

TRUMAN W. INGERSOLL, by John M. Kuhn of St. Paul

TRUMAN INGERSOLL

ST. PAUL PHOTOGRAPHER PICTURED THE WORLD

Patricia Condon Johnston

IN THE YEARS surrounding the turn of the century, St. Paul photographer Truman W. Ingersoll pictured the world — or at least a good part of it. His specialty was stereophotography, and he marketed his staggering collection of stereoscopic views from his St. Paul studio with uncommon success. That would have been enough, but his story is both important and fascinating for other reasons, too. His legacy also includes a finely detailed portrait of St. Paul in its younger days, as well as a revealing glimpse into the social life enjoyed by certain of its inhabitants.¹

Ingersoll was a latecomer to the business of stereophotography, which unquestionably put him at a disadvantage. Author Oliver Wendell Holmes had invented the hand-held stereoscope in 1859. And well be-

fore 1870 nearly every American town and village had at least one resident photographer who made stereo cards for the local trade. Stereo viewing had become a national pastime.²

But by the mid-1880s, when Ingersoll opened his first shop, the stereo view market was dominated by a few "giants" — firms that used more efficient manufacturing methods than others to produce incredible numbers of cards and employed a veritable army of young people to sell them door-to-door. Moreover, they had at their disposal many thousands of photographs made by their own photographers and purchased from outside sources. The competition was decidedly keen, but the records show clearly that Truman Ingersoll could hold his own.³

In a particularly dramatic case concerning the sale of Ingersoll stereo views of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago (1893), the photographer was taken to court by the firm of Kilburn and Davis, which claimed a monopoly on all such pictures. (The Kilburn brothers, Edward and Benjamin, had been manufacturers of stereo views in Littleton, New Hampshire, since 1865.) The Kilburn and Davis partnership had paid fair officials \$17,000 for exclusive rights to sell views of the exposition. To protect the firm's interests, all but small hand cameras, not to exceed four-by-five inches, were banned

¹The author acknowledges that this article owes much to the help of Ward Ingersoll of St. Paul, Truman Ingersoll's son, who provided a good share of the source material on which it is based. Among the very few works on Ingersoll is Judy Rauenhorst, "Truman Ward Ingersoll: Portrait of a Minnesota Photographer, 1862-1922," unpublished manuscript (1977). The Minnesota Historical Society library has a copy.

²William Culp Darrah, *Stereo Views: A History of Stereographs in America and Their Collections*, 6-8, 25 (Gettysburg, Pa., 1964).

³Darrah, *History of Stereographs*, 109-111.

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from the grounds. Persons using small cameras paid \$2.00 a day for the privilege, and photographers were required to sign an agreement stating that they would not sell their pictures. Ingersoll followed the first rule and left his stereo camera at home. After guards at the gate approved his small Kodak, Ingersoll paid the permit fee and photographed the fair. He did not feel obliged, however, to continue playing the photographic game. Once back in St. Paul, he began offering for sale various stereo views made from his Chicago fair photographs.⁴

On February 6, 1894, his mail included an \$8,000 order from Chicago for 180,000 of the views. Unfortunately, that same day also brought a personal visit from James W. Davis, the junior partner of Kilburn and Davis. The firm requested damages for World's Columbian Exposition pictures sold and threatened a lawsuit if the money were not forthcoming. Ingersoll hastily consulted his lawyer, who doubted that the photographer could come out the winner. So Ingersoll offered a compromise: He would destroy the photographic plates in question if Davis would give him a written release from any claim to damages for views already sold. When Davis agreed, Ingersoll gathered up his negatives and the two men walked together to the Wabasha Street bridge, from which the plates were thrown into the Mississippi River.⁵

But this did not end the matter. After Davis returned east, Ingersoll again advertised World's Fair views (if indeed the negatives had been destroyed, he was copying his photographs). This time Kilburn and Davis took their case to court and, surprisingly enough, lost. In handing down his decision the judge declared that the legality of the Kilburn-Davis contract with fair officials was dubious at best. Little or no explanation for this opinion is given in newspaper accounts of the hearing, but it is known that Ingersoll was only one of several photographers who had questioned the validity of the arrangement from its onset and that other large stereo view firms — Underwood and Underwood of New York, for example — also sold World's Fair views. And there was no evidence at all that Ingersoll had signed the stipulated waiver (which, in fact, he had not).⁶

The Minnesota Historical Society has in its collections Ingersoll's catalog of "Fine Stereoscopic Views and Scopes" for 1899. At that time his studio was located at 52 East Sixth Street, and his stereo views were being sold by a contingent of door-to-door salesmen, by mail order, and through Sears, Roebuck and Company catalogs.⁷

