

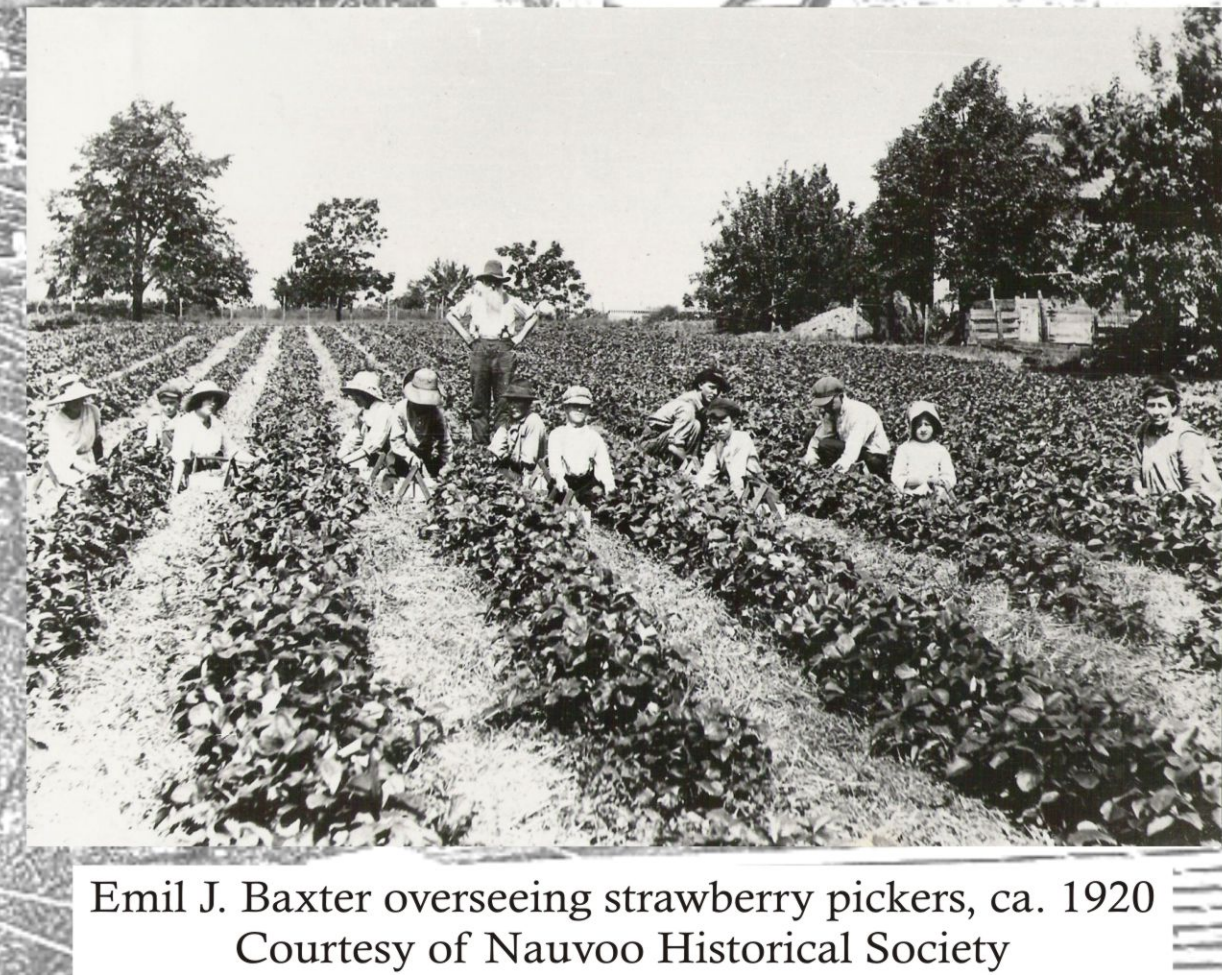
# HOPE FOR A *Better* LIFE : ICARIANS

Icarians hoped to create a perfect society, Icaria, where individuals gave according to their ability and received according to their needs. Influenced by the French Revolution of 1830, Icarians focused on liberty, equality, and fraternity; they owned property together and stressed participation in music and theater. Their goal was to eliminate poverty and achieve “Common Happiness.”

## Brief History:

The Icarian community was inspired by an 1840 novel, *Voyage to Icaria*, by Etienne Cabet that described his vision of a perfect society. Most of the members were from France’s middle class with some Germans and others. They attempted to settle in Texas before they moved to Nauvoo in 1849 and bought empty Mormon homes and businesses. On the former Mormon temple block, the Icarians built seventeen buildings, including a school, dining/performance hall, apartment buildings, a print shop, and several stores. They also owned mills, a wash house, and a distillery near the river. The Icarian community grew to more than 400 members in Nauvoo.

