center founder Robert Kalfin. A slate of expert Broadway actors read such roles as Robert Green Ingersoll, his brother Ebon, his future wife Eva Parker, her father Judge Parker, and various dour evangelists. The play presents a fictionalized account of Ingersoll's young and middle years that powerfully captured the wit, insight, and singular courage of the man who dared to challenge America during its Gilded Age by being its most public agnostic.

The play had been performed twice before on the New York stage, in 1983 at the Chernuchin Theatre Off-Broadway under the title "Royal Bob," and in 1972 at the Lamb's Theatre under the title "One World at a Time." This was its first performance under the playwright's preferred title and in a revised edition edited by his widow.

As for the playwright, Richard Stockton died in 1997. He is perhaps best known for his play *Prisoner of the Crown*, which debuted at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1972 (more on this play below). He was a longtime friend of the Ingersoll Museum; at one point roughly two decades ago Richard visited with then-Council for Secular Humanism executive director Tim Madigan and me in Amherst, New York. He gave us an original copy of his Ingersoll script, bearing the original *Speak of the Devil* title. Ever since, I'd nurtured fantasies of doing something to bring the script back to life.

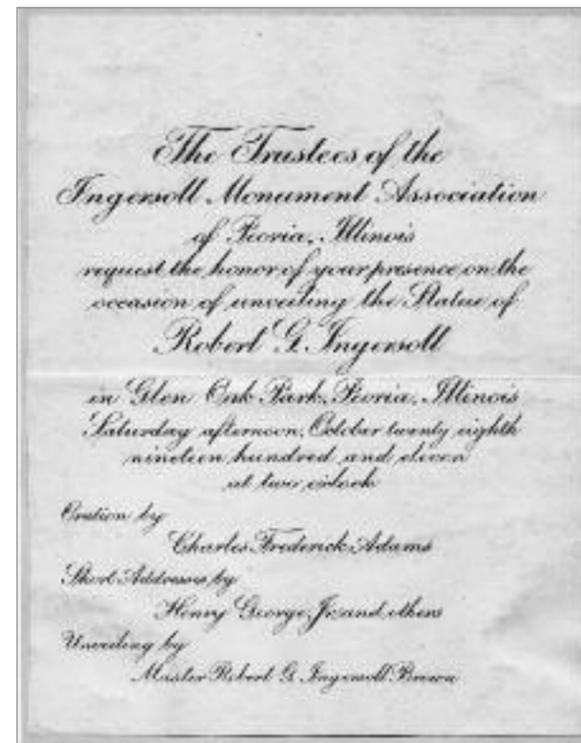
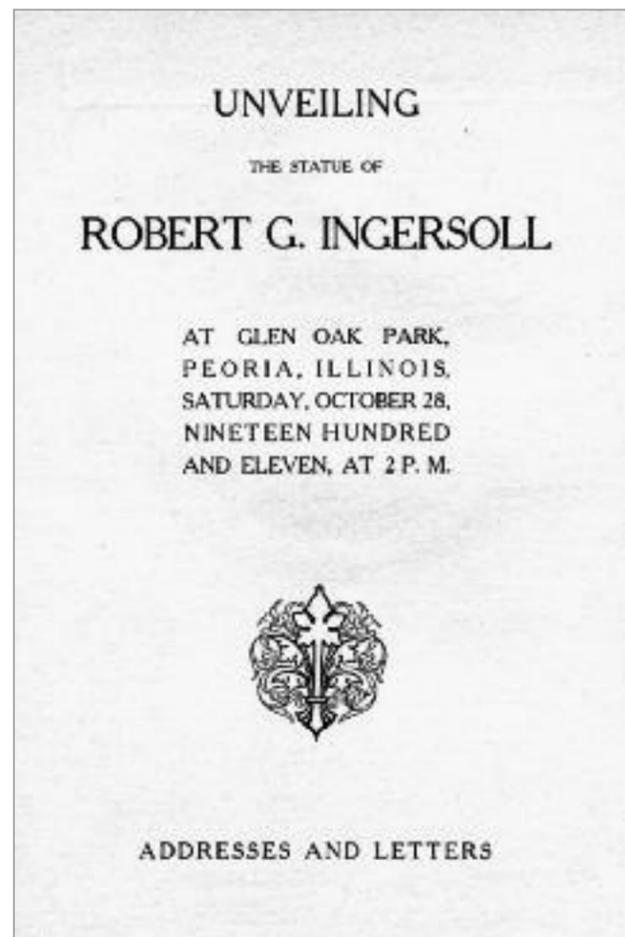
In June 2010, I contacted Irene Stockton, a busy New York casting director, and inquired about the rights should we wish to mount a new performance of the play at one of our Centers for Inquiry. A month later, Irene told me that my call had prompted her to arrange for a reading performance at The Players. It would be a significant event, and not only because of The Players' storied past. Over the years readings there have led to new or revival productions of countless works. In fact, not long ago Irene had helped to coordinate a Players reading of *Prisoner of the Crown* which led directly to the play's republication and a successful off-Broadway revival.