Ingersoll offered two grades of stereographs (stereo cards). His "best grade" views were actual photographs, trimmed and pasted to curved cardboard backings. This was basically the way stereo views had been made since the 1850s, although the "warped" or curved card mount which accentuated the illusion of three dimensions was

not developed until 1879. (Some small mention should be made here of the binding power of the mucilage used then, for to this day it invariably holds tight.) "Best grade" views were sold singly (for twenty cents each, plus ten cents for hand-tinting) or in series, handsomely boxed in red fabric-covered bookshelf volumes. Each boxed series also included a detailed guidebook, sometimes written by Ingersoll himself, other times by someone considered an expert on the subject at hand. The book was essentially a guided tour of the area covered in the stereographs.⁸

The second grade Ingersoll published was cheaper — flat "lithoprints" he called "reproduction" views. This type of stereograph became common after 1898 and, because it was simply run off on a commercial press, could be sold for next to nothing. Sears, Roebuck's 1908 catalog offered 100 such views for eighty-five cents. For \$1.00 you could have the 100 views plus a stereoscope.⁹

In addition to some 200 World's Fair views, Ingersoll's catalog offered an astonishing kaleidoscope of North American scenes ranging from the Klondike to Mexico. It also showed that he was doing a brisk trade in European views, primarily those of Sweden and Norway, and listed views of the photographer's home town — the Winter Carnival, Como Park, and the national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic at St. Paul in 1896. A few years later he would add pictures of Palestine, Greece, Italy, and Japan ("Nippon land").¹⁰

TRUMAN WARD INGERSOLL was born February 19, 1862, in St. Paul to Daniel Wesley and Marion Ward Ingersoll. (Mathew B. Brady's photographers were already in the field, making stereo views of the American Civil War.) Ingersoll's father was a pioneer Minnesota merchant of Welsh descent who had moved his growing family to St. Paul from New York in 1855. (His first wife

⁴The stereocamera had two lenses placed about 3½ inches apart center to center to duplicate the vision of two human eyes. It was, in effect, a double camera. It was possible, however, to make stereo views with an ordinary camera. A careful photographer had only to make two exposures, shifting the camera position slightly between them. See Darrah, *History of Stereographs*, 6, 41. For an account of the Kilburn-Davis suit, see *St. Paul Dispatch*, February 7, 1894, p. 5.

⁵*St. Paul Dispatch*, February 7, 1894, p. 5.

⁶Darrah, *History of Stereographs*, 157; *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 19, 1895.

⁷This was the third of Ingersoll's St. Paul studios. City directories list his first studio at 160 West Third Street beginning in 1884 and his second at 40 East Third Street from 1885 to 1890.

⁸Darrah, *History of Stereographs*, 18. Members of the Ingersoll family of St. Paul and Minneapolis own boxed series of the photographer's stereographs, henceforth cited as Ingersoll stereographs.

⁹Darrah, *History of Stereographs*, 117.

¹⁰Ingersoll stereographs.



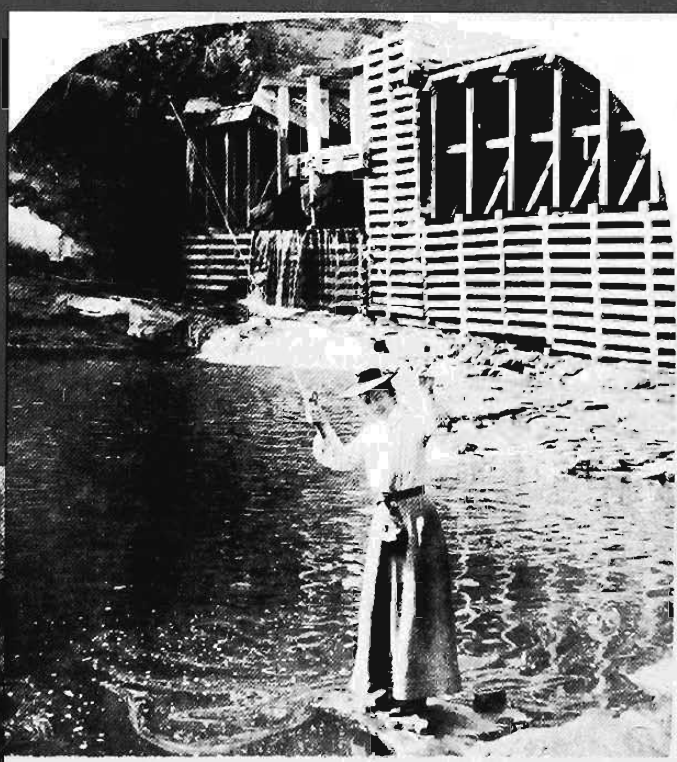
*The Ingersoll View Company
St. Paul, Minn., U. S. A.*

*High Grade Original Views
Sold through canvassers.*

1510 Feeding the Pigeons, Piazza San Marco, Venice.

PIGEON FEEDING in famed Piazza San Marco, Venice, Italy, around the turn of the century was much the same as today except for the style of the women's clothes. These were among a large number of "high grade original" stereoscopic views from foreign countries and the United States that Ingersoll "sold through canvassers."