In 1854, Cabet was called back to France, and when he returned to Nauvoo, he discovered that some of the communal rules were being ignored by younger members. A major disagreement developed over the election of group leaders, and Etienne Cabet was voted out as president. Nauvoo’s mayor tried to settle differences, but Cabet and 180 followers moved to St. Louis in 1856, where he died a few days later. The remainder of the Icarian community in Nauvoo continued until 1860. Many of the group moved to Corning, Iowa, where they remained until 1898, making the Icarians one of the longest non-religious utopian experiments in America.



## The Baxter Family

Emile Baxter came to America from France in 1847. He married Annette Powell in New Jersey and they came to Nauvoo in 1855 to join the Icarian commune. Emile served as Icarian Society secretary and Annette taught piano. With the break-up of the Icarians, Emile’s family returned to New Jersey, but soon realized they preferred life in Nauvoo. They joined their French and German neighbors in cultivating grapes in Nauvoo, which quickly developed into the production of wine. The Emile Baxter vineyard and winery has passed down through four generations, and continues today into the sixth generation as Baxter’s Vineyards, the oldest-operating winery in the State of Illinois.



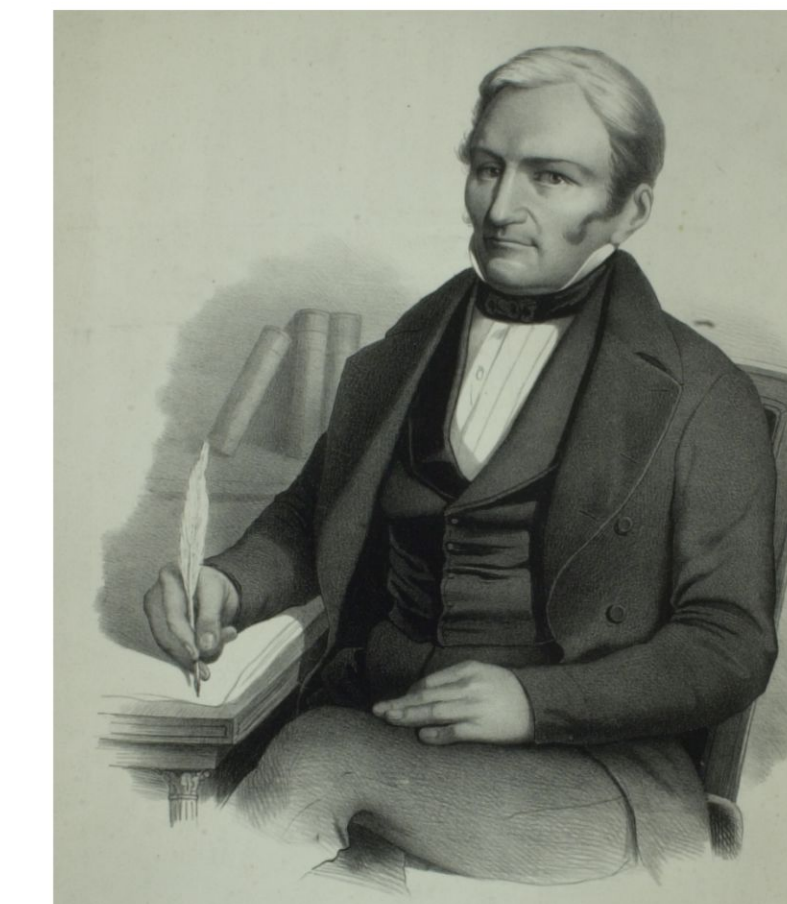
## The Cambre Family

Adolph Cambre was not pleased with the reign of Napoleon III. In 1849, he left his native France and sailed to New Orleans where he worked as a cabinet maker. He returned to his homeland to marry Hortense Dussessois, but soon returned to America with his new bride. This time he bypassed New Orleans and sailed up the Mississippi River to Nauvoo, Illinois to join the Icarians. In 1867, the Cambres bought a small farm north of Nauvoo on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi in an area called Mormon Springs. Adolph built a salt-box style home and planted strawberries, raspberries, and a vineyard. This farm remained in the Cambre family until 1979. Adolph’s brother, Eugene Cambre, also settled in Nauvoo. His brick home with a stone-arched wine cellar was on Wells Street just south of the Temple block, and his vineyard was on the south side of his house.

