

Dr. Lillian M. Snyder
Nauvoo, Illinois
Birthday: September 14, 1914
Interview on September 26, 2001. in her home by Diana Johnson
Tyler Dahl also present

Q. [Diana Johnson] When is your birthday?

A. [Lillian Snyder] My birthday is September 14, 1914. so I just had a birthday. I'm eighty-seven. It was a very fine birthday. People came in and sang "Happy Birthday" I don't know how many times.

Q. How long have you lived in the Nauvoo area?

A. I actually moved back here in the summer of 1973 when I took the position of professor at Western Illinois University. I moved back here to be with my mother, Florence Baxter Snyder, who lived here. Actually, before my mother and my father were married, my mother said, "Now, if we get married, I want a contract. We're going to take the children to Nauvoo every summer." So when I was two weeks old, she started bringing me to Nauvoo. I spent more time in Nauvoo than anyplace. I've lived all over—Paris; New York City; Washington, D.C.; Baltimore; Galveston and Houston, Texas; and St. Louis. I've lived lots of different places, but Nauvoo I consider my home.

Q. Were you born in Nauvoo?

A. When my folks got married, they went to my father's farm, in Kankakee. I was born on the farm in Kankakee, Illinois, as was my father. My mother was born here in Nauvoo. Of course, that will be part of the story, how they happened to be here. If my great-grandfather hadn't come to Nauvoo, I'd be living in Paris. I'd rather be here. I really do consider Nauvoo to be my home.

Q. How old were you when you started moving around?

A. We left the farm when I was four years old. My father took a position as farm advisor with the extension service in Montgomery County, Illinois. I went through high school in Hillsboro, Illinois. All of us kids went to the University of Illinois. Then my mother came back here to live in '48, when her older sister had a stroke and needed somebody to care for her. My father had already died. He died young, when he was only sixty-two. My mother kept on in Hillsboro and then came here in '48. She's been here since '48. She was one hundred and two when she died on October 19, 1992, and I've been here since then.

Q. Who were your first ancestors in the Nauvoo area?

A. My first ancestors were my great-grandparents, Emile and Annette Powel Baxter. They came in 1855.

Q. Where did they come from?

A. They came from Newark, New Jersey, where they were temporarily. He was working there as an importer, and she was teaching French at the Miss Porter School. That's where Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy went to school. It's a lovely place up in Connecticut. Times were terrible. There was crime in the streets, high taxes, and the educational system was terrible. "We can't stay here." Then they heard of the Icarian community in Nauvoo. They wrote to Etienne Cabet and asked if they could join. They came out in June of 1855. He was immediately elected as secretary to the president, Etienne Cabet. He was a graduate of Edinburgh University in Scotland in business in 1843. My great-grandmother, Annette, was the schoolteacher for the children. They had the biggest library in the state of Illinois—four thousand volumes. In the Icarian colony he was an officer, working with Cabet and as a secretary in charge of the newspaper, the library, and different things.

Q. What attracted you back to Nauvoo? If you had lived here and had spent so much time here, why did you want to come back?

A. I came back to be with my mother. My aunt had died—she had a stroke. She was a concert pianist and taught about everybody around here piano, voice, and the organ. So when she died in '67, my mother was still here. I decided to come back and be with her in 1973. That's why I came back. She went with me on trips to different countries when I started speaking about the Icarians.

Now, how I got interested in the Icarians was I heard stories about this group, but I didn't pay any attention when I was growing up. I should have gotten more information from my grandfather.

One of my cousins, Maurice Dadant, was very interested in the Icarians; he was called Mr. Icarian. He was chairman of the committee on the history of the Icarians in the Nauvoo Historical Society. He had written papers and given a lot of talks. When he told me about it and gave me some of his papers, I thought, "Well, that's curious. I think I'd like to explore that. I'd like to find out more about my background." I was living in Washington, D.C., so I went to the Library of Congress because I had heard that the Library of Congress had a copy of every book, either published here or not. So I went over there every Saturday for ten years to a special little room where you could look at these books that were never given out to anybody. They were old, old, old books. The librarian would get the books out for me. I read everything in the whole library about the Icarians. The more I read about it, the more interesting it became. It was all in French, and I had of course studied French, so that's what I'd do. Then I wrote up my notes and wrote papers and gave talks to people.

Q. What occupations have you pursued in Nauvoo?

A. I accepted a position as professor at Western Illinois University, in Macomb, forty-seven miles away. At first I commuted. I'd go over there for my classes in sociology and social work and then come back. Pretty soon, I got a little apartment and rearranged my classes so I could come home Thursday night and be here all weekend.

Q. What did you study in school?

A. I took up farm management. I wanted to be a fanner. My dad was born on a farm, was in fanning, and got acquainted with a lot of farmers. Oh, the farmers would call him up at 4:30 in the morning: "Alden, my hogs are dying."

My daddy'd get in the car, go out, take a serum to vaccinate the hogs, and save them. I was so close to my dad, I said, "I'm going to take up farm management." So that's what I did at the University of Illinois. I was the only woman among six hundred fellows. I got acquainted with a lot of them. They knew a lot more about farming because a lot of them had just come from the farm, and it had been a long time since I was on the farm. I got third place judging hogs. I beat all those fellows judging hogs. Agriculture, economics, or farm management was the first degree.

I earned the degree in '37—a B.S. in agriculture. And then I decided to go into social work when I was a junior. Then I got my master's degree in social work from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. I was going to combine that with fanning—maybe have on the farm a home for tired women to help them with their lives. But I got sidetracked by a geologist. He went to South America and married a nurse down there. I should have looked for a farmer.