MRS. INGERSOLL was the well-dressed angler in these charming views made about 1903 by her husband.



*High Grade Original Views
Sold only by Subscription.*

..3292 "Oh! See My Whale."
Copyrighted, 1903, by T. W. Ingersoll.



*The Ingersoll View Company
St. Paul, Minn., U. S. A.*

gave him nine children. She died shortly after the move to St. Paul, and Ingersoll married Marion Ward, who bore him another six.) It is recorded that the Ingersolls arrived that spring on the first boat, the "War Eagle," which docked in St. Paul on April 17, carrying 814 passengers. In 1856 Daniel Ingersoll opened a dry-goods house on East Third Street. Its name was later changed to Field-Schlick, Inc., and until it closed last year that firm was the oldest dry-goods business in the state. By 1860, Daniel was building the Ingersoll Block on a triangular piece of property on the corner of Third and Wabasha. The ground floor housed his dry-goods business, and the second was occupied by offices. The third and top floor, Ingersoll Hall, was St. Paul's first public hall of any note.¹¹

Ingersoll Hall was advertised as "The easiest to sing in, in America; the best seated in the state; the best ventilated this side of Italy; and the best lighted in the world." Marion Ramsey Furness, only daughter of Minnesota's first territorial governor, Alexander Ramsey, remembered that tableaux, generally given for the benefit of a church or charity, were much in vogue in the early 1860s and were usually staged in Ingersoll Hall. She once posed there as a "portly" Indian child. And, interestingly enough, the Reverend Edward Eggleston gave a series of stereopticon displays, using a 225-square-foot canvas, at the hall in January, 1864, some seven years before he wrote *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*. The exhibition included European views of the likes of

INGERSOLL HALL, comprising the top floor of the Ingersoll Block, was St. Paul's first public auditorium of note. Daniel Ingersoll had his dry-goods business on the ground floor. The second floor housed insurance and other offices.



Windsor Castle and Melrose Abbey and photographs of current celebrities, including several local persons. Eggleston, incidentally, was the first librarian at St. Paul's first public library, also located in the Ingersoll Block.¹²

In 1861, with five other civic leaders, Daniel Ingersoll organized the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce. The next year he was the Republican candidate for mayor but met defeat with his ticket. And from 1865 to 1877 he served on the city's school board, part of that time as its president (even though he himself had had only what was termed a "common school education," having begun his mercantile career at the age of fourteen). He was also appointed president of the board of managers for the state reform school in 1867 and continued in that position for eighteen years. Eventually, when his health began to fail in his mid-seventies, he sold his business to his son-in-law, T. C. Field. At his death in 1894 at the age of eighty-two, Daniel Ingersoll's estate was valued at \$100,000.¹³

Marion Ward Ingersoll was born in Rochester, New York, in 1832. She was educated in Holyoke, Massachusetts, and later taught there. After that she traveled west to Minnesota to teach at the new state university and met and married Daniel Ingersoll in 1859. In spite of her many household duties, she was one of a small circle of women known for their charitable work in St. Paul. In particular, she served as the first president of the "Ladies Christian Union of the City of St. Paul," a group of women from twelve St. Paul Protestant churches organized in 1867 for a number of worthy purposes, chief among them being to provide homes for the homeless. (In 1867, the homeless were mostly penniless immigrants. The city, with an estimated population of 16,000, was growing rapidly, and newcomers — some of them suffering already from malnutrition — arrived on every stagecoach and steamer.)¹⁴

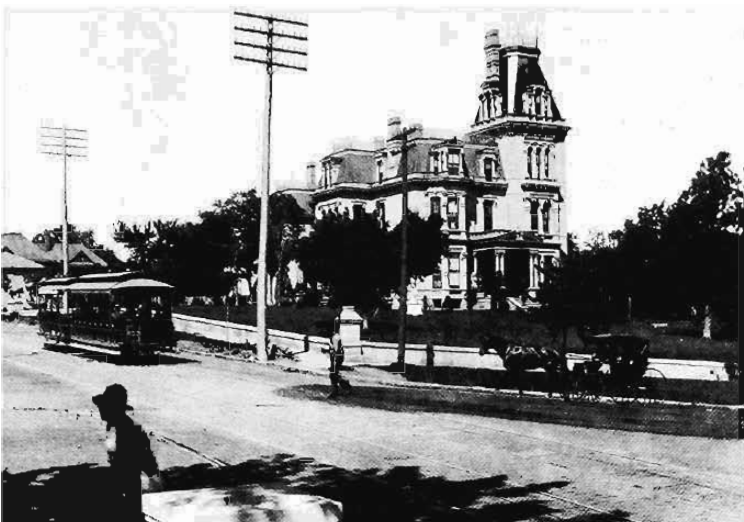
Truman was the oldest of the six children born to Daniel and Marion Ingersoll, but the house of his childhood was already filled with the children of his father's first marriage. The family home was a sizable frame structure at 18 Nelson Street near Summit, and Truman

¹¹ Henry Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity*, 1:91 (Chicago, 1912); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 27, 1894, p. 1.