Background image of the Icarian Apartments looking west - ca. 1900  
Courtesy of the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

“Each for all. All for each.”

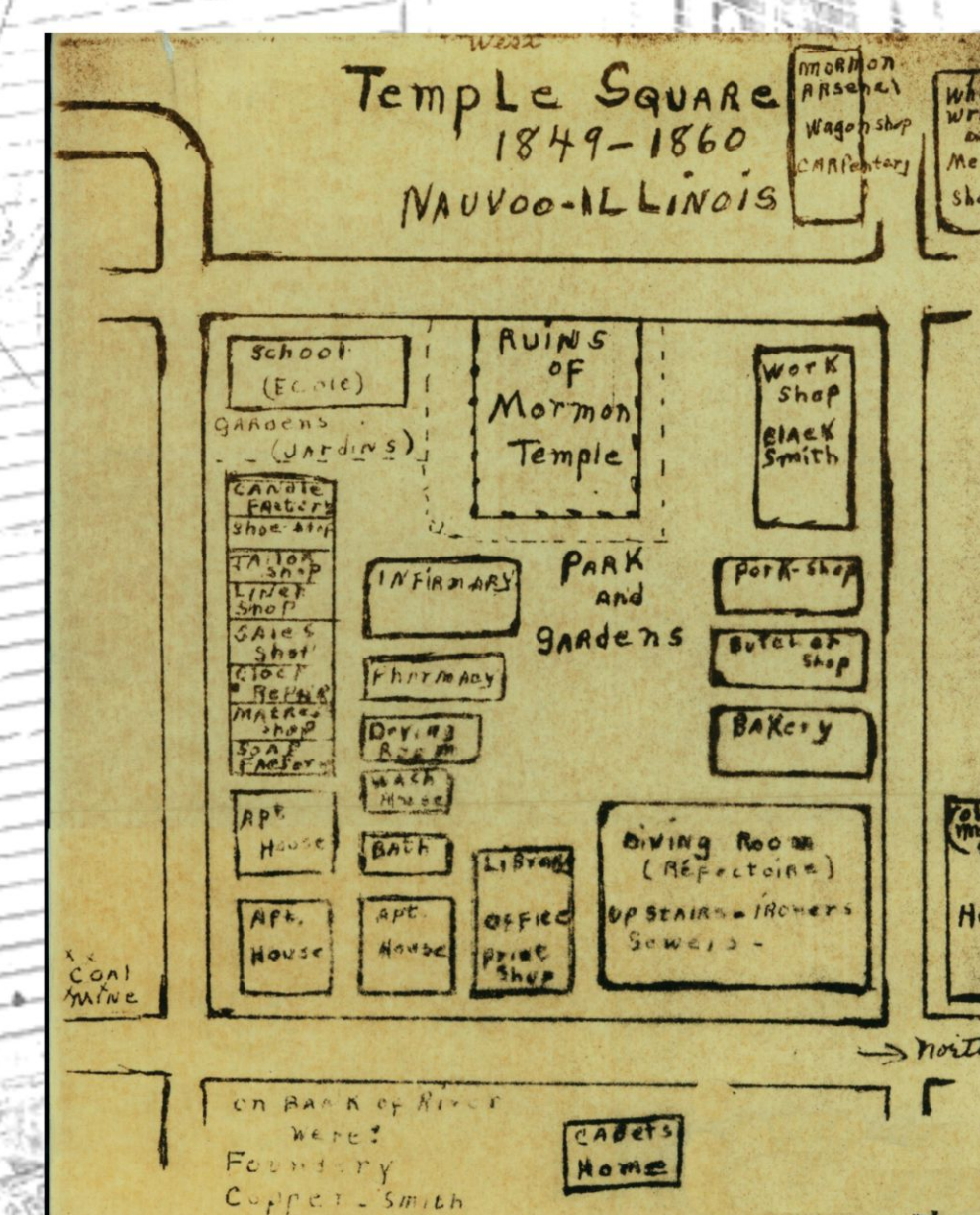
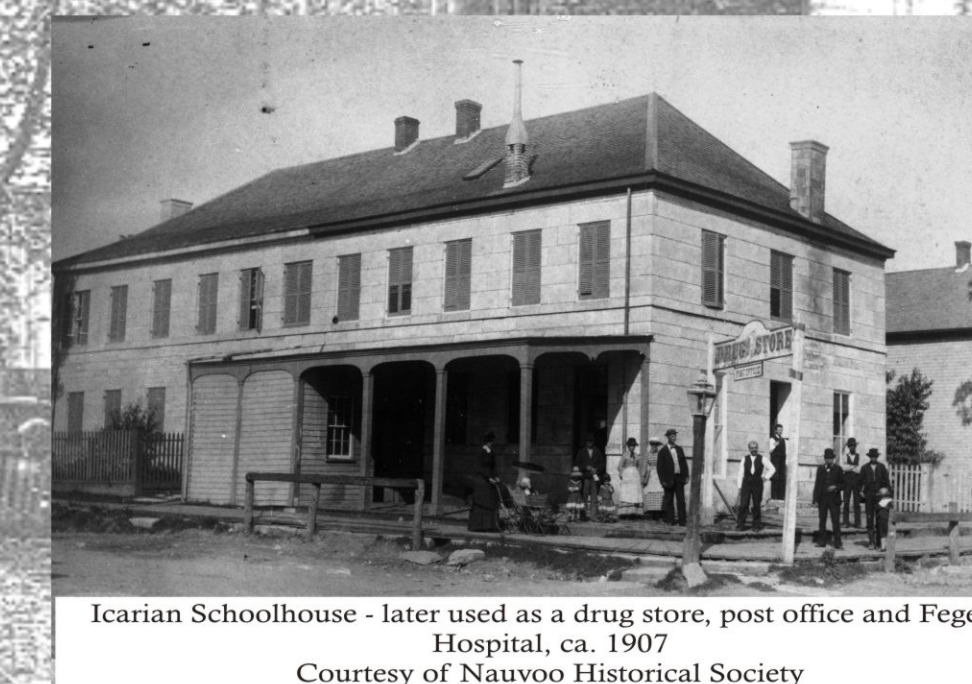
From Etienne Cabet’s Creed