Q. What do you particularly like about living in this area?

A. I like the community life and my family life—a lot of Baxters, a lot of cousins, a lot of family around here and in Fort Madison and in surrounding areas. I think I came back to be with my family and my relatives and to pursue this Icarian history. My mother and I have everybody sign in my guest book. When my mother came back here in '48, that was at the time when people were interested in their roots. Remember Haley's book *Roots*? Everybody was reading that, and people began to come back to Nauvoo—Mormons and Icarians and the Gennans and the different ones to find their roots. If they had anything to do with Icarians, the tourist center would send them over to my mother for information. She'd ask them to sign the book. Then she'd tell them what she knew about the Icarians.

People were interested in their history. One day when we were looking in that book we said, "These people are so interested, let's invite them to a picnic." In 1969 we invited them from all over the United States to a picnic, and thirty of them turned up. I had taken notes of the books in the Library of Congress, so I gave a talk on the history of the Icarians from these different authors' point of view. People were fascinated; one of them was an architect from St. Louis. He had a whole suitcase full of family letters. "This is marvelous! Let's get together next year." So we did. And the next year, and the next year, so this year, we had our thirty-third get-together in Santa Barbara, California. I gave another talk. I've given fifty-two talks.

Q. How many people do you have in attendance?

A. Eight hundred and fifty are on the mailing list, from all over the United States. The people that show up—well, sometimes we have around two hundred. I don't know how many we'll have at this meeting. This meeting won't be just Icarians. It will be all the different Utopian groups, some four hundred and fifty of them, including the Mormons. We had a meeting in St. George, Utah, two years ago under direction of one of the Mormon leaders, who I think is an officer.

The Icarians—that's the big attraction now, because when my mother and I got these people together, the first thing they said after five or six times was, "We need a museum." So they wanted to have the old Icarian schoolhouse up on the temple square which was built by the architect Alfred Piquenand who built the state capitol in Springfield. But the Mormons said, "No, we're going to tear it down." They bought the temple square back again. "We're going to make it into a beautiful spot with a lot of trees and flowers.

Then we asked the Sisters of St. Benedict, because the Icarians had given them the building. The sisters said, "Sure, you can have it." So we were going to have it there, but we didn't get it done before Father Wissing came along. "I want that building for my retirement." So the sisters said okay. Then we found this little building on my mother's place, built by the head carpenter who built the original Mormon temple. His name is Phelps Mix, and he designed it like the temple. It looks just like the temple. He was thrilled, working on the temple. You see, the Mormons had to volunteer a tenth of their time, but they didn't know about anything, and so this carpenter, Mr. Mix, supervised them so they'd know where to put the nails and everything. Of course they had their own architect too. They had good direction for the first temple. Mr. Mix and his wife built their first home, which is now the Icarian museum. She handed him the bricks, and he put them up. What do you think of that? The couple did it themselves in 1846. He said he didn't want to leave Nauvoo. They were going to stay. So they did, and they had a little farm—ten acres.

Then pretty soon the gold rush came along out in California. That was 1849. He got on the train, went out there, and made a fortune because he was an excellent carpenter and built houses for people. He bought a farm out there. He did very well. He was out there two years and contracted yellow fever on the way home. Sadly, he had to be buried in the ocean. So here she was, a widow with two little kids, a little boy and a little girl, and her husband didn't come home.

She was trying to manage the two little kids, her chickens, and everything and then she fell in love with a schoolteacher, Mr. Carry. That was in '48. He was elected mayor in '50 and was a mayor for ten years. Then he was elected sheriff in 1860. They moved to Carthage.

The Mormons had left in '46, and then the Icarians came in 1849. They had an orchestra. They had musicians, they had a Shakespearian theater, they entertained everybody. It was a wonderful time. So this schoolteacher and the mayor were pretty well the leaders of the community. Then the Icarian community was here. They started out with one hundred and eighty, and built up to about five hundred and fifty, but there were a lot of people coming and going, because people in those days were eager to buy land. You could get land for a dollar an acre or something like that. At the beginning, some of them didn't stay in the Icarian colony too long. They'd buy land all over Hancock County. There are more French descendants in Hancock County than in any other county in the state of Illinois. A lot of them were descendants of the Icarians in Nauvoo. That's how I got interested, and then I got elected to the county board in '82. I was the only woman. I was still teaching classes at Western Illinois University.

Q. What events or traditions, social or cultural characteristics, make Nauvoo an attractive place to live?

A. The attraction that the Icarians brought, according to Emma Smith, was their contribution of the music: a thirty-four-piece orchestra. Emma said that the Icarians were very talented. They put on plays in Nauvoo in the early days. Now, since we started our museum, what the Icarians contributed were programs about every two weeks. They celebrated the leader Cabet's birthday. He was born on January first. They celebrated April Fools' Day because it was started in France. Charles IX wanted to change the calendar, which he didn't like. He didn't like Jesus' calendar. "I'm going to start a calendar, and I'm going to start it the first of April." So he had his own calendar in France for a couple of years, and people didn't like it. They made fun of his calendar. That's why they call it April Fools' Day. So we always have something to celebrate about French history. They celebrated the day that the Icarians came here, March the fifteenth, 1849. It took from 1977, when we first started, until 1990, to restore the Mix house for the museum. It took a long time to build that. We had a lot of setbacks with three different groups. One of them robbed me of \$6,000.

Oh, I had a lot of setbacks. We finally got it going, and then every two weeks we had something going, and a lot of it had to do with French-American relations. We had one program, for instance, on how they educate the children. They educate them up to twenty-one years of age, free of tuition. They felt that the country would be much safer if everybody was well educated. So that's what they did. We had a French teacher come and lead the discussion; we had retired teachers and all the people in education. We discussed how we can improve our education. They have an altogether different system. They start when people are born and try to educate them, especially the first three years, and see what direction a child is going to go. If he plays with blocks, maybe he'll be a builder. If he puts a thermometer in his mouth, maybe he'll be a doctor, like his father. They start from zero and then start regular school at four years of age.

