

THE STORY OF ICARIA

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In 1860 a group of French people of the Icarian Society established the community of Icaria near the present site of Corning in Adams County, Iowa. Icaria was perhaps the most typical representative of the rational democratic community as opposed to the religious groups concerned only incidentally with the solution of social problems.¹ With the Icarians their religion was the solution of social problems as advocated by Etienne Cabet. It was an attempt to realize the democratic communism of the Utopian philosophers;² therefore it was invaluable as an experiment.

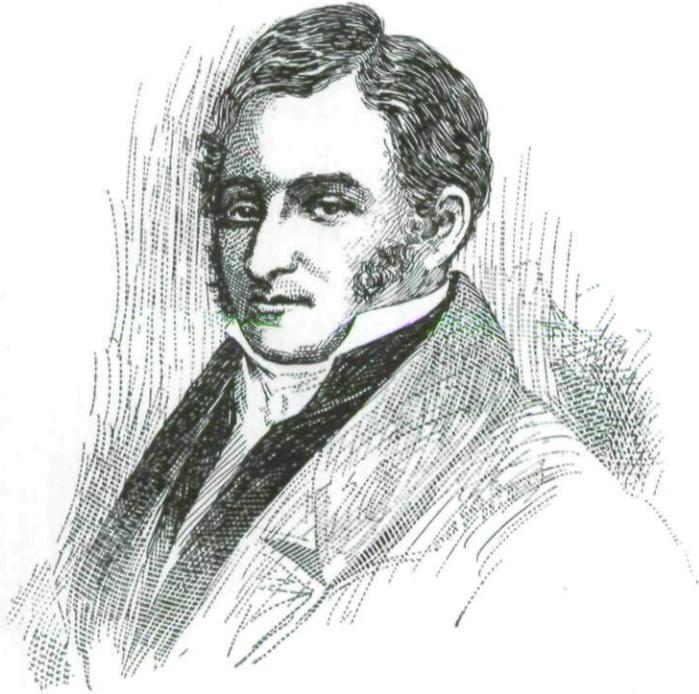
According to the Greek legend, Daedalus was a skillful artist and inventor who built a labyrinth in Crete for King Minos. He and his son, Icarus, were then unable to get out, and in order to escape he made wings for himself and his son. In spite of his father's warning, Icarus, in his eagerness to escape, flew so high that the sun's rays melted the wax with which his wings were fastened, causing him to fall to his death. From this has been derived the present meaning of Icarian. Which, as stated in Webster's New World Dictionary, is "of, like or characteristic of Icarus; hence, too daring; foolhardy; rash."

This writer was unable to find anything as to how the people of the Icarian Society got their name, but it is easy to imagine how Etienne Cabet, who was exiled from France because of his writings, could be called an Icarian.

Etienne Cabet was a French lawyer who was the author of the popular *History of The French Revolution from 1789 to 1830*. He was also editor of the newspaper, *Le Populaire*, in which he advocated the rights of working people, and he also wrote many controversial pamphlets and books.

¹ Albert Shaw, *Icaria, A Chapter in the History of Communism*, London and New York, 1884, p. vii.

² *Ibid.*, p. viii.



ETIENNE CABET

He was sentenced to prison for an article in his paper; however, he was able to escape to London. While in exile he studied history and the Scriptures and continued his writings. He wrote "Vrai Christianisme" or "True Christianity" in 1840 and the novel, *Un Voyage en Icarie*, in which all follow Christian concepts of brotherly love as a solution to social problems. An English reviewer in 1848 wrote:

It [*The Voyage*] has already gone through five editions — There is not a shop or stall in Paris where copies are not in readiness for a constant influx of purchasers—hardly a drawing-room table on which it is not seen.

The above is evidence that Cabet's writings created quite a sensation in France. His book, *The Voyage*, told of an imaginary community, but against his protests people began to believe it. His disciples set up the cry, "Let us found Icaria!"

³ *Ibid.*, fn. p. 18.

In 1847, in response to their cries, Cabet published an article in *Le Populaire* entitled "Allons en Icarie" ("Let us go to Icarie"). Thousands responded and America was chosen as the place to set up such a community. Cabet's announcement in the January 17, 1848 issue of the paper will be another feather in the cap of the Texan. He said that Texas was chosen as the place to go because it "presents the most advantages in health, temperature of the climate, fertility of soil, extent of country, etc."

On February 3, 1848, seventy picked men gathered at Le Havre, France to set out for Texas. Thousands of people came to bid them farewell. For the first time the song, "Partoons pour Icarie," was sung. Cabet then read a profession of faith and asked the seventy a series of questions. Each was answered with a loud chorus of "YES!" after which the crowd cheered. At that time it was expected that so many would be converted to Icarianism that a world-wide revolution would take place and "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity" would rule civilization.

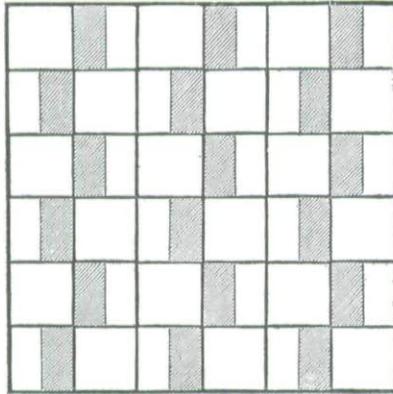
The trip across the ocean was a pleasant one. The Icarian pioneers, dressed in their uniforms of black corduroy tunics and gray felt hats made the decks of the ship, *Rome*, sing with repeated choruses of their "Chant du Depart" — the new song, "Partoons pour Icarie."⁴ Cabet had painted in their minds a pleasant picture of their new home in Texas. They had time on the boat to speculate about life in their new community. Cabet had assure them that they would have absolute title to one million acres by the banks of the Red River.

After landing at New Orleans they started up to Red River to their lands in Texas. When they arrived at Shreveport they were due for a big disappointment as the lands turned out to be more than 250 miles from the river with a wilderness of swamps in between.