Could such a happy fate await *Speak of the Devil*? It's quite possible. Since the reading, Irene has had discussions with possible backers from the New York theatrical community – and from the Ingersoll Museum's far-flung network of supporters – about a possible revival, along with possible performances elsewhere around the country. Council for Secular Humanism Associate Members will be kept informed of further developments!

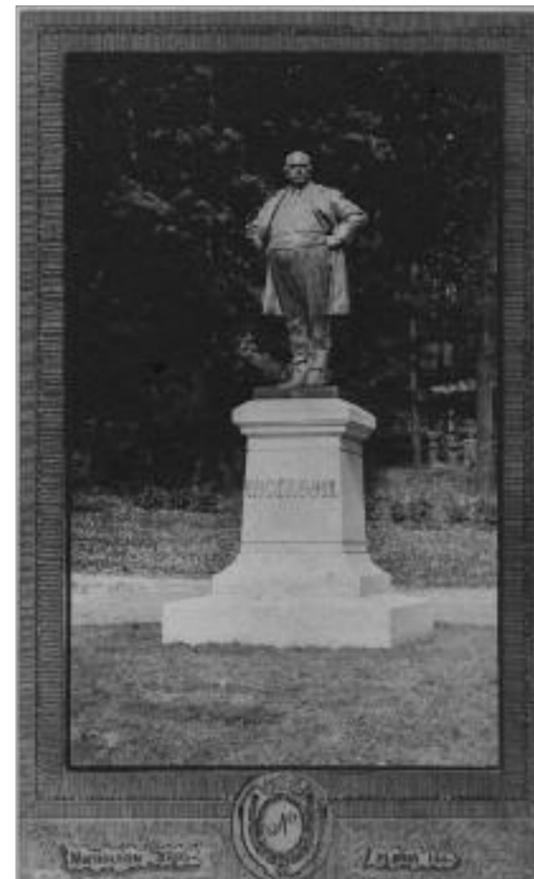
GENEROUS GIFT ADDS RARE ARTIFACTS

The Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum will open for the 2011 season on Saturday, May 28. On display will be several significant artifacts, only a fraction of the items donated to the Museum last summer by antiquarian bookseller C. E. Van Norman. Mr. Van Norman, of Neversink, New York, spent years

Title page of the souvenir program from the 1911 unveiling of Ingersoll's statue at Peoria, Illinois. This gift from C. E. Van Norman is believed to be the only surviving copy



Above, formal invitation to the 1911 statue unveiling. Below, this photo of the statue in Peoria's Glen Oak Park was taken shortly after the statue was unveiled.



acquiring the Ingersoll memorabilia that came his way. In August 2010 he generously donated more than fifty varied items ranging from old news clippings to a one-of-a-kind bust of Ingersoll.

The bust is cast in plaster and finished in a dramatic dark bronze. Its design is similar to the 13-inch plaster busts that are relatively common on the freethought market. But at 28 inches from base to pate, this specimen is almost twice the size of any previously seen. "It's the first Ingersoll bust I have seen at that size," said Museum director Tom Flynn. "It's the only known example." Following needed restoration work, the bust will be placed on display at the Museum.

Additional items include a previously unknown period photo of the Ingersoll statue (by sculptor Fritz Triebel) installed at Glen Oak Park in Peoria, Illinois, on October 28, 1911 and the only known surviving copy of the souvenir program from the unveiling ceremony. These items will be displayed at the Museum alongside other photos and artifacts pertaining to the Peoria statue.

Charles P. Farrell, Ingersoll's brother-in-law and official publisher, is in some ways the "mystery man" of Ingersoll's life. The books he published remain widely available on the antiquarian freethought market, but photos and artifacts relating to Farrell himself are extremely rare. The Van Norman collection includes two such items – a business card from Farrell's publishing business and a fabulous rarity, a complete letter in Farrell's hand. These two will go on display at the Museum.

The remainder of the Van Norman collection, ranging from period books to newspaper clippings to notes an unknown person apparently took during an Ingersoll speech, will be catalogued and stored at the Robert Green Ingersoll Memorial Committee's office at the Center for Inquiry – Transnational in Amherst, New York. Additional artifacts from the collection may go on display in future years.

MUSEUM JOINS CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM NETWORK

The Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum and the Freethought Trail now belong to the new New York Cultural Heritage Tourism Network, a gathering of arts, culture and heritage attractions and venues from across New York seeking to promote and expand cultural heritage tourism. For more information, visit <http://www.nychtn.org/>.