I lived with a French family when I was teaching social work in France. I was hired by the French government to teach, following my interest. At six years of age, the children can read and write, and here, in third and fourth grade, we have a very low number of people who are really proficient. Then we had another program about the criminal justice system. The French have an altogether different system. They start right away when a person has a first offence and try to keep him from having a second offence so he never goes to jail. We invited the judge, the prison staff, the sheriff, and others. That was our contribution to Nauvoo. People still talk about that. A report was published in the newspaper.

Then we had another program on health. For the one on the criminal justice system, we had a judge from Paris that came over here; she'd been a judge for twenty years. She was the most beautiful woman you ever did see.

We had another program on medical care in France. The doctors planned their program. They had these little hospitals where you can walk in, and small lying-in hospitals where you can have a baby. They give you tea, and then you can be there for a couple of weeks, like on a vacation. They make a big to-do about the newcomer. If the man has a drinking problem, he can't have a new child in here. He has to go and get treatment.

As I say, it's an old country. I think of all the people that came—we had all the medical people and the medical society. They got a lot out of that. We organized French classes. About thirty people would come and learn French because people like to travel. We celebrated a lot of these holidays in France. Recently, our board of directors resigned, so we had to close the museum.

We have so many of these things that we're traditional. People call up—"When are you going to have your Rhubarb Festival?" You see, the French brought the rhubarb over here. They brought the rhubarb, and now we have rhubarb pie contests. If the people are going to come, we've got to plan something. Volunteers help out. Two hundred people attend the Rhubarb Festival during the first week of June. Now we're going to have a Persimmon Festival during

the last week on October.

We also have a French Festival. We have a sister city in France: Boussac. It's the headquarters of the Limosene cattle. We invited them all to come. Some of them were going to come, but then they got sick. We had the French Festival in July of 2000. It was put on by the Chamber of Commerce at the tourist center. We had about ten committees, and they had a lot of things going. It was a big event. About eighty people attended the festival. They came from all over. They were going to make it an annual fair, like a grape festival, but that didn't happen. We weren't so active; we didn't have it last year, but we did have the Rhubarb Festival. Those are the traditional things that make contributions in Nauvoo.

Q. What have you found to be some of the challenges of living in Nauvoo?

A. There are several challenges. We have a group of people that come back here to retire, older people. And then we have some of the people, who have just gotten old, and there is a senior citizen group here. But towns around here, for example, Leharp, have a regular senior citizens center and we don't. That's a challenge. I think we need to do something for the older people.

One of the older ladies, Carrie Stutz, left some money to build what is called Carrie Manor. They have the apartments. I think there are about six apartments for older people. That was started by a friend of my mother's. They used to get together and talk on the telephone every day. I remember one day when we were talking about this, Carrie heard it, and she had her lawyer make arrangements for her money. She had about \$ 160,000 for a nursing home or a place for people that needed special care. It's all under the direction of the Memorial Hospital in Carthage. They thought maybe they needed something geared to the older person with physical limitations. But that person doesn't have to be an invalid. I think we need to do something for the older people. I've been talking with some of the head people who are Mormon that have come back, about what we can do for the community. I think that's the big need here.

I gave a talk about this not too long ago, about maybe moving in the direction of having a place here for people who retire. I have asked, "Where are you going to go when you retire?" Some of the professors would say, "I'm going to retire to our farm out in Indiana. I'm going to retire to my little town out in Iowa." And so I think a lot of people would like to go back to their roots when they retire. This could be a beautiful place here, along the Mississippi. It is really a religious community too. We have almost all religions represented here.

Then about the young people. They were getting into trouble and dropping out of school. Several of the parents got together and arranged to build a youth center here. Then when the children went away to school or left, the parents didn't see any need to continue it. Nobody took it over. Now it's a fire station, and the mayor has taken it over. The city hall used to be the youth center. I don't think they should have given up the youth center. I think these people need that.

I'm on an advisory committee at the high school. A little boy was referred by his teacher. The teacher said he was disruptive to the class. She could hardly teach. I said to the committee, "Well, that's a symptom. Maybe there's something wrong at home. Maybe he needs some help."

They said, "No, we're going to expel him, put him away."

I don't think that's the way to handle it, so I think this town needs some more help with helping its youth. Why, I know one of the youth that went to prison. We've got several youth in prison. I think we can prevent that. That's one of the things the Icarian museum was trying to do—to help the people be more aware of the needs of the youth.

I'll tell you what Nauvoo did do. We started an athletic area. There's baseball, and that's wonderful for the kids. The kids get interested in the athletics. Of course, the schools, too, have a lot of basketball and football and different activities. I think that's another area we need to be aware of and try to help the youth. The Latter-day Saints could help the youth. They could be role models, but I don't know whether people are aware of the need.

A couple of little boys stole my purse the other day—\$339, and I made a complaint. The two boys were arrested, and they've had treatment. I don't think it's a very in-depth treatment, because they come from disordered families where the parents and everybody need some help.

I tell you, we seem to think that just talking things out is enough. But you need trained people. We have 450,000 social workers in our country, but only five percent have a master's degree. What if we had 450,000 doctors and only five percent had a degree to fix a boil or something. The stress in families is just as important as having a boil lanced or getting an operation. But our country doesn't seem to be geared to real education. Eighty percent of all of the people in prison dropped out of school. Fifty percent of youth in Chicago drop out. I think it will take a century for our educational system to catch up with France's. We've got some big needs here. I'm talking really from the heart.