¹² Advertisement in collection of Ingersoll papers owned by Ward Ingersoll, St. Paul, Truman's son — henceforth cited as Ingersoll Papers; Marion Ramsey Furness, "Childhood Recollections of Old St. Paul," in *Minnesota History*, 29:118 (June, 1948); John T. Flanagan, "The Hoosier Schoolmaster in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 18:362-64 (December, 1937).

¹³ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 27, 1894, p. 1; *St. Paul Dispatch*, May 10, 1895, p. 12.

¹⁴ *St. Paul Dispatch*, September 29, 1909, p. 9; Ethel McClure, "The Protestant Home of St. Paul: A Pioneer Venture in Caring for the Aged," in *Minnesota History*, 38:74-76 (June, 1962).



AMONG MANY St. Paul views by Ingersoll was this of the Norman W. Kittson residence at Summit and Selby avenues. It was torn down for the Cathedral of St. Paul. The Ingersolls lived in this area.

walked to classes at Jefferson Grade School. (Nelson Street was subsequently renumbered so that the Ingersoll house became number 197. Later the street disappeared altogether. But the residence stood on approximately the site now occupied by the Civil War monument northeast of the Cathedral of St. Paul.) Few details remain of his boyhood, but it is known that he lost an eye at an early age in an accident involving an arrow made from a corset stay. This made his future work in stereophotography all the more remarkable. From that time he usually, but not always, wore a glass eye.¹⁵

At the age of seventeen, Truman left home and headed west to seek his fortune as a civil engineer. This career lasted only two years. He found employment for a time surveying the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad and then helped lay out the present sites of Billings and Glendive, Montana. This short western stay was the beginning of his lifelong love affair with the western wilderness.¹⁶

Truman Ingersoll was back in St. Paul in 1881, living under his father's roof and clerking in his dry-goods business. He also was doing some photography, and by 1884 the first of his commercial studios (at 160 West Third Street) was a paying proposition. St. Paul would remain

his home and his base of operations, while he roamed the West, then the world, in search of unusual stereoscopic views.¹⁷

YELLOWSTONE PARK particularly intrigued him. Many years later in the small guidebook that accompanied his boxed sets of stereo views of the park, he wrote of his special introduction to its "weird phenomena and fairy-like enchantment" as a child: "A family friend, one of the Washburn-Doane party, narrated his adventures and experiences of the past year, while on that memorable exploration trip of 1870. After our guest had departed, my mother, turning to me, said, 'My son, you must not believe everything that you are told,' and so an effort was made to check my burning imagination. From that hour grew my determination, and years to come I vowed to see and know whereof I was told."

He also wrote of being a "tenderfoot traveler" in the park in 1883 with only an almost equally inexperienced boy for a guide and companion. "Day after day," he related, "we wandered from point to point in this land of marvels." Then, early one never-to-be-forgotten morning while camped on Tower Creek, the two had visitors: "President Arthur and Gen. [Philip W.] Sheridan rode up with their guides. There has never been a doubt in my mind that the good-natured smile that greeted us was caused by our infantile and woe-begone appearance. Our tin cups of hot coffee were accepted, and a guide swung out of his saddle, approached our camp fire, and remarking, 'Pards, no offense, but I can show you how to beat that bread,' and he did, and from that day we had frying pan bread in camp instead of 'sinkers.'"¹⁸

During one of his early western trips he also met young Theodore Roosevelt who was trying his hand at ranching near Medora, North Dakota. The two became lifelong friends, and Ingersoll made many pictures of Roosevelt in his western trappings. These were reproduced from time to time in newspapers and various periodicals, one appearing as late as October 19, 1921, on the cover of *The Outlook* magazine. After Roosevelt became president in September, 1901, following the assassination of William McKinley, Ingersoll received special permission to photograph him in the new executive offices and also to make views of the remodeled White House and grounds. A *St. Paul Dispatch* clipping dated December 17, 1903, indicated that the privilege was somewhat unusual, adding that "Mr. Ingersoll is already besieged by many newspapers for copies of the pictures he has taken."¹⁹

It is thought that Ingersoll had a hand in perfecting the mechanism for the Kodak that his friend George Eastman patented in 1886. (Ingersoll had many talents. Some of them provided him a livelihood after his retirement from photography. Certainly, he had a definite flair

¹⁵ Author interviews with Ward Ingersoll, St. Paul, November, 1978, hereafter cited Ward Ingersoll interviews.