## The Vallet Family

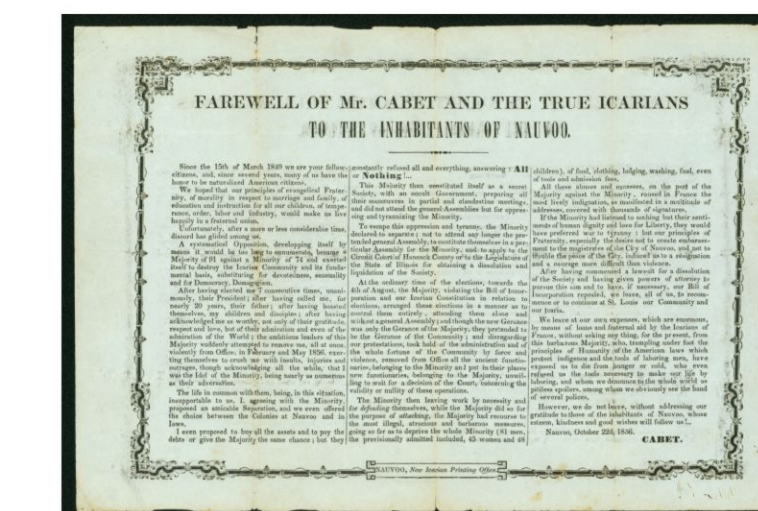
“The theory was not practicable and soon proved to be a complete failure.”  
Emile Vallet on Icarian ideas

Emile Vallet was born in Orsay, France, in 1834. His parents became interested in the Icarians in 1847; they joined the colony and arrived in Nauvoo in 1850. The Icarians purchased the ruins of the Mormon temple and planned to rebuild it. Emile was helping with the masonry work on May 27, 1850, when a storm “blew one of the walls down while we were working in the inside...No one was hurt,” but plans to rebuild the temple were abandoned. In 1854, Vallet married Doris Henriette Wilhelmina Ebert, and they had six children. Emile Vallet earned a living as a cooper, gardener, and shoemaker. He also painted houses, signs, and landscapes. Vallet had many talents and graciously shared them with the community. He wrote a short history of the Nauvoo Icarian colony, first printed in 1866 and reprinted in 1917 as *Communism: History of the Experiment at Nauvoo of the Icarian Settlement*. At his death in 1907, Vallet was described as “a freethinker since the days of his youth.”



Like the Mormon Zion, Icaria was not to be in Nauvoo. But the Icarians were not the only people to recognize that the near-vacant city left behind by Mormons might be a land of opportunity. By the late 1840s, German speaking people from present-day Germany, Switzerland, and Austria also focused on Nauvoo.

Etienne Cabet in full cape  
Courtesy of Mary Logan, Nauvoo, Illinois



In October of 1838, Cabet gives Nauvoo his farewell thoughts about the society  
Courtesy of Iowa State Historical Society, Des Moines, Iowa

