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STUDEBAKER'S SHOP - EL DORADO COUNTY

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STUDEBAKER'S SHOP

The original site of the Hinds (Hines) and Ollis Blacksmith Shop, where John M. Studebaker came in August 1853, is located near Stony Point in the center of Placerville. The shop was a long log building situated near the Carey House. This was also known as the Raffles House and the Placerville Hotel, and was built in 1851.

The blacksmith shop faced on Main Street and the rear of the building was a wall made by digging into the earth on the side of the hill. The building contained two interior sections or departments. The front half was the blacksmith shop, equipped with a primitive forge, operated by an old pull-type bellows; a crudely made anvil, around which hung some hand-made smithing tools, a group of tongs and hammers, and a rack filled with strips of iron rod. The rear section was a combination carpenter shop and living quarters. A long wooden work bench, a saw and several wood-working tools were adjacent to sleeping bunks, tiered from the ceiling to the floor. A large sheet iron stove on which the cooking was done, occupied the center of the room. A few pots and pans, a small rough wooden table and benches completed the furnishings. Outside, old wagon wheels, a weather worn "prairie schooner" and a damaged stage coach

designated the smithy's location and his trade. It was in the back section that John M. Studebaker built wheelbarrows for miners and became known as "Wheelbarrow John."[1]

In the year 1853, when John M. Studebaker started his westward trek overland from South Bend, Indiana, to the gold fields of California, most of the turbulent history of Placerville was written in the names "Old Dry Diggins" and "Hangtown." Each name typified a distinct stage in the evolution of a primitive settlement of tents and bush arbors, into a progressive township. Situated only eight miles from Sutter Mill on the American River, Placerville grew from these dry diggings to be one of the richest and oldest placer towns in California.

Placerville first found settlement on a creek (Hangtown Creek) in the valley broken up by hills. Either side of the creek was intersected in every direction by small ravines. Captain Charles M. Weber, founder of the city of Stockton,[2] mined on Weber Creek, which was one of the main tributaries of the south fork of the American River, in June, 1848. He established a camp on a site called Weberville or Weaverville. Here Weber opened a trading post under

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1. Wells Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 30.
2. H. H. Bancroft, History of California, V, 74.

an arbor of bushes where he displayed his goods and groceries for sale. Prospecting in this region proved successful and a trading and mining company was formed, called The Stockton Mining Company, with Captain Weber as its leader.

The Company had scarcely been established when two of the members, Will Daylor and Perry McCoon, discovered one of the most valuable diggings ever worked. They called the locality "Old Dry Diggins."[3] There was plenty of gold but little water to work the placer. In the dry bed of the creek, hardly more than four feet wide from bank to bank, two or three feet deep, gold was found in a large quantity. With the aid of four white men and a hundred Indians, they "panned" seventeen thousand dollars worth of gold in one week. After deducting expenses, they had ten thousand dollars worth of gold left.

The importance of this gold discovery was mentioned by Colonel R. B. Mason, in his official report _On the Discovery of Gold in California_ to the President of the United States, in August, 1848.[4]

News of this rich find brought hundreds of prospectors to the location. The first boarding shanty in Old Dry

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3. James H. Carson, _Early Recollections of the Mines_, 6.
4. _Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the 13th Congress, December 5, 1848_, 56-64.

Diggings was opened and operated by Anna Cook. The winter rains filled the dry creek bed, and several hundred placers up and down the creek and ravines were worked. The hillsides leading into Weber Valley from the north and the south were rich, and gold in amazing quantity was found. Cedar Ravine and Log Cabin Ravine were the richest; they yielded over a million dollars worth of gold.

Old Dry Diggings was a scene of mining activity and civic tranquility. The miners were industrious and self-governed. Colonel Mason said:[5]

> I was surprised to learn that crime of any kind was very infrequent and that no theft or robberies had been committed in the district. It was a surprisingly peaceful and quiet state of affairs.
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> All lived in tents, in bush arbors, or in the open air, and men have frequently carried about their person thousands of dollars worth of gold.

In the winter of '49, the camp became a township. The ever increasing arrival of emigrants added to the population of "Old Dry Diggins," and with these vanguards came a liberal number of the lawless. The crimes of robbery and murder increased so rapidly, and became so common that the harassed miners feared for their lives and undertook to deal

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5. Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the 13th Congress, December 5, 1848, 60.

summarily with offenders. They organized the first impromptu court in the Mother Lode, which operated with dispatch; flogged some, hanged others, and, presently restored some semblance of peace and order. In the process "Old Dry Diggins" acquired a new name - Hangtown - one it was not proud to possess. This action taken to safeguard life and property was forced upon the honest citizen by desperate necessity, against the influx of undesirables from Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and the "ticket of leave" element from the English penal colonies. With these came the American outlaw and the Latins from whose ranks Joaquin Murrieta recruited his murderous band.