Since it was necessary to go overland to reach the newlands, they had to purchase wagons and yokes of oxen. They found they had too much baggage; so some of it was left behind in Shreveport. To further their disappointment, they found that they did not have absolute title to any land; instead they had the right to homestead the land. Each person would receive 320

⁴ Marie Marchand Ross, *Child of Icaria*, New York, 1938, p. 111.

acres of land, provided he had a cabin built on his land by July 1st. To make matters even worse they were unable to get adjoining sections. The State of Texas retained every other section, and the Peters Company, with whom Cabot had been dealing, retained half of each section. The accompanying diagram⁵ of one township shows the way their holdings lay. The blank sections represent the holdings of the State of Texas, the blank half sections represent those retained by the Peters Company, and the shaded half sections show what could be held by the Icarian Domain.



It is easy to see the problems such an arrangement would present to a people with a communal type of life such as these people planned. They had a lot of courage, however, and decided to make the best of a bad situation. They built a community building on one of the half sections and were able to complete thirty-two cabins by the first of July.

Back in France, Cabot was making arrangements for the second group of men to start for Texas. This group, which was to have numbered in the thousands, was composed of nineteen men.

These nineteen men, under the leadership of J. P. Favard, arrived at New Orleans and set out to find the first group. They too were told of the location of the lands; so they set out in wagons for the last stretch of their trip. Some of the men died

⁵ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

of malaria on the way. When the remaining men finally reached the settlement they found that most of the settlers also had contracted the malarial fever.

It was expected that the women and children would soon arrive at New Orleans and begin the arduous trip out to their poor establishment. It was decided that the only possible thing to do was to return to New Orleans in time to prevent the women from starting the rest of their trip. The men knew that the few homes along the way would not be able to feed many, and no one was able to carry any provisions; therefore they decided to set out two or three at a time to make their own way as best they could. The money in the treasury was divided; and each man had six or seven dollars⁶ which, with a gun and knapsack, were his only assets as he started the return trip.

Most of the men were able to reach New Orleans where they met the women. By this time several of their letters telling of the pitiful state of affairs had reached Cabet. He published excerpts from them in the paper and seemed in no way concerned; however he was finally persuaded to come to America.

When he arrived in January, 1849, he found the entire group living in two rented houses in New Orleans. By this time they had only money to last a few months if they returned to Texas. They stayed in New Orleans for a time, and exploring parties were sent out to search for a new location. Two hundred abandoned the group and took \$5000 or nearly one third of the money with them. A few of these people remained in New Orleans, but most of them returned to France.

That spring (1849) they heard that the Mormons had left the town of Nauvoo which at that time had been the largest town in Illinois, having 15,000 population compared to 8,000 in Chicago. In March Cabet, with two hundred eighty, left on a Mississippi River steamer for Nauvoo. By the fifteenth of March the migration of the Mormons was almost complete, leaving Nauvoo practically an empty town. The Mormons had left one man to act as agent in charge of their properties.

Cabet and his followers were able to purchase a large building to use as their community hall, a mill, a distillery and one or two homes. The rest of the buildings were rented.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Although about twenty had died of cholera on the steamer, the rest did not give up their resolution to found Icaria. The community prospered for seven years at Nauvoo in spite of the fact that the people were "ignorant of the language, laws, customs and business methods of the country."⁷ They were also hampered by their leader who "was rather a patriot, agitator and theorist than a practical business manager."⁸

More people were admitted, and at one time there were as many as 500 members. The community had every kind of industry and good schools. They also had a very good orchestra and gave amateur plays that were "as good as could be had."⁹

"Everyone seemed filled with enthusiasm for the cause but — —." Every year at their election day celebration on February 3, the history of the community would be given by Cit. Marchand.¹⁰ As he would come to this phase of their life in Nauvoo he would be overcome with emotion at the memory of the trouble which broke out there.

Cabet, who was very elderly by this time, was becoming "dictatorial and unreasonably arbitrary."¹¹ He requested to be elected dictator for a term of ten years instead of president for a one-year term. The majority balked at this. A few upheld their leader for whom all still held much respect; however they would not allow him to become dictator. He wrote letters back to France telling of how badly he was being treated, and the people of France could not seem to believe the letters of the people of the community. He waged a regular war of secession and went to court to try to dissolve the society, but he did not succeed. He then left with one hundred eighty followers to found another community at Cheltenham, Illinois.¹² They took with them all of the account books and a large portion of the library.

Cabet died only a few days after their arrival at Cheltenham,

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹⁰ Cit. or Citoyen means man in French, and Cite. or Citoyen means lady. These people, mostly French, always used these terms to address or speak of the others.

¹¹ Ross, *loc. cit.*

¹² Cheltenham is now a part of East St. Louis, Illinois.

and the community only lasted about eight years. After its dissolution a few members came to join the larger group that had come to Iowa.

Shortly after Cabet and his followers had left Nauvoo, the remaining people began to make plans for their own future. A few were discouraged and left the group to return to France or to settle other places in America. The rest still held to their determination to follow the teachings of their former leader and to found an Icaria.

The community at Nauvoo reorganized with Cit. Gerard as the new president and Cit. Marchand secretary-treasurer. They had never considered Nauvoo as a permanent place, and of course most of their land and homes were only rented.

A few years before, Cabet had contracted to purchase 3115 acres of government land in Iowa. This land was located in Adams County and was to be paid for at \$1.25 per acre. Very little of this had been paid; so the remaining principle with the interest at 10 per cent amounted to quite a heavy debt. But these people were still undaunted. Therefore, in 1856 it was decided to come to Iowa, and several of the men decided to go there as soon as possible to prepare for the families to come later.

On the first of January, 1857, there were 239 members of which eighteen were already in Iowa. The Icarians had about 275 acres in cultivation and had erected several log cabins. They brought livestock and farming implements from Nauvoo and purchased more in Des Moines.