¹⁶ *Buffalo Journal*, Buffalo, Minn., June 15, 1922, p. 1.

¹⁷ *St. Paul City Directory*, 1881-1884; material from Ingersoll Papers.

¹⁸ T. W. Ingersoll, *Nature's Wonderland*, preface (St. Paul, 1904). This citation includes the preceding paragraph.

¹⁹ *Buffalo Journal*, June 15, 1922, p. 1.



A BIRCHBARK CANOE takes shape in this view, one of a large number that Ingersoll made of Chippewa (Ojibway) Indian canoe building and other activities in various places of northern Minnesota.

for solving mechanical problems.) At any rate, he was given exclusive rights to sell the camera in Minnesota. His first sale — one of the first Kodaks completed, model no. 7 — was made to the mayor of St. Paul. The popular hand-held cameras cost \$25.00, loaded with a roll of 100 negatives that produced circular photographs about three and a half inches in diameter. Normally, when all the negatives were exposed, the entire camera was mailed to Eastman's factory in Rochester, New York. There the pictures were developed and the camera reloaded with film, but newspaper advertisements show that Ingersoll also provided Kodak finishing in his St. Paul shop.²⁰

Ingersoll almost always carried his camera, even when he was having an outrageously good time as a member of the Nushka Club, which he joined shortly after its organization in 1885. He soon became its "official" photographer. Originally intended to promote the activities of the St. Paul Winter Carnival, which was first held in 1886 and was also pictured expertly by Ingersoll, the club dedicated its wintertime leisure to the pursuit of fun and frolic. The Nushkas dressed and paraded as "polar bears" during carnival festivities. And for their other cold weather amusements — tobogganing on a slide at Crocus Hill, taking snowshoe tramps to Merriam Park, or ice skating on a rink at Western and Summit — they sported natty red-and-black woolen uniforms.

The membership roster included both married couples and "bachelors" and single "ladies" (and a good many highly recognizable St. Paul names, such as the Cass Gilberts, the J. L. Forepaughs, the Charles E. Flandraus, the L. P. Ordways, Messrs. J. H. Merriam

and C. Weyerhaeuser, and the Misses Clara Hill and Grace Upham). Such a fun-loving group was bound to attract new members, and as the number of Nushkas grew (to more than 150 in 1890), so did the seasons — and reasons — for their revelry. In summer, "coaching parties" were added to the agenda, and a special train was chartered to take them north for the Duluth-Superior regatta. There were frequent "informal" Saturday nights, a yearly elaborate celebration in honor of George Washington's birthday (the first of these was held in February, 1887), and the annual New Year's Eve masquerade ball.

Ingersoll captured many of his friends' parties and outings on film. He included the best of these pictures in elegant albums of eight-by-ten photographs he published for the club's membership. Thus it is to his credit that a good deal of the playful history of St. Paul's most

²⁰ Ward Ingersoll interviews; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 28, 1909, first sec., p. 9; *Buffalo Journal*, June 15, 1922, p. 1; unidentified newspaper clipping in Truman Ingersoll's personal scrapbook, p. 43, owned by Ward Ingersoll, henceforth cited as Ingersoll scrapbook.

²¹ Of the Nushka Club albums of photographs Ingersoll published, four are in Minnesota Historical Society's audio-visual library. This and the previous two paragraphs are based largely on these albums. See also, Virginia L. Rahm, "The Nushka Club," in *Minnesota History*, 43:303-307 (Winter, 1973).

colorful social club is a matter of public pictorial record.²²

DURING THESE SAME YEARS, although he still maintained a room in town at his parents' residence, he built a log cabin — christened "Birch Lodge" — at Dellwood on the north shore of White Bear Lake. (A family photograph shows it to have been three logs high in 1887.) Boats fascinated him. His business was well established. And he could afford to spend a major portion of the summer social season sailing. He had at least two sailboats — the "Che-wa" and the "May B." He also kept a birchbark canoe, a rowboat, and a duck boat. And there was a steam launch he built himself and powered with a kerosene-fired steam engine (almost unheard of then in a small boat). It flew a crimson-colored silk banner with the name "Mirella" emblazoned in white.²²

He doubtless was a popular bachelor. Numerous items in the local society columns recounted his many visitors (quite a number of them female). One reporter summed it up: "Mr Ingersoll, the hospitable owner of Birch Lodge, has more visitors probably than any one else at the lake. He lives in a veritable log cabin — but with all the modern conveniences — and keeps open house for all his friends."²³