The first hanging took place in the public square at the corner of Coloma and Main streets from the stout limb of an old oak tree, later known as "Hangman's Tree."[6] This tree became a symbol of strength and vengeance, which carried its warning throughout the Mother Lode country. The name "Hangtown" was an impressive reminder to law-breakers, and not until the citizens appealed to the legislature in 1850, was the name officially changed to "Placerville."

Placerville situated fifty miles east of Sacramento, was the first town reached after crossing the Sierra Nevada

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6. "Original Name of Hangtown," Pony Express Courier, XLVII: 277,50. May 1930.

Mountains by the Carson Valley route. A large trade in stock was carried on with the emigrants arriving there from points east and west. It was estimated that nearly 100,000 emigrants had crossed the Missouri River in 1852, and that eighty-five percent of that number came to California, and almost all passed through Placerville, which gave a new stability to the town. Placerville prospered in keeping with its growth and in 1854 was incorporated as a city. In 1856, it became the county seat of El Dorado County, then the most populous county of the state.[7] There was civic and social development. Schools and a theatre were built; also four churches, a Congregational, Methodist, Baptist and a Catholic Church. Shops, business and express office catered to the miners. Several newspapers were established before 1854.[8] In a state election, Placerville cast a number of votes exceeded only by that of San Francisco.

Placerville was the terminus of the Mother Lode and the beginning of the trail to the northern mines. The camps extended from Placerville to Mariposa and north to Weaverville, and before the end of the gold rush days, it was the principal outfitting point and center of mining affairs.[9]

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7. J. Ross Browne, Resources of the Pacific Slope, 81.
8. "Placerville," Hutchings' California Magazine, 250, December 1857.
9. Glenn Chesney Quiett, Pay Dirt, 95.

After the big fire of July 6, 1856, which virtually destroyed the town, Placerville's fortune declined for a time. The rebuilding of the town delayed progress, but the cost of this delay was offset by a combination of fortunate circumstances whereby mining received an impetus. The building of the ditch of the South Fork Canal from the South Fork of the American River, brought relief from seasonal droughts to the placer miners, and gold production reached 6,000 to 8,000 ounces a week. Rich gold placers were found in the center of town, on Main Street, in cellars, and on sites of burnt buildings.

A new town was built and some of the fire-proof structures erected at that time are still in use. Gold production again declined, but the town became depot of supplies for the extremely rich Washoe silver mines, in Nevada. For eight years Placerville was sustained by the enormous traffic of freight and passenger service that flowed across the Sierra Nevada.

Placerville retained a prosperous development through the progress of agriculture in the mountain country. Apples, pears and many kinds of vegetables are produced for market and canneries. Grape-vines produce abundantly, furnishing wineries the essentials to manufacture wines and cognac. Soapstone or stealite and a chalk-like silicate of lime from the town's quarries find a market at San Francisco.

The Placerville road (U. S. 50) across the mountains has done much to bring business to the county.

Placerville is the central gateway to Lake Tahoe. The highway (U.S.50) from Sacramento comes up by way of Folsom. Above Folsom, it ascends through the foothills past the delightful towns of Clarksville, Shingle Springs, El Dorado and the orchards to Placerville. This route by way of old "Hangtown" is one of the pioneer roads of the west. Over it, Harry Roff made the initial run of the Pony Express from Sacramento to Placerville, fifty-five miles in two hours and forty-five minutes, on April 3, 1860. The road passes through a country of primitive forest where the hand of man has made little impression. The trees are the same that sheltered Murrieta, Vasquez and other bandits lying in way to rob plethoric miners bearing gold dust from the "diggins," or to pillage a Wells Fargo treasure box. The road that teemed with thousands of emigrants, eating houses, stables for teamsters and stage stations is still the main highway leading through Placerville to the Eldorado National Forest, one of the finest mountain recreation grounds in America, a land of dense forests and rushing streams, of snow-capped peaks and sparkling lakes - a land of romance and adventure.

Famous men laid the beginning of their fortunes in Placerville. Mark Hopkins, eldest of the "Big Four"

railroad pioneers, who built the Union Pacific, came to Old Dry Diggins in 1849, shortly after the multiple lynching. Philip D. Armor, operated a retail butcher shop on Main Street, before he dreamt of the great Chicago plant and national markets.[10] Four years after Mark Hopkins arrived, another man of destiny started for the gold fields. He was John M. Studebaker, who made a small fortune building wheelbarrows for the miners at ten dollars each; then returned east to join his brothers, who built the Studebaker Corporation, known throughout the civilized world for their road vehicles.