In 1860 the families who remained in Nauvoo started across Iowa in covered wagons. The women and children encountered many hardships on the trail, but they continued on toward their new home. The little village of Icaria was built in a clearing of the woods bordering the Nodaway River a short distance from the present town of Corning in Adams County. The community had about thirty families at the time it was established in the early 1860's.

Their log houses were built from the trees they had cut to clear the land for farming. The homes were built without floors or windows. However, these people had a powerful determination to build their Icaria; and they worked together to found

their "ideal and model society, based on the communist principles of equality, fraternity and liberty."¹³ They worked with much enthusiasm and soon had a flour and saw mill built near the river and run by water from a dam which they built across the river. They could then saw boards to be used for floors in their cabins as well as for furniture. Wheat and corn could also be ground at the mill.

Their furniture was simple and was made from the fine black walnut trees from their own woods. Each cabin had beds, chairs, and a table; and some had a chest for clothing and a closet built into the cabin. Some had only pegs on the wall instead of a closet. These pegs were then covered with a muslin curtain.

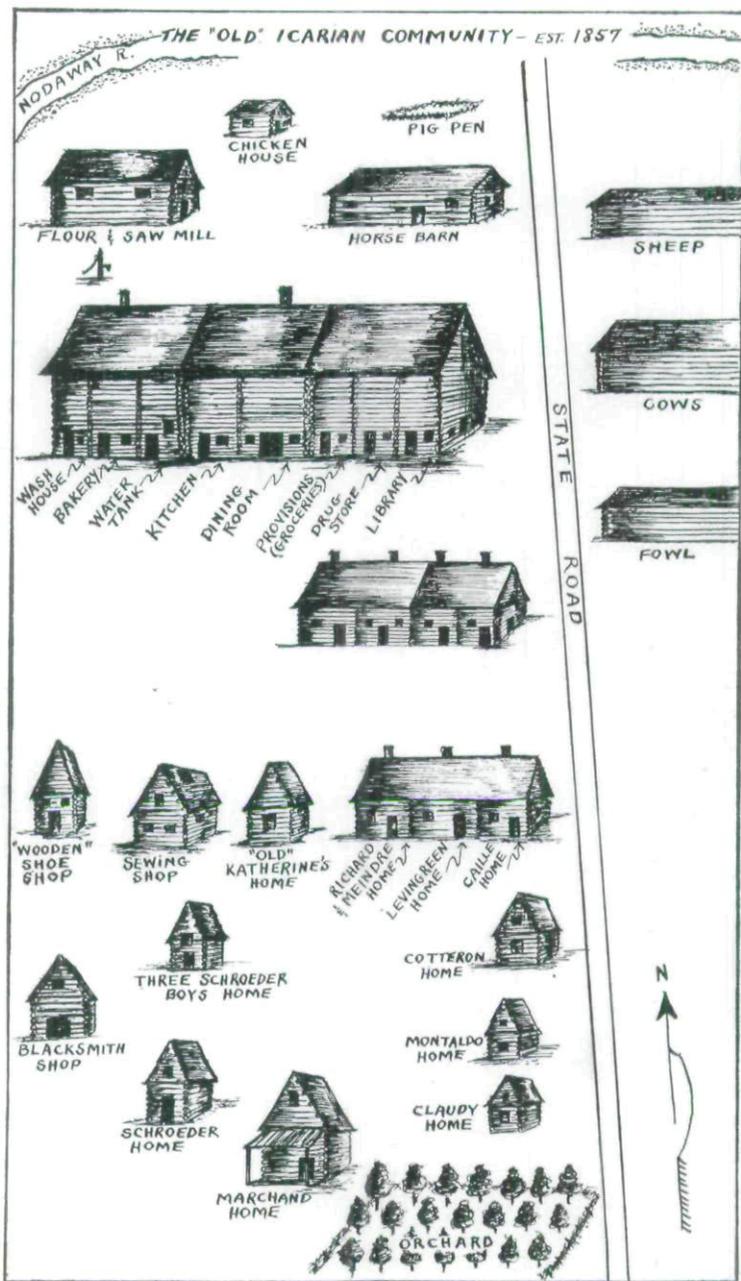
After they could afford to buy windows, the Icarians traveled to the nearest town which was St. Joseph, Missouri. St. Joseph was about one hundred miles away, and the roads were almost impassable. It was necessary to go by ox team in order to bring back the windows and the necessary supplies. Later this trip was made twice a year, in the spring and in the fall. Their supplies such as flour, sugar, coffee, and salt were purchased in barrels.