Then, in the summer of 1895, this notice appeared: "It is a matter of rejoicing that Birch Lodge, the picturesque log cabin tucked in among the trees for which it is named, and which always seemed to hold out welcoming hands, is to have a new occupant. Truman Ingersoll will be married tomorrow, June 28, to Miss Bessie C. Hess, daughter of George H. Hess, of Chicago." It was a double wedding in the bride's Chicago home, Bessie's sister marrying at the same time. (It seems very likely that Ingersoll met Bessie a couple of years earlier when he was in Chicago photographing the World's Fair.) Then the couple returned to Birch Lodge where the bridegroom plunged, quite literally, back into sailing.²⁴

One newspaper account, dated August 1, 1895, of the "most brilliant social event of the season" at the White Bear Yacht Club (a moonlight sailboat race, followed by dancing at the clubhouse) tells of "Capt. Ingersoll," who, when the wind subsided, "finally determined that an excellent method of propelling the boat would be to swim behind it for a short distance and thus lighten its ballast." And another article begins: "When Truman Ingersoll christened his new sailboat 'May B.,' he worked a

fearful spell of ambiguous nomenclature — a spell that hoodooed the entire fifth race of the White Bear Yacht Club." An unpredicted storm burst upon the lake in mid-race, and "'May B.,' the pernicious provoker of this calamity, was capsized three times in succession and three wet souls [Ingersoll and two of his brothers], all unprepared, were cast within appalling proximity to a drier atmosphere."²⁵

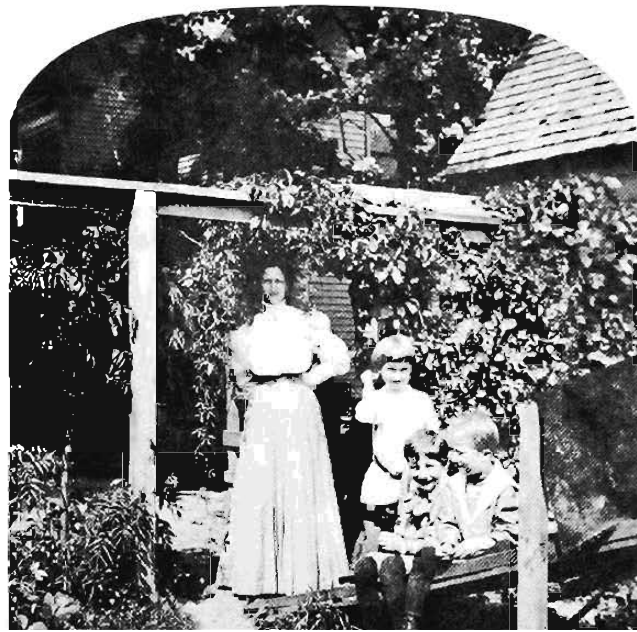
Ingersoll was also an automobile enthusiast. In addition to being one of the first St. Paulites to own an automobile, he also was an early officer of the St. Paul Automobile Club and helped organize excursions. In July, 1907, a newspaper article listed him as one of sixteen drivers of "big touring cars" who drove from the Twin Cities to Mankato (by way of Jordan and Le Sueur). They covered "the ninety miles without mishap of any kind. The big repair car that trailed the party was not once called upon for assistance."²⁶

This is not to give the impression that Ingersoll was a playboy of sorts. Rather, it illustrates that, even though he was operating a busy establishment, he nevertheless found time to indulge his many interests.

During these years the Ingersolls also kept a residence in St. Paul. For a time they lived on Ashland Avenue and at another time had a house on Portland at Kent before moving into the substantial family home Ingersoll himself designed and built at 588 Grand Avenue. By now the family included three sons: Ward Hess, born in 1897; Thaddeus, born in 1899; and Truman Howe, born in 1903.²⁷

The photographer traveled considerably. His son, Ward, now in his eighties and living in St. Paul, recalled his father's long absences from home. During one of his trips he was in Italy, where he convinced Pope Pius X to pose for him. Ingersoll was continually adding to his inventory of negatives. But it must be said he had a

IN THE BACKYARD in this Ingersoll stereo view are his wife Bessie and their three sons. Ward was born in 1897, Thaddeus in 1899, and Truman Howe in 1903.



²² Newspaper clippings, Ingersoll scrapbook.