John Mohler Studebaker was born at Gettysburgh, Pennsylvania, on October 10, 1833. He was the third son of John Studebaker, Sr., and grandson of Peter Studebaker whose Swiss ancestors came to Philadelphia from Rotterdam, Holland, in 1736.[11] The Studebaker men had been wagonwrights and blacksmiths for generations; building road vehicles was firmly established in their tradition. Rebecca Mohler Studebaker, mother of the five Studebaker brothers likewise came from a family of distinction. The Mohlers had been honored by William Penn with a grant of land in Pennsylvania.[12]

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10. G. A. Richardson, "El Dorado - the Country of the Pioneers," Grizzly Bear, 10-13, August 1907.
11. Who's Who in America, 1910-1911, 1916, 1917.
12. Edward Mott Wooley, "Conquerors of the Road," Review of Reviews, 26-28, October 1930.

The trend of the pioneers in 1835 was westward, and John Studebaker Sr., acquired one hundred and sixty acres of land near Ashland, Ohio. He sent men ahead to start agricultural operations; in the meantime, he built a large four-horse wagon of the Conestoga pattern with bent bows covered with stout duck canvas and having an enormous carrying capacity. Two additional wagons were required to carry the mother, her infant son John, the youthful Henry and Clement, and their four small sisters.

At Ashland, a somewhat pretentious home was established, in which Peter, Jacob, and a fifth sister were born. Adjacent to their dwelling stood the blacksmith shop. The elder Studebaker strived for success, but he encountered the hardships of the early frontier days and for many years found business a hard struggle. He later moved the family to a small rented tract of land at Pleasant Ridge, near by. With a family of ten children and a small income, it was necessary for the mother to spin and weave cloth to make clothing for her family. Brighter days followed and ultimately the whole family moved to South Bend, Indiana, and established a permanent home.

All day the Studebaker boys worked alongside their father at the anvil making horseshoes and nails. Their father was unrelenting in his stand for perfection and quality. As they approached manhood, they were taught the

necessity of establishing an independent position in life. Proprietorship was encouraged. In 1850, Henry and Clement went to South Bend, Indiana, where Clem taught school for a time, and also worked as a blacksmith for fifty cents a day.[13]

Henry and Clem, confident of their workmanship, took an epochal step when they pooled their capital of eighty-five dollars and two forges to establish the business firm of H & C Studebaker, blacksmiths and wagonwrights. Their ages were twenty-six and twenty-one respectively. Peter, their brother, was a merchant at Goshen, Indiana, and later gave up his business to join them.

At nineteen, John M. Studebaker, Jr., entered the employ of John Cotton, a South Bend wagon builder.[14] His real interest however, was with a company of men who were organizing to travel overland by wagon train to El Dorado in quest of gold. John was determined to go, and his brothers, Henry and Clem, regretfully helped him to build a specially designed prairie schooner. John made the woodwork in the winter of 1852, and his brothers forged the iron work. Together, they produced a prairie schooner worthy of the Studebaker tradition. John transferred his wheeled tent to

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13. Albert Russel Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 15.
14. Who's Who in America, 1916-1917.

the company organized to go to California, in lieu of his share of the expedition expenses.[15]

John Studebaker and the company left South Bend about February 23, 1853, by way of Chicago, then over the prairies of Illinois and Iowa, following the Indian trails with the oxen and horse drawn wagon train. They crossed the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, at which point stood a log cabin, and where today is the city of Omaha.[16] Here the company rested for three days. It was at Council Bluffs that John M. Studebaker and a few of the younger members were beset by a group of three-card monte gamblers. John, unaware of the dishonest tactics of gamblers, listened with the others and fell an easy prey to the gamblers' capper who painted an interesting word picture of how he was winning easy money from the "helpless" gamblers, and offered to show them his system of making plenty of money without traveling all the way to California. So impressed was young Studebaker that he cut open his concealed leather belt, and removed the sixty-five dollars his mother had given him. Agreeing to follow the stranger's system, they played against the banker of the game and the three-card monte gamblers. John's cash was neatly extracted from him without one word

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15. Wooley, "Conquerors of the Road," Review of Reviews, 27, October 1930.
16. "John 'Wheelbarrow' Studebaker at Placerville," Pony Express Courier, 6. November 1936.