These are the things I've observed. There's a lot to be done. And I think the Mormons can help us. I have talked with Mr. Snow, and I hope that maybe the Mormon presidency here can help us with some of our problems.

Q. We've already brushed over this, but just in case I've missed anything, what opportunities have you had to serve in civic offices, community service organizations, or church service positions? Are there any others you haven't mentioned?

A. Right immediately when I came here, I was elected to the Hancock County election board. I arranged some of the community meetings where we had discussions. And I also set up the places where people would vote, and for eleven years, I got 81 percent [smiles] of the people of my district to vote. That's better than anybody in the world, isn't it— 81 percent!

Q. That's awesome!

A. It wasn't 100 percent, but it's pretty close.

Q. [Tyler Dahl] That's really good.

A. I went to the nursing homes and had people sign to vote with absentee ballots. Then I got elected to the county board eight years. I served in Hancock County. I said we didn't need to spend six million dollars on a jail when we could get it free! I understand that a lot of people got money—you can get 90 percent if you put some money in, but I don't understand at all how some of these programs are financed, but when I went to Smith College and spent the whole day in the jail, I was up there at a reunion. I was told that their jail was free by cooperating with the state for a work experience program.

I was elected president of the Nauvoo Historical Society for several years, and I was elected secretary of the Republican Ladies for the county. I was elected to the board of the R.S.V.P. Retired Senior Citizens. I got the county to start a health department. I went around to all the churches for two years and got everybody interested, then I presented the legal papers in the county, and we got a health department started. I was chairman of the health committee, chairman of the recycle committee, chairman of insurance—oh, they kept me busy. That's most of what I have done.

Then I was on the committee of the American Association of University Women. We tried to improve things at the libraries and find scholarships for people in Hancock County. I was on the board of the Business Professional Women, helping with the women's contribution to the chambers of commerce. I was on the board of the chamber of commerce [laughs]. That was a long time ago. I guess I've just kind of been involved in a lot of things.

Q. That's neat.

A. I belong to thirty-four organizations, [smiles]

Q. From your knowledge of the history of this area, what groups or individuals stand out in your mind as having made significant contributions to the growth and betterment of Nauvoo?

A. Well, we've had some active mayors. Each one has had a particular interest in mind. My great-grandfather Emile Baxter did a lot for this town. He started a winery [laughs], Baxter winery. Before that, Nauvoo mayors had the largest library in the whole state. The Icarians carried on a newspaper at that time, and it was very well done; it was distributed even on the East Coast. Emile and his wife, and then my uncle, my greatgrandmother's brother, who was educated in medicine, came out here in the 1850s. People that were educated in medicine would pick a small town and come and be the doctor. So he came to Nauvoo and went to a little town four miles out called Powellton. The town was named after my great-uncle Powellton. We are now seeking all the information about that little village, because a lot of the farmers around here come into Nauvoo. Nauvoo supports this whole area—all these townships. So we're in the process of having a plaque put up.

Of course Emma Smith made a great contribution here. All the little Icarian and Gemian boys would go down to the beach in front of her house. At five o'clock, she would call out to all of those boys, "Boys, it's time to go home." Then she'd give them all bread and molasses. They loved her—all the children in Nauvoo loved Emma Smith.

Of course Emma married another man and had some more children. One of her daughters by this marriage was a very close friend of my mother's. They corresponded with each other until they died.

Dr. LeRoy Kimball came out in 1954 to see his grandfather's home and restored it. After five thousand people

came to see it, he said, "I can't stay in this home. It's a museum." He went back to Utah and said, "Let's go back to Nauvoo, because people are so interested in its history." He came back and built himself a home. He did a lot for Nauvoo.

After the Mormons came back and fixed up their places, everybody in town began to fix up their places! It made the whole town beautiful. And now it's lovely.

My grandfather was once mayor of the town and was president of the beekeepers' association of the state and president of the horticulture society. All the bees were getting foul brood and dying. He saved them in Illinois. He saved them when they came to Missouri. The head of the legislature in Utah invited him out, and he saved the bees in Utah. He was out there a year, going back and forth. His name was Emile Baxter also. He built this house out of honey money. He was head of the school board. He was one of the leaders in Nauvoo, and I'm trying to write a book about him. There were several others in the old days that were leaders of this town. We've got a lot of fine history.

Q. The Mormons, or members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, came to Nauvoo in 1839 under the leadership of Joseph Smith, a man they believed to be a prophet of God. Over the next few years they built a city with a population of over 15,000 people. Conflicts arose between Mormons and the citizens of the surrounding areas that led to the Mormon exodus in 1846. What is your understanding of the causes of that conflict? Why were the citizens of the surrounding communities upset with the Mormons?

A. I can't really answer that question. I've heard stories, but I don't believe them. One story that the farmers tell me, which angered them very much, is that some of the Mormon people would come out and release the hogs "for the Lord." They would bring a truck up and haul the hogs away. Joseph Smith didn't approve of that, but there were a couple of people that had already had a history of theft, and you can't always control everybody. I think that's how that story got started, but I don't know whether that had anything to do with the Mormons or not.

Somebody reported someone down in the southern part of the county who had it in for the Mormons, because the Mormons' lives were so exemplary. Four families would live in a block, and they would have their own chickens and such. They would be self-sufficient. They would look after each other, and the women would get together and help each other. I don't see how anyone could find fault with that. Why would they drive them out of Nauvoo? I just don't see it.

Someone said it was all a political move. Everybody had to vote the way Joseph Smith said, and the Mormons said that they could take over the legislature. I don't know whether there's any truth to that or not, but those are a few of the kind of stories I've heard.

