

# The Studebaker National Museum...Over a Century on Wheels

*Commemorative Edition, 2008*

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## BOOK REVIEW

by SFNA board members

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**T**he Studebaker National Museum...Over a Century on Wheels, by Andrew Beckman, Archivist at the Studebaker National Museum in South Bend, Indiana, is a beautiful photo-essay of the Studebaker company and its vehicles. Recently published by the Studebaker National Museum (SNM), the hard cover book contains, on 160 pages of glossy paper stock, 380 superb color, sepia and black & white photographs, accompanied by concise commentary, from the Studebaker Archives, Studebaker Museum and private donors. The visual presentation of cars, people and artifacts follow the development, production, problems and highlights of Studebaker wagons, cars and trucks over the company's 114-year history. Chronologically presented in ten chapters, they are: *Meet the "Studenbeckers," Wait for the Wagon, Transitions, Evolution, Recovery, Duty, Limelight, Decline, Legacy, and The Collection.*

To begin writing this book review, Clem Neal borrowed the signed copy belonging to fellow board member and co-reviewer Sandra Studebaker. She had purchased a copy of the book from the SNM vendor table at the Studebaker Drivers Club (SDC) International Meet in September, 2008, in Lancaster, PA.

Having the necessary resources nearby at SFNA's vendor/display table, Sandra quickly identified, and penciled in corrections to, an initial 12 errors in family data on page four of the book.

Obviously supplemental to the book's main focus, and a convenient verso page for the Table of Contents, page four presents a partial three-generation "Studebaker Family Tree" of John Clement Studebaker and his wife Rebecca Mohler, parents of the five South Bend brothers of wagon and automotive fame. The "Tree" contains names and dates only, and, in keeping with the focus of the book, presents minimal data on the five daughters of John and Rebecca.

Also obvious to anyone with knowledge of Studebaker family history are several more factual inconsistencies on page six of the first chapter entitled "Meet the Studenbeckers." Most prominent among these are the first names ascribed to John Clement's father and grandfather, i.e., Peter, Jr. and Peter, respectively. Unfortunately, this fallacy of names seems to have held sway in automotive circles for some time. SFNA research has documented that John Clement is descended from Clement, Jr. and the immigrant Clement, Sr.

All the identified factual errors plus a

confusing duplicate line of text in the entry for Jacob Franklin, 5th of the five Studebaker brothers, have been communicated to the author/archivist at the Studebaker National Museum. He was understandably dismayed about the apparent errors and receptive to the proffered corrections. However, the author seems unable to implement an immediate solution, such as Clem's suggestion of an 'errata sheet' insert for the remaining unsold copies. All corrections, we understand, are on hold pending a second printing of the volume following sale of the first-printing run of 1000 copies.

Both co-reviewers assume that most people will only glance at the "Studebaker Family Tree" on page four and quickly move on to the vehicles, the book's primary focus. This assumption is reinforced by a glowing review of the SNM book appearing in the December, 2008 issue of SDC's *Turning Wheels* monthly magazine. In it, the author of the review has praise for the book's "stunning presentation" and noteworthy "absence of errors." And, indeed, except for one typographical error this co-reviewer (Sandra) found on page 65, the remaining pages appear devoid of typos. Whether there are factual errors about

the company history or vehicles portrayed is, obviously, the province of experts in those areas.

Despite the multiple errors in family data, we would recommend this new book for its excellent photo-essay of Studebaker vehicle history. It makes a great coffee table book and an ideal primer for the Stude novice. However, some may want to await the second printing if accuracy of family data is important to them. It's unfortunate there was no collaboration between SNM and SFNA before the book went to press. Hopefully, this will not be the case before a second printing of The Studebaker National Museum...Over a Century on Wheels.

A corrected version of the abridged "Studebaker Family Tree" of John Clement and Rebecca (Mohler) Studebaker, similar in scope and layout to that published in SNM's new book, has been created for use as a possible insert into personal copies of the book. That Errata Sheet is included in the Spring, 2009 issue of *The Studebaker Family* quarterly newsletter for members of the Studebaker Family National Association. Others will be able to find it, and this book review, on the SFNA's web site at: [www.studebakerfamily.org](http://www.studebakerfamily.org).

#### ADDENDUM

Most of the errors in the aforementioned "Studebaker Family Tree" have to do with birth and death dates, while some dates are simply "unknown." A few names beg fuller treatment, and two daughters attributed to Peter Everest Studebaker, 4th of the five South Bend brothers, need definitive clarification. The first volume of SFNA genealogy published in 1976 indicates that the two daughters, Dora L. and Etta, are actually one and the same, namely--Dora Louetta, 1864-1909. Recent research by this co-reviewer (Sandra) to confirm this also identified more than 60 previously unknown descendants, and their spouses, of Peter Everest Studebaker [C7610] and his first wife Dora Handley. Results of this new research will eventually be incorporated into SFNA's expanding Studebaker family genealogy database.

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