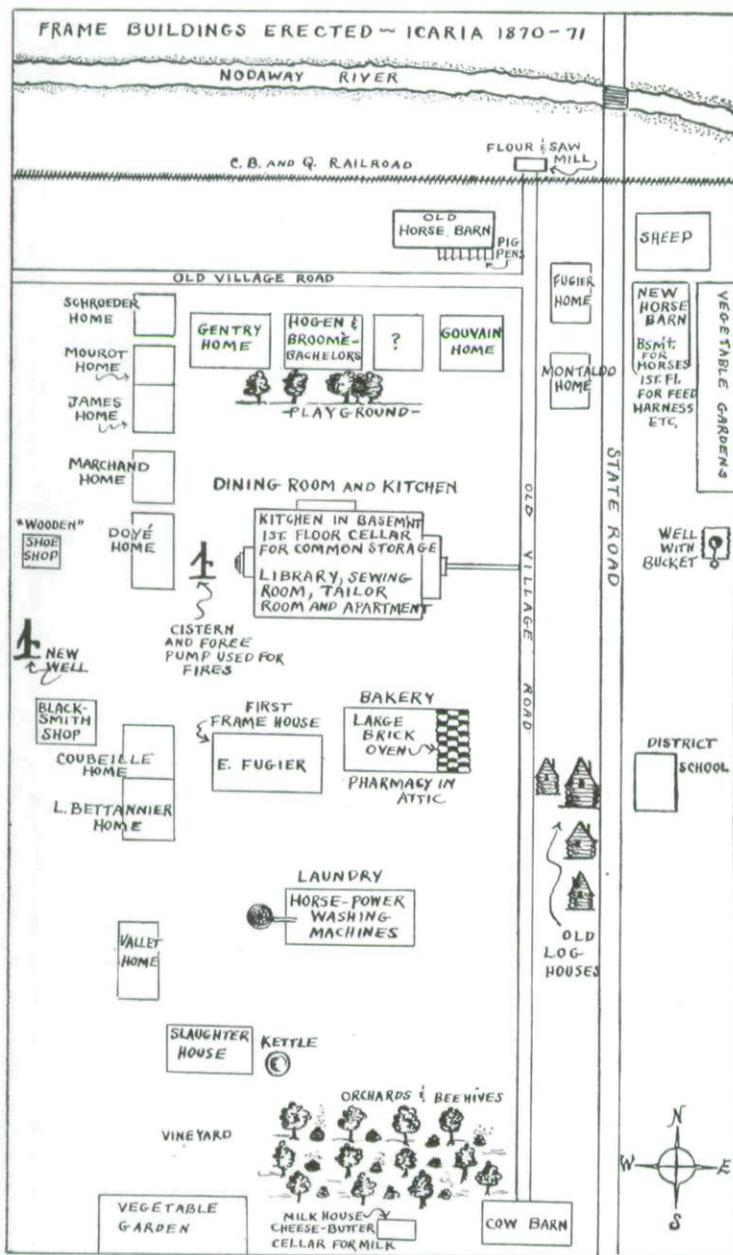
The Icarians' first attempts at colonization in Iowa had met with so much trouble, in fact almost failure, that there were no births in the colony until the fall of 1864. The people of the colony were much interested in the little girl who was the first child to be born in their new home. "Even from a group of Iowa Indians who at that time had their camp in the woods nearby came a squaw with her papoose to see the new white baby and compare it with hers."¹⁴ The little girl was Marie Marchand, the daughter of Cit. and Cite. A. A. Marchand. Cit. Marchand had been one of the first to come to the United States and had many times been an officer of the colony. This same little girl was to become the late Mrs. W. A. Ross, the author of the book, *Child of Icaria*, and many magazine and newspaper articles about her beloved Icaria.

As the Colony began to prosper the log houses began to change somewhat. The cracks were plastered with clay mor-

¹³ Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.





tar, the walls were whitewashed and windows were added. A typical cabin of this time would have a French window and a door in front with a small square window in the back. The women braided rugs to place on the floors and made muslin curtains to hang at the windows. However, the curtains were soon badly stained by the rain and snow which dripped in through the cracks between the logs. In the winter a small, square wood-stove stood in the center of the house for heat. It was removed in summer. Around the cabins lilacs and flowering shrubs began to appear as well as vines and currant and gooseberry bushes. Many of the yards contained cherry trees.

Several cabins were placed side by side and were for the common use of the community. These cabins contained the laundry, bakery, water tank, kitchen, dining room; and the store, the pharmacy, and the library. The supply of food such as barrels of brown and white sugar, coffee, dried apples, salt and everything that was bought in quantities for the colony was kept in the store.

After a time as the colony prospered, new dwellings were built on the same site and many of the log cabins were town down. These new cabins were placed in rows facing each other with a rough street or road running between.

These people had their troubles also. There was no near market for their livestock so it had to be driven to Des Moines to be sold. One winter seventy-five hogs were driven to Des Moines, and when they arrived there it was found that the market price was one and three quarters cents per hundred weight. The men decided not to sell the livestock, so they drove the hogs all the way back to Icaria again. The animals were slaughtered and the meat was cured. The following spring the meat was sold to the army. At that time a ham or a shoulder would bring one dollar.

"Icaria was to be an experiment of owning land in common and self-government under socialistic theories."¹⁵ All property was owned in common and under the control of the assembly and officers. The General Assembly consisted of all male members over twenty-one. Their officers were a president, secretary

¹⁵ Maude Friman, "History of Adams County," *Adams County Free Press*, March 12, 1931.

and treasurer and three directors. There was a Director of Industry, a Director of Agriculture and a Director of Clothing. These officers were elected every year on the third of February. Every other year the constitution was to be reviewed and revised if necessary on that date.

The third of February was said to be "the grandest day of the year." A celebration was prepared months ahead for the coming anniversary of the day the first group of men left La Havre to establish an Icaria.

When the big day came the election would be held in the morning, a dinner at noon and a banquet in the evening. Many outside friends attended the evening banquet. After the meal they would sing, "Partoons pour Icarie," which was first sung as the men took the oaths and prepared to leave La Havre on that memorable February 3, 1848. This would be followed by special recitations by the children and many speeches and toasts.

The first of the speeches was given by Cit. Marchand, the only man still with them who had come over with the first group to Texas. He would give the history of Icaria from the first writings of Etienne Cabet in France and in exile in England to the present day life in Iowa. Perhaps this is one reason these people seemed so well versed in the background of the colony. The one other strictly Icarian holiday was the *Fete du Mais*. This occurred in the fall after the crops were harvested.

The laws provided that anyone leaving the community under the age of twenty-one would receive one hundred dollars and twenty dollars for each year of the age over twenty-one that was spent in the colony. Any new members were to bring one hundred dollars for the colony and sufficient clothing for one year. Any other money and valuables were to be turned over to the officers to be used for the good of the entire community. In addition, any money which they received from work outside the colony was to be turned into the treasury. Any money that the men who were in the service had at the time of their return was to be turned into the treasury as was the pension money that was received by two of the men. No compensation was to be given for services of any kind.

The Fourth of July was a great day of celebration for young and old. On the eve the cooks could be found in the kitchen preparing all sorts of good things to eat. Others cleaned the large hall while the young people gathered vines and green boughs to make garlands to decorate the dining hall. Even the big fireplace was filled with greenery and wild flowers.