Q. What have you heard over the years about what the Mormons may have done to provoke actions against them?

A. I think I've read about this, but the only thing I've heard is that some of the people began to be critical of where the Mormons would have several wives. There was someone who would publish something in the paper. He had a printing press here in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith and some of his men came and broke that printing press before he could publish whatever it was that was against the Mormons. I understand that some of the people then left the Mormon Church and went to Wisconsin. They all went to different places. They continued with the Mormon religion but with a different point of view. That was breaking the law. You're not supposed to break or invade someone's property.

Joseph Smith was arrested, and he was supposed to stand trial in Carthage, but he never had a chance to stand trial. The governor said, "I'm all for Joseph Smith. He's a good man. We should support the religion. I'll stand up for everything—but I can't stand up for his breaking the law. He just went a step too far." The governor tried to support Joseph Smith because he thought he should have a trial. Joseph Smith got in front of the jail window, and somebody shot him. That's terrible. Can you imagine that? Look what they're doing now. People are going down the street, and they're shooting a lot of people just because they look like . . . I don't understand it. Some of them are from India and . . . well, I just don't understand any of it.

Q. What accounts or interesting stories of particular events associated with the time period have you heard that came down through your family or through members of the community?

A. The people of this community always look forward to Saturday night. That was a big town. We still have the city park, and there is a place where we had the band. There were a lot of people in the band. Then we'd walk up and

down the sidewalks, and they say there were thirty of these places where you could get liquor—thirty of them—[laughs] in Nauvoo. Many hat shops, shoe shops, three meat shops—it was a live town. There seemed to be a lot of community spirit. Nowadays, it seems like half of the farms are gone, people leave town after they graduate from school and we don't seem to have that community spirit now.

When I ran for mayor in '88, after I finished with the county board, I lost by forty-seven votes. On my list of things, I was going to build a new community center like they have down in Warsaw. It was built by the people. They volunteered. Why couldn't we do something like that? I had a place picked out for it. I thought we'd build a new library. We now just have a little storefront library. We'd need ten times more books and have book reviews, and our library could be the center of the town. I had a place picked out where we could get grants and have a library. I felt we needed a community center for the children, a community center for the old people, and I had enough votes to be elected. I went around to every house and presented my platform.

But I was forty-seven votes short. I was told that the reason was because I didn't buy beer for everybody. I don't believe in liquor. I don't even drink Coke or coffee or anything like that, just fruit juice. So they didn't approve of me, and I didn't win. They didn't want a woman for mayor either. They didn't think that a woman would be strict enough with the police and all that, [laughs]

There was a lot of emphasis on the band and on music too. A lot of young people from all over came here and had music lessons. When my grandfather was active over in Springfield with all the state offices, he had many visitors come here. We would entertain. They'd get a table out there. He would have little chairs in here, and he'd have people come and entertain them. This place was like a Rockefeller house. People would be invited to come here to sing or play the piano or play the violin or have a little—this was a very unusual house. People still talk about how they came out here to the programs that my grandfather used to have, [laughs] That was unusual.

Q. That's neat. Were any of your ancestors members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

A. Yes, there have been some. There's a lot of tie-together in their ideals. One of my cousins is now married to one, and they come here and visit me some. She's been very active in the Mormon Church. They live out in Colorado. Another one married into the Mormon Church that I have visited with. The Baxters—there are about four hundred of them now—descendants that are alive and live all over the world, in Russia, the South Sea islands, New York, everywhere. Some of them are outstanding musicians, lawyers, and writers. So they have had a lot in common with some of the Mormons.

Q. So most of your ancestors came after the Mormons with the Icarian groups?

A. They came here in 1855. The first group of Icarians came in 1849. Our family came a little later.

Q. What is your understanding of the role of anti-Mormon activists and newspapers played in stirring up animosity between Mormons and citizens of the surrounding areas?

A. I just don't understand it. I can't understand why people would do that. I don't believe in war. I've never voted for a president that wanted to increase money for the military, and none of the people I've voted for have won. I haven't found a president that is for peace. So I'm out of it.

Q. There are two names here: Thomas Sharp and the *Warsaw Signal* newspaper. Have you heard anything about them?

A. I've read about it in the Mormon history. I can't remember the name of the book, but I haven't any idea about that. I just don't understand it. I don't know too much about Warsaw, but I do remember reading about that in the history. I don't understand what it was all about. I'm not interested in finding out.

Q. What is your understanding on how Joseph Smith was viewed by his enemies in the 1840s, and how has he been viewed by succeeding generations down to the present time?

A. I think that the story I heard, he believed not exactly in polygamy—I mean, he didn't go out and get a license. He didn't divorce his wife. But they say that he taught young women how to be wives. But his wife didn't know a thing

about it. There was one lady that he impregnated that lived with them. I don't understand that story. I don't see how that could be. Since then. I think the exemplary life that the Mormons have lived demonstrate how they have been leaders in the country and how Joseph Smith had high ideals and also his mother, his family, and brother, and so forth. It's beyond me about that history. But you know when I was out there two years ago at this meeting in St. George they took us on a tour of a town called Colorado City. It's on the border. The mayor was just a charming gentleman. He had about five or six wives, twenty or thirty children. That whole town, they all had several wives. Each family was like a community. They had their separate big apartment building, and each woman had a separate apartment with her children with the same husband. Some of the men had maybe twenty apartments, and the women seemed to like it. They were lawyers and teachers and outstanding women. They were well educated. In their community, they had a beautiful school. I was quite impressed with that community. They had a different kind of life, but it was on a tour. The head of it took us to see a lot of places while we were out there. Of course, Salt Lake City is certainly lovely, and the whole story of how the Mormons went out there and found a little spot in the middle of the mountains. Then they helped each other. They had a real community. That's inspiring.