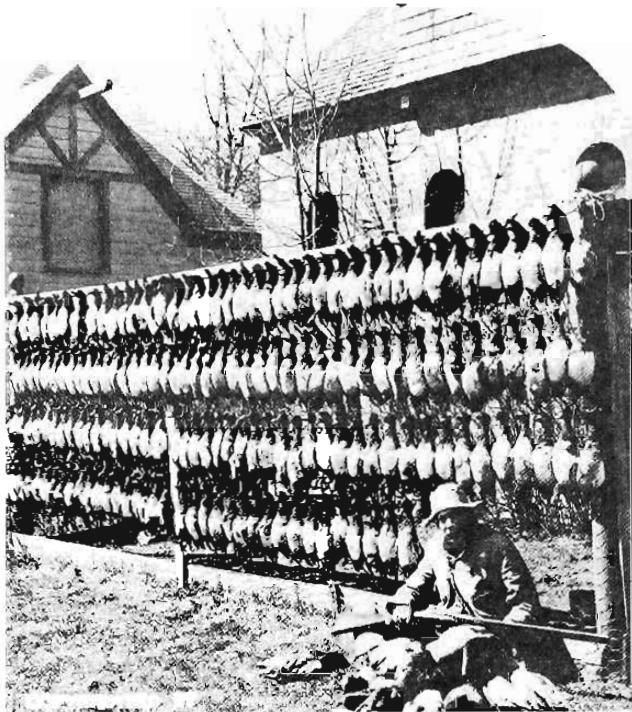
²³ Newspaper clipping, Ingersoll scrapbook.

²⁴ Newspaper clippings, Ingersoll scrapbook; Ward Ingersoll interviews.

²⁵ Newspaper clippings, Ingersoll scrapbook.

²⁶ *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 7, 1907, first sec., p. 2; Rauenhorst, "Ingersoll," p. 20.

²⁷ Ward Ingersoll interviews.



TWO DAYS' TAKE of "black" ducks



"MY DOG AND I," by Ingersoll

knack for turning a profit from his own pleasures. This is especially evident in an extremely popular "Sporting" series of stereo views he offered. The pictures document hunting of both big and small game — elk, pronghorn, deer, as well as duck, quail, and prairie chicken. Also represented was fishing as practiced by Ingersoll and his companions. One stereo view is a self-portrait of the photographer and his dog in camp (which is complete with lean-to shelter, dead game strung from trees, and a supertime campfire).²⁸

An entertaining story concerning an Ingersoll hunt appears in an undated clipping pasted in the photographer's scrapbook. Under the title of "How It Happened that Sportsman Ingersoll Shipped Home Two Domestic Geese," it reported:

A handsome bag of game came in on the Omaha train the other morning, forwarded to his friends by that popular gentleman and prominent sportsman, Truman W. Ingersoll, who was taking an outing in the northern [sic] part of the state, in the vicinity of Heron Lake. Some surprise was manifested among Mr. Ingersoll's friends when the game arrived in St. Paul, upon finding among the birds two tame geese and no explanation. . . . It seems the noted sportsman had been having splendid luck all that morning, having brought down twenty-nine ducks and four geese, and being weary after such arduous toil together with the excitement attendant upon such brilliant success, he had lain down on the

cushions in the bottom of the boat and taken a quiet siesta. Upon rousing from his slumbers he immediately, with true sportsman's instinct, looked in the direction of his decoys, and beheld four magnificent birds with long, gleaming necks, calmly resting among them. Realizing that delays are dangerous, he leveled his gun and blazed away. Two of the beauties were laid low, and as the others did not take flight, True concluded that they were some birds he had winged the day before. True made all haste to gather up his trophies, but upon reaching the scene of the tragedy he was horrified to discover that he had killed two eighteen-pound domestic geese, belonging to some poor farmer on the lake shore who had been fattening them all winter on corn. . .

Mr. Ingersoll declares he took the birds for white brants; that all the farm houses were so far away you could not see the windows, and that he cannot understand how in thunder the pretty, web-footed creatures ever got so far from home and two or three miles from shore. It is a mystery still, but Mr. Ingersoll will henceforth bear the reputation of being the foremost ornithologist who haunts the shores of Heron Lake.

AT LEAST upon one occasion, Ingersoll also worked as a newspaper correspondent. Following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the *St. Paul Dispatch* carried this

²⁸ Ingersoll stereographs; Ward Ingersoll interviews.

notice: "Instantly upon receipt of the news of the disaster at San Francisco, the *St. Paul Dispatch* engaged the services of Truman W. Ingersoll and hastened him to the scene. Mr. Ingersoll is known as the best scenic photographer of the west. He took the first train for San Francisco, equipped with complete photographic outfit and a special pass from the War Department at Washington to give him unrestricted egress and ingress at the scene of the calamity. At the earliest possible moment, the *Dispatch* will print his descriptive photographs of scenes of the devastated city." Ingersoll also carried a pass dated April 19, 1906, from St. Paul's chief of police to San Francisco's, reading: "The bearer, T.W. Ingersoll, will explain what he wants. He is a personal friend of mine and I will vouch for him at all stages. (Signed) John J. O'Connor."²⁹