After a few years the town of Corning had a big Fourth of July celebration with a grand parade. The people of the French Colony usually went in five or six heavy farm wagons decorated with flags and bunting. One year all of the girls rode in one wagon. They were to be dressed in white with red and blue sashes. As the girls had no white dresses they wore a white waist and a white petticoat. The sash of red and blue bunting completed the dress. They wore straw hats of white wheat straw which they had made themselves. This in itself was quite a parade.

After the procession the Icarians did not take part in the other festivities. The children did not even visit the ice cream and lemonade stands. They remained grouped together, spreading their lunch on the grass and taking in what was going on around them as they ate. They did not fire fire-crackers or make any extra noise.¹⁶ When they arrived home later in the afternoon, a banquet was soon spread which was enjoyed by all the Icarians as well as the many neighboring friends who never failed to attend. At night a grand ball was held. This was sometimes preceded by a play in French.

The late Mr. Jules Gentry, who lived on his farm near the old site of Icaria, told of one Fourth which he remembered. In the later years there were not enough young men to do the field work in the summer; so it was necessary to hire other young men to do part of the work. The boys of Icaria worked right along with the hired men but were not paid anything. When the Fourth came along, Jules told his father that the boys wanted to celebrate like the hired men were planning to do; so Mr. Gentry proposed to the Assembly that each of the young men who were doing the field work that summer receive one dollar. As this was contrary to the entire teachings of Cabet, it was not passed. Jules had seven cents so he walked

¹⁶ Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

to Prescott to celebrate anyway. When asked how he had gotten the seven cents, he said that there was one hired hand who hated to do the milking. His turn to milk came every second Sunday, and at that time he would pay Jules to do it for him. He paid him ten cents for milking five cows in the morning and again in the evening. Jules was glad to do it for the precious spending money.

Although the men worked where ever they were needed, most of the men had definite jobs. For example, Cit. Mignot was the wooden shoemaker and Cit. Mitchel Bromme made the leather articles such as harness. Cit. Cotteron was the blacksmith and Cit. Caille was the regular baker, although the baking was done at times by Cit. Marchand.

Game was abundant and the men did a great deal of hunting. They had made molds into which they poured melted lead to make their own shot and bullets. They also did a great deal of trapping. In addition to beaver, muskrat and raccoons, they trapped many prairie chickens and rabbits, a few wolves and coyotes.

The women's work was divided. The women worked in pairs and each week would have a different job. They took turns with the cooking, each doing it for one week. The men did the cooking on Sunday.

The laundry was done together. The women sorted the clothes and the men did the washing. The women then separated the clothes into baskets for each family to take to their home to dry. This was facilitated by marking each piece of clothing with a number, one number being assigned to each family. In the case of the men who lived alone, the other women took turns taking care of their laundry and the mending of their clothes as well as the cleaning of their rooms. Women with children under two were exempt from chores outside the home.

The cooking was done in the central kitchen, and all of the families were together in the large dining room.

The dining room was used for many other purposes. On every other Saturday night an opera was presented. Since the nearby town of Corning was just getting started, the people there had no organized entertainment; therefore they attended

many of the operas and plays that were given at the colony as well as the many dances.

The young girls learned to sew, embroider and knit. The girls usually knitted all of the socks and stockings for the family, and they also did the marking of the clothing. Cit. Marchand taught all the girls to braid hats for their families. Later these hats were sold to the neighboring farmers, and the money they received was used to buy hats for the citoyennes from the shops in Corning.

By 1876 matters began to look better. That year they planted 250 acres of corn, 100 acres of wheat, five acres each of potatoes and sorghum and had a strawberry bed of one and a half acres.¹⁷ The large mortgage on the land had been paid off, and the people had approximately \$60,000 in assets. They had conveniences that certainly were not in evidence during the early 1860's. They even had a few luxuries besides. With the new houses that had been built and the little gardens around them, the colony began to take on a new look. It was decided to build a new common refectory. They had been using the first log one which was aged and beyond repair. It was also a little small with the new members who were joining the community.

Masons and carpenters were employed to aid in the construction of this building. It took months to do the excavating, lay the foundations and build the walls of the basement which were made of stone. This basement was to be used as the common kitchen as well as a cellar for storing the winter vegetables. They had a large variety including parsnips, salsify, turnips, carrots and potatoes. They also had plenty of their big cream cheeses as well as barrels of wine, vinegar and sorghum molasses stored there. From this list, one would assume that the noon meal must have been very similar to our main meal of today. For their evening meal there was always onion soup.

An amusing incident is told regarding the soup kettles. It seems that one of the influential citizens of Corning who was also a political aspirant wanted to give a big oyster supper. There was no place in Corning large enough to handle it; so

¹⁷ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

he decided to have it at New Icaria. Everything seemed fine until the soup was tasted. It had been prepared in the large kettles that had been used solely for onion soup. It is said that the stew tasted most like onions than oysters.

The first floor of the new refectory was one large hall except for one end which was partitioned off for service. In this end section was an elevator to bring the food up from the kitchen. It also contained work tables and cabinets for bread and dishes. The rest of the main floor was where the daily meals were served. The hall was also used for the weekly business meeting of the Assembly. Operas and plays were given there as were the dances and indoor games.

The second floor was not finished at that time. When it was finally completed, part of it was made into rooms for the Valet family who had just arrived at the colony with their four children. This apartment covered about one quarter of the floor space, and the space across the hall from it was used for the library. The remaining half was used as the common sewing and tailoring shop. They had a very good library consisting of approximately two thousand volumes. When the colony finally disbanded years later, many of these volumes were given to Judge Horace Townner, and at his death they were given to a museum in Omaha.¹⁸

At first the same long tables and benches that had been in the old dining hall were used, but later new tables were made. A fine cabinet maker, Cit. Coubeille, made round, drop-leaf tables of the beautiful black walnut wood from their own trees. They then purchased chairs of solid wood and painted them. A German family by the name of Schroeder had come to the colony soon after its beginning in Iowa. Cit. Schroeder was an able artist. One of his paintings of early Corning hangs in the Corning Library today. Cit. Schroeder did the painting and decorating of the new refectory. His three sons were also artists and they helped him. They spent many months frescoing the walls with lovely designs. He even painted scenes on the bottom section of the big divided window shades.¹⁹ After he completed the decoration of the new building, the scenery for

¹⁸ Edith Stevenson, "Icarian Colony," unpublished.