Q. With the perspective of nearly 160 years of history behind us, what are your thoughts and feelings today about that period of Nauvoo's history? What do you think about when the Mormons started Nauvoo?

A. I think they did a lot for Nauvoo, because it was all underwater. They drained it all and demonstrated how people could survive and help each other and help the poor and everybody. I think that if our whole country could follow some of that, maybe we could be a lot better off. We have a lot of problems with poverty. Forty-five million people don't have medical insurance. We have a lot of problems in our country. We need everybody working together to solve them. I think that Mormons have taken a leadership and shown how it can be done. I'd heard of some religions that say we're only going to be here for a few minutes in terms of eternity, so why bother with the poor? Why bother with medical care? They say, "Jesus is going to solve everything. In a few years, they're going to be with Him." I've heard that from religions. If we're not going to help each other, I don't think that's very good religion. I don't know how the Mormons feel about that.

I go to six different churches. They say I'm addicted to church, [chuckles] Some Sundays, I go to two churches. Last Sunday I went to the Presbyterian Church, and then I went to the Unitarian Church in Keokuk. I believe in peace, working together and conflict resolution, and understanding each other.

I just cut out a little piece in the paper written by a student about how to deal with our problems today. He said we should be kind to the people that are destitute. We should look out after everybody and try to help what's gone wrong with them. I was so impressed with that, I sent a copy to the president. I said that with young people like that, our future is in good hands. I have a lot of trust in the young people.

Q. Good. Were any of your ancestors associated with the Icarians? I think we've already established that.

A. That would be on my mother's side. They are the Baxters. My father was German. There is part of that family that has done a lot of genealogy. They were religious. One of my uncles was a Presbyterian minister. My great-grandfather was a minister in some religion way back. They've always been very religious. We'd go to church and Sunday School every Sunday since I was born. I have a record of about fourteen years of five times a week, four times on Sunday, going to church. Our whole family has been very religious.

Q. What legacy has been left in Nauvoo by the Icarians from their ten-year stay?

A. The legacy is the Icarian Living History Foundation, which has the mission of acquainting the descendants of the idealism of peace. My book *Search for Brotherhood, Peace, and Justice*, is very popular. It's sold at a lot of places. That's the legacy of trying to spread that whole point of view of brotherhood, peace, and justice so that we can have communities where people work together, love each other, help each other. They had no poverty. They had no crime. They didn't have any lawyers. There were no uprisings. Everybody had medical care. They had the doctors. It was an ideal kind of Utopia that I think that we should have throughout the world. They've had displays of Icarian history in Paris in their biblioteque, and it was brought to New York. They had a big display of Icarian history in the New York Public Library, where millions of people saw it. The Icarians have contributed quite a bit. The young man from Nauvoo built the state capital in Springfield and in Des Moines. One of his students has built all these state capitols throughout the Midwest with the cupola on top. He's built Presbyterian churches and many county court houses.

Some of them have done research on some of the outstanding literature. There have been some writers like Victor Hugo, who wrote *Les Miserables*. That was all written about the Icarians. The author of that was Icarian. There were 400,000 readers of Etienne Cabet's book, *Voyage en Icarie*, on all the parlor tables in Europe; many people have read his many books on true Christianity, on why countries fail, and the French Revolution—he wrote three volumes. People that read those things call themselves Icarians because they're trying to build a better world. So that's the legacy.

We have five museums, and we're trying to promote our relationship with Western Illinois University. One day, the head of the library came over to my office to talk with me. "What's this about the Icarians?"

He said, "We're going to have a mission in our new library to promote the history of Western Illinois with special reference to the little known history of Icaria."

"I want you to make a talk to the whole faculty at Western Illinois University," which I did. Then President Malpass established this Center for Icarian Studies, and now the university has a copy of every document in the world that Cabet wrote about the Icarians. It's the center for the world. Many people come to do research. The University of Chicago sends its students down to our Icarian Heritage Center. We have a thousand books here. We have books from Mormons, books from all the different Utopian centers. People come down here because we have a better collection than the University of Chicago does. I've gotten acquainted with some of these students. I haven't seen any lately, but that's the story.

Q. Are you familiar with the beginning and the history of the wine industry in the area?

A. That was my great-grandfather who started the winery in 1857.

Q. What do you think caused it to decline over the years?

A. I thought it had increased. I didn't know it had declined.

Q. [TD] The popularity had increased, but the exporting has decreased. It's getting more popular; there just aren't as many wine makers anymore.

A. Oh, there are a lot more, I understand. They're starting up there near Chicago. It used to be that this was the only winery in the state of Illinois. I was buying a dress down in the Corpus Christi when the lady behind me said, "You're from Nauvoo?! We go up there every year and get two cases of that wine." [chuckles] I was flabbergasted. One time I went out for dinner in Baltimore. "I want you to taste some of this wine. We just stopped in a little town out in Illinois and got this wine." It was Baxter wine. But I don't drink it. I don't believe in anything with alcohol, [chuckles] Some Icarians went back after some of the Icarians broke up in '56. Some of them went to St. Louis. My family went back to New Jersey, but they didn't like it. They wanted to come right back to Nauvoo. "What are we going to do?" So they stopped in Ithaca, New York, at Cornell University, the only agricultural school way back then. They bought eighty stocks of grapes and twelve acres of land in Nauvoo. Right away, they started the winery, and it's been going ever since. So I don't know too much about it. You'll have to talk with them.

