

**FANNY CROSBY'S VOICE DISCOVERED ON WAX CYLINDER BY GRAMMY-WINNING ARCHEOPHONE RECORDS**

*America's Most Famous Hymn Writer, Thought Never to Have Recorded, to Be Featured on "Waxing the Gospel" Compilation, Coming Sep. 30th*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CHAMPAIGN, IL (MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2016)** — Archeophone Records ([www.archeophone.com](http://www.archeophone.com)) today announced that it has discovered the first and only known recording in existence of legendary blind hymn writer Frances Jane ("Fanny") Crosby in a batch of field recordings made in 1897. Meticulously transferred and restored, the audio track will be one of 102 selections on Archeophone's highly-anticipated book and CD compilation, *Waxing the Gospel: Mass Evangelism and the Phonograph, 1890-1900*, which will be released on September 30, 2016 via all major brick and mortar and online retailers, as well as the label's website.

Committed to wax cylinder in August 1897 during the annual camp meeting at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, Crosby is heard reciting the words of her as-yet unpublished poem, "Threescore Years and Ten." The poem was a tribute to her friend and collaborator, the composer Robert Lowry, first published in an altered form in the second edition of *Bells at Evening* in 1898. The cylinder was found among several others in a collection of "homemade" cylinders, and the producers of *Waxing the Gospel* researched the cache and established their provenance. The whole detective story is told in the extensive notes to the set.

"Originally, we envisioned a one-CD set collecting the rare recordings of Ira D. Sankey. Then our friend Michael Devecka put forward this cache of mystery wax cylinders and asked us to look into them. We were amazed by what we discovered," said Archeophone co-producer Richard Martin. "Through deep searching in online databases we discovered newspaper accounts describing these very cylinders. This research would not have been possible a few years ago."

The result was an altered vision for the product. *Waxing the Gospel* became a comprehensive odyssey on three CDs (nearly four hours of audio) housed in a beautifully illustrated 408-page hardback book, exploring in unprecedented fashion the earliest days of recording. It chronicles in words, images, and ancient sounds how tradition and technology merged in three distinct areas of recording: commercial, celebrity, and vernacular. The cache from Ocean Grove is the major portion of the vernacular CD.

At the camp meeting, a Manhattan optician named Henry A. Heath made the records of Crosby and other prominent Victorian-era American evangelists, including: composer and choral leader John R. Sweney, composer Winfield S. Weeden, "gospel soloist" Capt. Charles L. Estey of the U. S. Church Army, "Golden Minstrel" Edward Taylor of the Salvation Army, the Moody Quartet, Rev. J. Reeves Daniels, the Ocean Grove Auditorium Choir, and others. Heath used the records in exhibitions of a program called "Echoes of Ocean Grove" at the Hudson County (NJ) YMCA rescue mission and at various churches in the fall of 1897.

“It was exciting enough to establish the identities of the performers on the records,” said Archeophone co-producer Meagan Hennessey, “but we didn’t know *why* Heath recorded them. Then we discovered that he took these field recordings back to the city to continue the evangelical work of the camp meeting. He brought the saving word via phonograph from the live event right to the at-risk people in his community.”

Although time has not been entirely kind to the cylinders, and the job of restoration was uniquely challenging, the results are astonishing. Martin, who restored the audio and wrote the notes to the book, said, “These folks are supposedly amateur recording artists, and yet they sound like top-notch professionals. We’re hearing them right in the midst of their ministry. It’s positively spine-tingling to imagine.” Samples of the work can be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqeqfcOUuyw>, and you can learn more about the album at <http://archeophone.com/catalogue/waxing-the-gospel/>.

### **About Archeophone Records**

Based in Champaign, Illinois, Archeophone Records produces critical editions of the world’s oldest recordings: audio tracked prior to 1925, during the acoustic (i.e., pre-microphone) era of recording. Archeophone has received twelve Grammy nominations for its reissues, with its 2005 release *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1891-1922* winning the Best Historical Album Award at the 49th Grammys. Additionally, the label has provided consultation and audio restorations for TV shows such as *Boardwalk Empire*. *Waxing the Gospel* is the 68<sup>th</sup> reissue produced by Archeophone. It is distributed by Alternative Distribution Alliance (ADA) and available in both CD and digital formats.

**For more information, please contact:**

**Meagan Hennessey or Richard Martin at Archeophone: [press@archeophone.com](mailto:press@archeophone.com), (217) 355-9883.**