¹⁹ Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

the dramatic presentations had to be remodeled somewhat to fit the new quarters.

The homemade candles which were first used for light had now been replaced by new glass kerosene lamps in each home. The new building had large lamps which held about a quart of oil. There were four of these on hanging brackets at each end of the hall and one with a reflector between each of the windows.²⁰

Christmas and New Years were festive holidays for the Icarians. Marie Marchand Ross told of one of the early Christmases. There were no evergreen trees in the Iowa forests; so Cit. Schroeder planned a surprise for the children. He and his sons constructed a Christmas tree from small strips of wood which were covered with colored, fringed tissue paper. This was covered with painted ornaments, gilded nuts, red apples and strings of popcorn. It was lighted with candles. This was the first time the children had heard of Santa Claus, and this was their first Christmas tree. The children were sent to the second floor until the tree could be placed in the main dining room. Gifts for each child were placed in a little pile with a card containing the child's name. The children marched around the tree several times; then they were told to find their own places. The presents included toys, candy, apples, nuts and popcorn; but perhaps the most wonderful gift of all was the oranges, for the young Icarians had never tasted them before.

The Icarians contributed much to the culture of the people of Corning and of Adams county in general. In the days before radio and movies or television sets, the operas and theatricals given at Icaria were well-attended. They were always given in French but everyone seemed to enjoy them. The people of the French Colony were well-educated. Many of the people of Corning studied French with Cit. Marchand or German with Cit. Gauvin. For a time Cit. Peron taught classes in electricity. Many took lessons on the organ and other instruments and others studied art with Cit. Schroeder while he was with the Colony.

Cit. Schroeder's three older sons were nearly grown, and as they did not care for farming, he decided to go elsewhere

²⁰ *Ibid.*

so that Hugo, Adelmo and Fremont could find other work. The young people of Icaria hated to see them go. The three boys had been instrumental in getting the Assembly to install gymnasium equipment, and they taught the other boys how to use it. They had brought steel skates with them and introduced ice skating. They also helped to build a billiard table and taught the men and boys how to play. After leaving the Colony they first went to Creston and were near enough for occasional visits. Later they moved to San Francisco.

Perhaps the favorite summer amusement for the Icarians was what they called fishing parties. A large group would pack a picnic lunch and start out. They first would select a nice shady spot by the river for their camp. Those who wanted to fish were then provided with the necessary equipment and went to select their own places along the river bank. Some went alone while others went in groups of two or three. Those who did not fish put up rope swings and cleared a place for playing games. They then would arrange fireplaces and cook the dinner. They had fresh, fried fish if some were caught in time to fry them. When the meal was ready the horn was blown to call everyone to camp. After the meal, games were played; and when it began to get late the horn was again sounded, and all who had wandered away returned to camp for the homeward trip.

All was not in harmony with the Icarians, however. Two factions developed. The minority, composed mostly of the younger people, said the majority were old men, set in their ways and opposed to progress. These older men had gone through many hardships in the founding of Icaria and had had many disillusionments; therefore they were very cautious in spending the money and admitting new members. They feared that these new members, being admitted at a comparatively easy time, would not be dependable if hardships should fall again. New members were admitted on probation for a term of six months, after which the Assembly would vote on their proposed membership. There were a few unfortunate incidents with new people who were still on probation.

A group of French families in New York heard of the troubles and asked to be allowed to send families to act as peacemakers. The Assembly finally agreed to accept five fam-

ilies as outright members. It seemed as if the new blood would bring renewed harmony into the French Colony. The new families brought new trades. Cit. Suava was a tailor, Cit. and Cite. Levy were hairdressers, Cit. Doreur was a shoemaker, Cit. Peron a machinist and Cit. Tanguy had been a sailor. Cit. Suava started the programs for each Sunday afternoon which consisted of songs, recitations and readings from Cabet's writings or other articles of interest. The amusements which had been almost discontinued were revived. Doreur was also a musician; so he reorganized their orchestra and began teaching the young children music again. Another new member admitted at this time was William Moore, who had been brought up in a Shaker Community. He was interested in horticulture and was very well-educated.

At the suggestion of Moore, fruit trees were bought and planted. He also set out a large strawberry patch with the help of the women. The men helped to plant blackberries and raspberries as well as the orchards of pears, apples and peaches. Cit. Moore also taught the women to can the surplus fruit. They planted numerous lilac bushes. Many of these lilacs can still be seen along the railroad right-of-way on what was then Icarian land.

Troubles began again. The new members wrote back to New York to their friends, each giving one side of the quarrel. Their friends in New York began to take sides too. The older members did not want to force the issue and believed that the younger group would soon see their error; therefore they let the minority do much as they wished. One of the things the minority did was to send open letters to friends in many cities which were very damaging.

When Jules Leroux and his wife came to Icaria to join their two sons, Paul and Pierre, Jules brought with him all of his printing equipment. He had printed a paper in Kansas called *Etoile du Kansas*. Here he continued the paper with the name, *Etoile du Kansas et de l'Iowa*.²¹ As Cit Leroux sided with the separationists (minority), he allowed them to use his paper as they pleased.

It was decided that the majority must do something to coun-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

teract the damage which was being done by their paper. Suava, Levy, Gentry, Marchland and others of the majority wrote articles, and in the evenings volunteers made copies by hand. After a time an old, abandoned lithographic press was brought into use.

The minority or the "Branche" as they called themselves were admitting new members. These new members, hearing only the side of the minority, were even stronger in the advocacy of a separation than the original agitators.