Ingersoll moved to the last and largest of his St. Paul studios — at 88-92 West Fourth Street, the site of the present public library — in 1906. One measure of his success is the fact that he now employed approximately twenty-five people, including a number of young women who hand-tinted the color views.³⁰ But he clearly foresaw the end of prosperity for stereo photographers. Moving pictures were new on the scene, and public interest in stereo viewing was waning. On November 28,

1909, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* announced that "Truman W. Ingersoll, the veteran landscape photographer, yesterday retired from active interest in the business which he established here twenty-seven years ago." Buckbee-Mears of St. Paul bought the commercial portion of his business and continued with industrial photography. The *Pioneer Press* also noted that "Mr. Ingersoll is the oldest dealer in kodaks and kodak finishing in the world." He intended to move his family to Buffalo, Minnesota, where he could do some "specialized" farming.

He built a comfortable house for his wife and sons on Buffalo Lake, milling the paneling and trim on gasoline-driven machinery in his own woodworking shop. Rural electrification had not come in yet, so he built a water wheel to generate electricity in the house (the Grand Avenue house had been lit by gas lamps). Then he set about developing a thriving business in flowers. Here, too, he was successful. His peonies and many rare gladiolus varieties achieved national recognition. The bulk of his business was wholesale; the firm of Holm and Olson, St. Paul, was an important account. His son Ward remembers packing gladioli in banana crates for shipment on the ten o'clock evening train. Ward also recalls that the family once supplied 65,000 live daisies for the Dayton Company's first daisy sale.³¹

The family also kept bees and packaged the honey supply in small containers for use in railroad dining cars. Ingersoll had a few turkeys and chickens, built birdhouses, and raised strawberries for commercial markets. He also made shock absorbers (an innovation then)

²⁹ Letter in Ingersoll Papers.

³⁰ Newspaper clipping, Ingersoll scrapbook.

³¹ Ward Ingersoll interviews; *Buffalo Journal*, June 15, 1922, p. 1.

LAST AND LARGEST of Ingersoll's St. Paul studios was this one he moved into in 1906 at 88-92 West Fourth Street where the St. Paul Public Library now stands.



for a man named Hayes who developed the product. And, although his days of world travel were over, he still returned to the West on occasion, staying with friends of his younger days at the Eaton Ranch, which had been in Medora in Roosevelt's time but later was relocated near Sheridan, Wyoming.³²

Ingersoll died on June 9, 1922, at the age of sixty at St. Luke's Hospital in St. Paul. The cause of his death was given as "lung failure." Very possibly he died of lung cancer, since he was an inveterate smoker. His health had been failing for more than a year, and during the last few weeks of his life he had had surgery for "internal abscesses." No autopsy was performed. He was buried in the family plot in Oakland Cemetery, St. Paul, beside his father.³³

OVERALL, the Truman Ingersoll story remains sketchy at this time. For one thing, his business records are missing, apparently lost in the shuffle after he sold his business (as were his negatives). Because he was a colorful and sometimes flamboyant local celebrity of sorts, his personal activities were reported with some regularity in the local press. But almost no mention — with the exception of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition episode — is made of his professional career. Particularly distressing is the lack of any substantial information concerning his travels. He kept a meticulous logbook during his later years in Buffalo and certainly must have kept like journals or diaries during his photographic expeditions. If so, they are lost, too.

We do have his photographic "records" to work from, though. These show, incontrovertibly, that his was a valuable supplement to world photography. He made comprehensive pictorial records, detailing the life and times of the countries and the people — especially picturesque in nineteenth-century costume — that he saw. But here again, researchers are warned that, with the exception of the large collection of foreign views belonging to the Ingersoll family, representative collections of these views have not yet been located.

The Minnesota Historical Society holds in its collections, however, several hundred of his St. Paul and Minnesota photographs, as well as a limited number of other American views (a very good Alaskan series, for example). And it may be that it was in the field of local photography that Truman Ingersoll made his greatest contribution.

His professional career in St. Paul spanned a quarter of a century. During that time his camera chronicled the city's ever-changing facade, mirroring its many moods. The resulting record, unequalled in scope, is indeed a tribute from a world photographer. He left St. Paul a lasting legacy — a perceptive portrait of the city's past.

³²Ward Ingersoll interviews.

³³*Buffalo Journal*, June 15, 1922, p. 1.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS on p. 122, p. 125, p. 129, p. 130, and p. 131 were furnished by Ward Ingersoll of St. Paul; those on p. 126, p. 127, p. 128, and p. 132 are from the MHS audiovisual library.

AN EARLY INGERSOLL photo is this one of part of old Fort Snelling and the road by it. At left is the Hexagonal Tower.





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