Q. Are you familiar with how the Nauvoo bleu cheese industry came about?

A. No, I just know from what I've read in 1936. Of course, I was still coming back here in the summer, and I kept up with it. I knew the people who started the factory. But the story is that they found some of the cheese in a cave and found that they could develop it, so they did. That's about all I know. But I understand that it's won a lot of prizes up in Wisconsin in contests with bleu cheese. And some of the people in France think it's just as good as their cheese. Now it's very popular. Some of my friends want a wheel of cheese.

Q. What churches have been influential in the Nauvoo area over the years?

A. I'm not too familiar with that. St. Peter and Paul, I understand, are two or three churches put together. Then there are the Methodists. A lot of them had their meetings down in the Seventies Hall when they first started. Then, I understand, the Methodist church in Powellton is so muddy that they couldn't get to church. So they just started their church out there, [chuckles] But now they all come in here, now that we have better roads.

I started out as a Methodist, then I was a Lutheran, and then I was a Unitarian. I go to a lot of churches. But I remember one day I wanted to go to church, but it was so muddy nobody would take me. If I had known that nobody would take me, I would have gotten my galoshes out and walked. That's the way it is.

Q. What have you heard about the people's thoughts and feelings about what the Mormons have done over the past few decades, restoring some of the old homes and businesses down in the flats, and all the tourists that are here?

A. Well, Dr. LeRoy Kimball started it in '54—he came back and redid his house. Then he built a house and lived here. He was a lovely man. Then the Mormons began to come back. I think at the beginning, people felt that maybe they didn't pay taxes, and maybe they were doing things that were destructive. At least I would hear stories, but I never did really know anything about it. In the '50s I was living out in Washington, D.C. That's when I was reading everything in the Library of Congress, so I didn't keep up with it. But I remember the activity down at the flats after the Mormons left, when I was here during the summer. Oh, I'll tell you what we did during the '40s and '30s. There was a ferryboat—the Reignolds, my cousin, had a ferryboat. We loved to go on the ferryboat. Everyone went down on the ferryboat. But I think that it froze and in about '47 or '48 or something before '50. That was a big activity on the flat. The Baxters had the hundred-acre strawberry patch down there. The whole area was growing in fruit. People did have some complaints at the very beginning, and then they changed after they demonstrated how lovely everything was with reconstructing the homes. I think twenty-two homes have been restored. Then the people would come, about sixty couples, and they would live in these homes. They would have a garden—just like in the old days. That was very impressive; everybody liked that. Then I think they joined right in with all the religions. I think they still have some kind of a religious ministers group or something that they all get together in.

Q. Do you think the changes have been for the good or for the bad?

A. Oh, I think for the good, yes. Everybody began to fix up their streets and their yards. I think it's been for the good.

Q. What was your reaction to the announcement of the Mormon temple to be rebuilt?

A. Oh, I wanted it to go out to Inspiration Point. It's such a beautiful place. It would have been seen up and down the Mississippi. I don't know why they haven't developed that place, because it's so pretty out there. They were going to have pageants and everything, but the pageant they have here has been beautiful. One of my colleagues from Western Illinois University developed a musical and started it all. It's been lovely here. People have come from Paris and all over to go to that. I think it's just been great.

Q. What have you heard from others about their thoughts and feelings about the rebuilding of the temple? Are there other people around here who have strong feelings?

A. That would be just lately. I made a speech at one of the meetings about how much I thought of what the Mormons have done for us, how we could work together and how we, the Icarians and the Mormons, had a lot of the same ideals in building the community, helping each other and so forth. Several people have asked me to come and speak. The Mormons had a series of lectures. Maybe you would like a copy of my speech. It was about the Icarian history. It was well attended. About five hundred people heard me. That was a year ago last spring.

Q. How do you think the temple will affect things in Nauvoo?

A. That's hard to say, but I do think that it will be a drawing point for the Mormons because it's a part of their religious heritage. It's very important to the Mormon group because it is a part of their history and as people come through in all the tours and everything.

The problem in Nauvoo is that we only have one two-lane road, just the one road. I don't think it should have been—a lot of us are very, very disappointed that they put this highway right through the middle of the town. It's a tiny little town, and we think they should have put it around some way, since it is in the middle of the town and we have had some bicycle accidents. We've had problems. We only have four streets, and the other three streets are just one way. You have to get over into the ditch to pass. I think the town is not the appropriate place for too many people to come

through. I think it will probably be handled all right. That's the only thing that I can think of. I'd like to see the high idealism reserved of our whole community, and I think all the churches are working together and doing things together.

There is a place now where most of the different religions meet, at least the ones that are active in this area. The temple is going to be beautiful once the grounds are in and everything. But as I say, I thought it would be beautiful up on Inspiration Point on the Mississippi River. I like that area.

I don't know how it's going to be for the people who run around that area, but I understand the Nelsons are moving and other people are moving. It might change the town, though. I'm not sure how that's going to work out. Of course, a lot of the stores are already closed—a lot of antique stores have opened up. I think the whole town is getting to be more touristy. Maybe the whole town will be different, but I would like to see it more supportive of some of the retired people and people who are coming back to enjoy life and have a place to be. The senior citizens just seem to be dying off, and I don't think there's too much interest, but they do get together once a month and have a meal over in Carrie Manor. Oh, they enjoy it, but there are only about a dozen of them or something like that. Not too many.

Q. Do you go to those?

A. I try to go to those. I'm supposed to be on the committee for next time. They say I'm supposed to furnish the meat, [chuckles]

Q. For the past couple of years, there have been groups of Brigham Young University students coming to Nauvoo to study. What, if any, contact have you had with any of the students? What have you heard from others about them being here?