In 1876 one of the many visitors to the community was a Mr. John W. Dye. He had been visiting the Amanites, the Oneida Community and the Shakers. Mr. Dye talked with both parties and could not sympathize with the separationists at all. He did not stay long with the colony, but he returned the following year and asked to become a member.

He was accepted and began to publish the paper, *La Revue Icarienne*. At first he arranged to have it printed in Corning, but later it was printed in the Colony. Marie Marchand did most of the typesetting, although she was only a child at the time. Soon after the paper was going well, Mr. Dye left; and Marie and her father continued the paper, which was sent all over the United States.

A few years later the war, as it was sometimes called, ended in a separation.

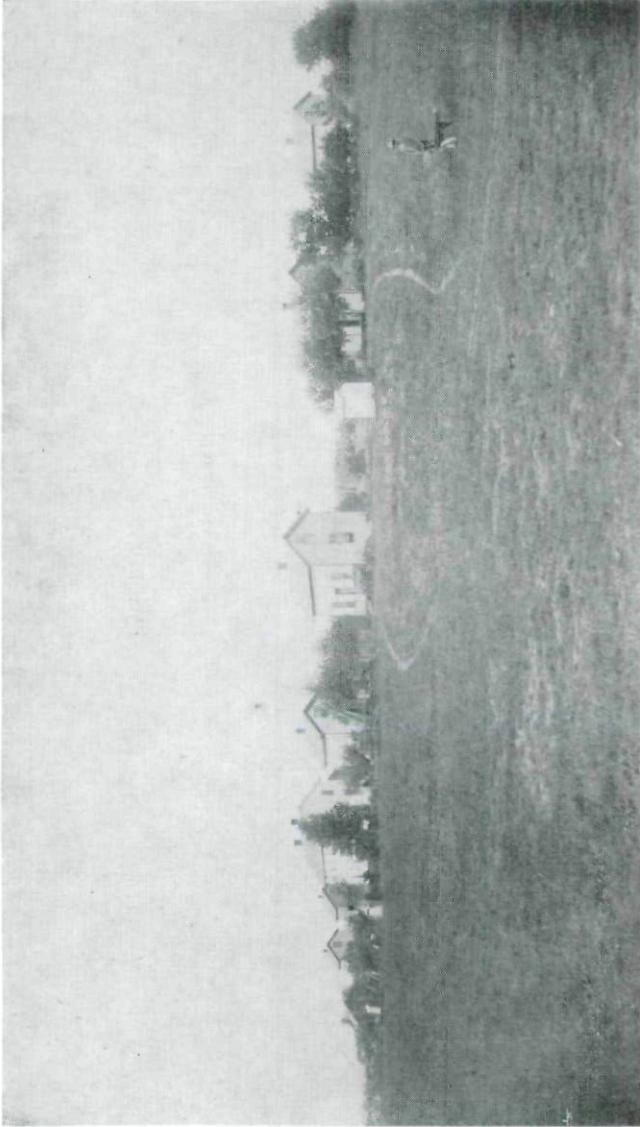
The minority had finally gone to court to secure the separation, and the verdict being against them, they had taken it to a higher court and secured the best lawyers and finally, through a technical trick, succeeded in having the community dissolved.²²

The community had been incorporated for farming only, but they had been operating the flour mill for the neighboring farmers as well as for themselves.

Three arbitrators were selected from the neighbors to settle the affairs. The separationists (younger people) were the first to reorganize; so they took the name of Icaria and the old site for which they paid \$1500 to the majority group.

The majority group of older people then reorganized and took the name of New Icaria. They moved their houses to a new location about one mile southeast of the old site. They had a housemoving concern move the eight houses to the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 99.



The "New" Icarian Community — Established in 1877. Boy in foreground is the late Jules Gentry of Corning, Iowa, born in 1872.

plateau upon which they had built a new communal building. This new refectory was much smaller than the one at the old place. The first floor was used as the kitchen and dining hall. The upper floor was divided into rooms for the single men and an apartment for the Claudy family. Under the entire building was a cellar to keep provisions.

Mr. Jules Gentry told of the housemoving. It was in the dead of winter. There happened to be a mid-winter thaw and the Gentry house was mired in the mud about halfway between. Then it turned exceptionally cold. Mr. Gentry, who was only a child at the time, remembered how awfully cold the house was.

Some of these eight houses remain and are used as tool sheds and various outbuildings today. The refectory has been remodeled into a home. The kitchen is now used as a kitchen and dining room. The dining hall has also been divided into rooms. The Howard Townsend family lives there at the present. A small enclosed porch has been added to the east end. Between that wall and the door seen on the front porch was the original kitchen. Directly inside the door is the upstairs stairway. The outside cellar entrance is near the center of the front of the house. The rest of the lower floor was the dining hall.



New Icarian refectory has been remodeled and is now the home of the Howard Townsend family.

Photo by Norma Brooks



Icarian schoolhouse before restoration.

After the houses had been moved, the schoolhouse was moved to a place about halfway between the two settlements. This was used for many years as an Adams County country school after the close of the Icarian Colony. [For years the schoolhouse stood in a state of disrepair until it was moved to Corning and restored by the Centurama Historical Society of Adams County.]



The Historical Society of Corning holds its meetings in the schoolhouse today.

Photo by Norma Brooks



The Elmer Olive home near Corning.

Photo by Norma Brooks

Among the buildings still standing are two of the houses of the original colony. They have been moved together, and with the addition of a porch they are now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Olive.

The younger group did not last very long after the separation. They moved to California where they only stayed for a year or two before they broke up.

