PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-50

The first years of H. & C. Studebaker in the histories of 1875: the opening in February 1852, the partners Smyser and Hoge, and Henry Studebaker's church and death

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SUMMARY

Two histories of 1875 give the founding day of H. & C. Studebaker, the South Bend wagon shop that became the Studebaker company. The county atlas says that "it was the 12th of February" 1852 when Henry and Clement Studebaker opened their shop on Michigan Street, and that "The first entry in their books was made on the 16th of February," a debit against A. R. & J. H. Harper; Goodrich and Tuttle's state history gives "the sixteenth day of February, 1852" as the day they opened. The same atlas page names two outside partners missing from the later histories we have read: Henry Smyser, admitted in 1853 (Studebakers & Smyser), and Israel Hoge, in 1854–55 (Studebakers & Hoge). Henry Studebaker, who left the firm in 1858, is said in later accounts to have left over his church's objections; the Brethren historian Otho Winger wrote in 1917 that when Henry's daughter Emma was baptized in 1869, "Emma's parents were not members of the church," and that both joined it later. Henry died at South Bend on Saturday, 2 March 1895, by the report sent from there that day, not on 12 March as Howard (1907) has it.

THE RECORD

1. ***An Illustrated Historical Atlas of St. Joseph Co., Indiana*** **(Chicago: Higgins, Belden & Co., 1875), p. 28, "Studebaker Manufacturing Company"**

   > *"One day in the early part of 1852 — to be exact, it was the 12th of February — two young men opened a wagon shop on Michigan street, in South Bend. ... The first entry in their books was made on the 16th of February. It was a debit against A. R. & J. H. Harper, then the leading merchants and millers of the city."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/illustratedhisto00higg/page/n31/mode/1up)

2. **The same, p. 28**

   > *"In 1853 Henry Smyser was admitted as a partner, and the firm name was changed to Studebakers & Smyser. The following year Mr. Smyser retired, and the name of H. & C. Studebaker was resumed. Soon after, however, and in 1854, Mr. Israel Hoge became associated with the brothers, and the style of Studebakers & Hoge was adopted. In 1855 Mr. Hoge went out, and the firm name became, for the third time, H. & C. Studebaker."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/illustratedhisto00higg/page/n31/mode/1up)

3. **De Witt C. Goodrich and Charles R. Tuttle,** ***An Illustrated History of the State of Indiana*** **(Indianapolis: R. S. Peale, 1875), p. 616**

   > *"It was on the sixteenth day of February, 1852, that Henry and Clement Studebaker opened their shop in South Bend, by the firm name of H. & C. Studebaker."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/illustratedhisto1875good)

4. **Otho Winger, *History of the Church of the Brethren in Indiana* (Elgin, Ill., 1917), "Emma Bowman," pp. 317–18**

   > *"Emma's parents were not members of the church … she made full surrender and was baptized August 29, 1869. For years she prayed for her parents and was finally rewarded by seeing both of them unite with the church before their death."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/BrethrenInIndiana1917)

5. **"Henry Studebaker Dead," *Indianapolis Journal*, 3 March 1895, p. 4**

   > *"SOUTH BEND, Ind., March 2. Henry Studebaker died at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon of stomach and other troubles after an illness of two years."*

   Library of Congress, Chronicling America · See the record (https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn82015679/1895-03-03/ed-1/?sp=4)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The founding of H. & C. Studebaker is dated from sources of 1875, written in the brothers' lifetimes, to 12 February 1852 (the opening, by the atlas) and 16 February (the first book entry, and the opening by Goodrich and Tuttle). The firm is shown with two outside partners in 1853–55. Winger's account places Henry's joining the Brethren after 1869, eleven years after he left the firm, which tells against the story that his church made him leave. Henry's death is fixed at 2 March 1895.

LIMITS

The atlas and Goodrich and Tuttle were written from information the company or the family supplied, and they differ by four days on the opening. The partners are known from the atlas alone among the sources found; neither man is identified there beyond

his name. Winger does not give the year in which Henry and Susan Studebaker joined the church; Susan died in 1871.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Chapman (1880); Anderson (1901); Howard (1907); Erskine (1918, 1924); the 1927 reunion booklet; Bonsall (2000); the Smithsonian Libraries timeline; the Studebaker National Museum; the Brethren Historical Library (2017); Wikipedia; Chronicling America for March 1895; web searches for the partners' names with Studebaker.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"New" means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note's version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

1. "From Horses to Horsepower: Studebaker Helped Move a Nation," Smithsonian Libraries, Mileposts. https://www.sil.si.edu/ondisplay/studebaker/mileposts.htm
2. Timothy Edward Howard, *A History of St. Joseph County, Indiana* (Chicago: Lewis, 1907). https://archive.org/details/historyofstjosep01howa
3. Fred Miller, on the Studebakers and the Brethren, Brethren Historical Library and Archives, 17 August 2017. https://www.brethren.org/bhla/?p=310

THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in Five brothers and a blacksmith shop (projectscroll.com/news/five-brothers-and-a-blacksmith-shop/). In the discoveries register:

- `stude-feb16-1875` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#stude-feb16-1875)
- `stude-partners-1853` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#stude-partners-1853)
- `stude-henry-brethren` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#stude-henry-brethren)
- `stude-henry-1895` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#stude-henry-1895)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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