A. In the old days, we always had students here. They were on a tour or an assignment for eighteen months or maybe during the summer, and I always met with the group when they wanted to hear about the Icarians. But we haven't had that lately. Of course, we've been closed. But the professor called me a couple days ago, and they're going to bring a class here on Monday at one o'clock from Knox College, so I have it all set up, ready to go. Then there was a senior citizen group who called from Peoria, and they came. People have come who know about history and want to know more. A lot of times they come by with the tours of the Mormon areas.

Q. What do you think about the BYU students being here?

A. With the students, I haven't had too much contact. But I have had contact with the people in charge, and we get together. I invite them over for dinner, and they've had some wonderful people. My mother—and all these ladies or the people that have come in the past, since 1954, go down to the coin wash. She got acquainted with a lot of them. So she had a lot of them come out, and she kept up with them for years. Of course, my mother isn't here anymore, and I don't know whether they still go to the coin wash or have their own facilities, [chuckles] So we've been in contact over the years since '54. Not much happened between '46 and '54, but some buses did come through from New York. They just came through and headed out to Salt Lake City.

Q. What of the future of Nauvoo? What would you like to see happen, or what do you expect to see happen in the future here?

A. I'd like to see the Mormons, the Icarians, and so forth support whatever the community's destiny is. It is going to be mostly older people. But of course there are young people who come here as kind of a bedroom for jobs in neighboring towns. They work in all these areas around and like to live here. A lot of them work over at the new factory in Carthage. They hire I don't know how many hundreds of people over there. I remember when it started and they only had eight people, and now it's so big.

Q. When was that? When did they start?

A. They started when I was in the Business of Professional Women. A couple of those ladies got it started. I think they're all dead now. That wasn't too long ago. It was in the '70s. That would be thirty years. It's grown like mad. They have another one up in Leharp and another down south.

It seems that the Ford Motor Company now, and all of the motor companies, are separating the parts; then they put the parts together from their industries. It's a different kind of work. That way, they do provide jobs for a lot of people in these small towns. So we don't have too many young people.

Our schools seem to have less and less people. I remember when our schools were overcrowded and had a lot of people, but now they seem to have a hard time getting enough people to make up a basketball team. [chuckles]

I was just reading a book that pointed out that cities are a good place to be. They have a lot of community things going on. Jefferson said that our country would be ruined if we got everybody off of the farms. He thought that people should stay in the small towns and on the farms; that would make a strong country. So I'm not sure. Things are happening that you don't understand. I'm not sure what the future will hold, but I think some of the leaders of the Mormons and the Icarians are working together to see how we can support the destiny of this community and help both ways. I think that would be a good thing.

Q. It's my understanding that you are a retired university professor. Where have you taught?

A. The last time was at Western Illinois University, but before that there was the University of Maryland and Cornell University, the University of Texas. The country of France employed me as a professor to teach the social workers. There is a plan in France that the professors, doctors, lawyers, and teachers have to be brought up to date every two years. They employ people to come in and teach various aspects of their education. So I was over there working with the social workers.

I was interested in going over there because I was the guest of the European Beekeepers' Association to represent the Dadant family from here. When the association put a plaque on my great-grandfather's home. Charles Dadant invented the modified Dadant beehive.

When I looked around at all the people in France, and they were rosy-cheeked and everything, I thought, "Well, how do they deal with poverty?" I'm going to come over and find out. I saved ten thousand dollars and said to myself, "I'm going to go over there and find out. I could buy a farm or something else, but I could lose that. But if I've got knowledge in my head, nobody could take it away." So I thought, *Well, I'll go over there*, and that's what I did. I found out what they did. It was very exciting for me.

Q. What did you teach?

A. I taught social work and sociology in these various places. I was on four medical school faculties. They wanted the doctors to learn more about the low income people and family problems and so forth so they could be better physicians.

Q. Do you have any other comments or observations that you would like to make for the record?

A. I believe it is important for all of us to understand each other and to try to work together to build a better life for everybody. I think the most important thing is for a person to be knowledgeable of himself to make important decisions that will make a better world. That's the most difficult thing to do. It is very hard to be knowledgeable enough to be able to make a decision that is going to help oneself and help everybody. I think that our education, our religion, family life, school life all play a part.

My dad used to say, "It's very important to listen to people that disagree with you. They might have the answers." I don't think we listen enough to people that disagree with us. We can profit from that, and maybe it's just like *Twelve Angry Men*. The one man kept bringing up questions, and they finally all agreed with him. [chuckles]

The Quaker religion believes in peace and conflict resolution. It might take two years until they reach a consensus, and one person might disagree, but they wait. My brother and my sister-in-law joined the Quakers because they were so peace loving. They wanted to find out how it worked. I think that if we can be responsible for our own lives—I've been fired three times because I believed in what I believed. But it made me feel good that I could just stick up for what I believed. I think that is the final thing I would like to say.

Lloyd S. Starr

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: December 30, 1930

Interview on September 21, 2001, at the Joseph Smith Academy

by Tyler Dahl

Q. [Tyler Dahl] How long have you lived in the Nauvoo area?

A. [Lloyd Starr] I have lived in this area seventy and a half years. I was raised about eight or nine miles southeast of here—on the Connable blacktop. I was born in Keokuk, Iowa. I moved to Nauvoo in the 1960s after I was married.

Q. What attracted you to this area?

A. A man offered me a job as a garage mechanic at Horton Standard Service, a Chevrolet dealership down the street—1420 Mulholland, next to the Allyn House. I started there on January 7, 1954. Halfway down the block was a Ford dealership. We had about ten men working for us. They sold between 100 and 120 new cars a year. Every two months I went to General Motors training school up in Hinsdale, Illinois, on Ogden Avenue and 34th. I spent three or