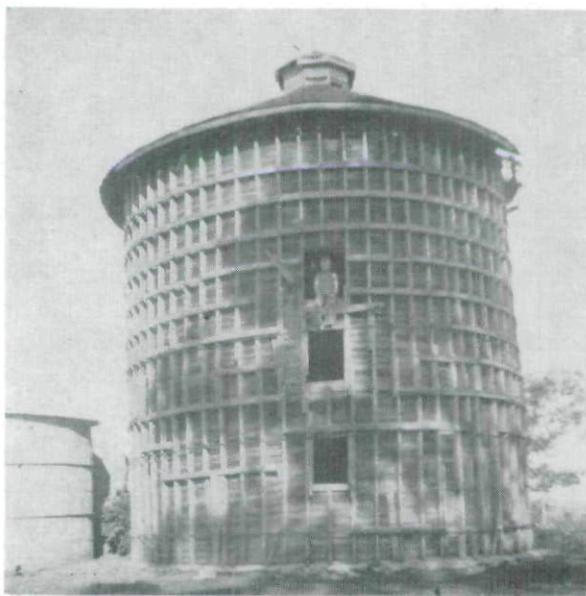
The majority now in New Icaria lasted until 1895. They had many difficulties. By their way of life it was necessary that they farm for their food. There were not enough young men left to do all the farming; the older men were not able to do the heavy work. It was necessary to hire many men from outside to help with the farming. There also was much dissatisfaction among the young men of the Colony. Although they were required to work along with the hired men, they received no remuneration. They were typical young Americans — they had ambitions to rise above their surroundings and many wanted to pursue a vocation of their choice. In Icaria there was no choice; the older men could do the other work so the young men must farm.

Also the younger people had more and more friends outside the colony. They naturally wanted to be like them. They felt

awkward in their clothes which were all made alike of blue jean material. Their wooden shoes also added to their self-consciousness.

Mr. Gentry said that in 1893 he applied to the Assembly for a furlough. This was granted and he went to work on a farm some miles distant. His salary was twenty dollars a month. After the first month he brought his money and came to Icaria on a borrowed mule. He got his father and together they went into Corning to buy some "store" clothes and shoes. He was delighted with them. He said he wanted to look like an American. He went back to work and stayed for several weeks. When he did return, his mother told him how badly his father, who was in ill health, felt about his being away. After this he soon decided to return to New Icaria.

At the next election, February 3, after his return, he was elected Director of Agriculture. Although he was just twenty-one at the time, he was in charge of all the farming operations over all the older men who were still able to farm. They had been farming before he was born and it was hard for them



Built by the Icarians, this wooden silo was the first in Adams County and perhaps the earliest in Iowa.



THE LAST GROUP OF ICARIANS, ABOUT 1885

Standing, from left: Marie Marchand, Jules Gentry, Jr., Claire Gentry, Bert Rouser, Alice Sauger, Cite. Gentry, Eva Bettan-
nier, Jules Gentry, Sr., Leon Bettannier, Lucian Rouser, Cite. Rouser, Cite. Rouser.
Seated, from left: Cite. and Cite. Marchand, Mignot, Elsie Sauger, Maillon, Richard, Caille, Eugene Bettannier and wife.
Children, from left: Edward Gentry, Bertha Bettannier, Eugene Bettannier, Jr., Bob Rouser and Lucie Bettannier. One girl
standing unidentified.

to take orders from Jules, who seemed to them only a child.

The younger generation desired to have things of their own like their friends outside New Icaria and to do the work of their choice. These natural desires caused many to leave the French Colony. Many of the girls married and left.

At the next election it seemed impossible to get anyone to be a candidate for president of New Icaria. Cit. Marchand was excused because of his age and long years of service. Cit. Eugene Bettannier had just served ten consecutive years. The elder Cit. Gentry was then in failing health. After long deliberation, Cit. Marchand proposed that the community be dissolved. The few remaining members agreed to the dissolution on February 16, 1895.

The estate was divided among the remaining members according to the number of years of service. Cit. Eugene Bettannier, as the last president, was appointed to receive the estate. Some of the members took part of the land. Cit. Marchand chose cash, for he was planning to go to the home of his married daughter. His payment was about \$3000.



This house, no longer standing, was once the home of the Bettannier family.

Icaria, as an experiment in true communal living, showed that such a life could not possibly work in America. The young people of America seem to have too much ambition and a desire to stand on their own feet to put their lot in with an entire community. For people with little ambition it would be fine, but then a community populated entirely with people who lacked ambition could not possibly succeed very long either. People with initiative could see that they would have a better chance away from those who were the free riders. Mr. Gentry said he had a lot more later on than he ever would have



had in Icaria. He said he never even considered that type of life again. Many of the descendents of the Icarian people have gone on to important positions all over the United States.

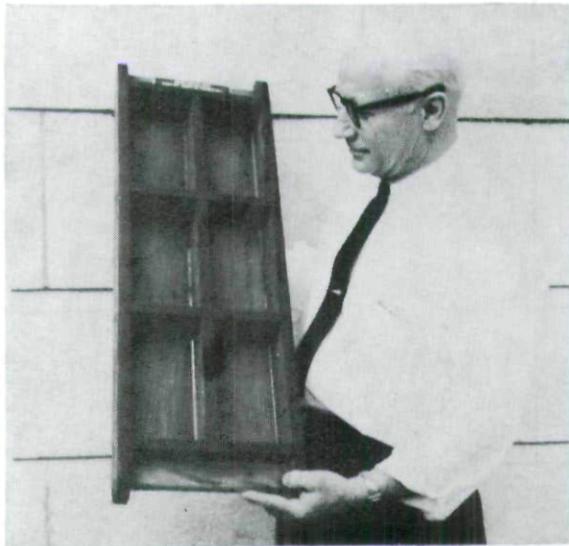
Although Icaria failed as a communal colony, it gave much to the development of the culture of Adams County and Corning. This was accomplished by their theatrical performances and through the private teaching that was done. In addition to this there were many plants that were first introduced into this section of the state in the Icarian Colony.

MUSEUM NOTES

PHOTOS BY NORMA BROOKS

Among the many items of historical significance donated to the museum in the past few months are the objects pictured below which have drawn much attention from visitors.

Shown here by Mr. Fred Voitell, Assistant to the Curator, is a brick mold used for making soft mud bricks. This mold is



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