of regret, leaving him with only fifty cents to his name.[17] It took five months and eight days across the prairies, via the Great Salt Lake, west of the Humboldt River across the Carson Desert to reach the Sierra Nevada; another three days to cross the pass, and the company with their wagon train reached the public square on Main Street, in Placerville, August 3, 1853.[18]

Little has been written concerning the overland trip of the Studebaker emigrants. If they had had any unusual sufferings or experiences, the members of the company had never recorded them. They had seen the "elephant" - an expression used by the Fortyniners to typify the dangers and hardships of the trail. They had "eaten the elephant's ear," for they had struggled, sweated and strained crossing the Sierra Nevada. Typical of other gold seekers who endured the hazardous hardships with a born determination that marked their generation, they had successfully completed their pilgrimage - "California or bust," and were now ready to work, for they were led to believe that when they reached California, all they had to do was to shovel up the gold and become rich.

A large crowd of miners gathered around the wagon

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17. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 32.
18. Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 17.

train moving slowly into their selected camp. The newcomers attempted to get the miners to talk about their gold, but the miners insisted on asking questions about the States and what changes had taken place in the past years. Before the company disbanded, the captain reminded his members of the hardships they had suffered to reach California and told them not to expect too much gold. During the captain's talk, Joe Hinds, /Hines/ the town's blacksmith, mingled with the new arrivals and inquired if there was a wagon maker among the train. Several members pointed out young Studebaker. Hinds /Hines/ approached him and asked "Are you a wagon-builder?"

"Yes sir," replied Studebaker pushing his hands into his pants pockets. Hinds offered him a job. Studebaker felt the fifty-cent-piece he had retained from his escapade at Council Bluffs, and he refused the offer, saying: "I come to California to mine for gold, and never thought of taking any other kind of job." Like most of the men who rushed to California for gold, John had never seen a mine, but what did that matter? Gold was all that mattered. Hinds was a man of very few words, and struck by the determination and manner of the young man, turned and walked away.[19]

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19. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 29.

After Hinds had disappeared Dr. Worthem, a by-stander, stepped up and very politely spoke to Studebaker, "Will you let me give you a little advice, young man?" Dr. Worthem then convinced him that "there was plenty of time to dig for gold, which was not always a sure thing," but the opportunity of securing work at his trade was, perhaps, better than speculating for gold. Studebaker, remembering that his only possessions were fifty cents and a healthy appetite, quickly accepted the stranger's advice and started off in Hinds direction.

Studebaker found the old log blacksmith shop near Stony Point and entered. Hinds greeted him with a handclasp and told him that he wanted twenty-five wheelbarrows made for the miners. He offered Studebaker ten dollars apiece to build them. John listened attentively and made a quick inspection of the shop where he later made his living quarters. He saw the coffee-sack bunks and the sheet-iron stove. The tools, he observed, were the worst he had ever seen, and that the material of which he had to build wheelbarrows, was pitch pine. Nevertheless, he accepted the job and with an old rickety saw, went to work in the back end of the Hinds /Hines/ and Ollis Blacksmith Shop.

Studebaker operated slowly on the first working day; he was hungry and was thinking of where he was going to get his meals. At noon, he went down to the miners' mess

hall operated by Mr. Simons. Studebaker approached the proprietor and told him that he was from South Bend, Indiana, and that he was employed by Hinds as a wagon builder. John found out too, that Simons was German, and conversed with him in Pennsylvania Dutch. He became friendly and allowed John to enter the mess tent without paying the usual one dollar fee required before entering the tent to eat. Studebaker lost no time and ate a hearty meal. Later Simons verified Studebaker's connection with Joe Hinds and he, thereafter, had his meals at Philadelphia Hall, the "mess tent."[20]

At the end of the second day he finished his first wheelbarrow. Hinds inspected it and asked "What do you call that?" looking curiously at Studebaker.

"I call it a wheelbarrow," replied Studebaker.

"A hell of a looking wheelbarrow," shouted Hinds. And he was correct for the wheel was a crude looking circle with a crooked iron hoop around the edge. The body was a box with handles.

"You asked me if I was a wagon maker and I said I was," explained Studebaker in a low voice. "I didn't say that I was a wheelbarrow maker; but I think I can do better

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20. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 30.

on the next one."[21] Hinds realized that the boy was sincere and capable, smiled and told him to go ahead.

Studebaker provided himself with some better tools. He had no patterns to follow, but, with inborn skill he shaped all irons by the test of his eye and it was not long until the miners were buying his barrows as fast as he could make them. Other makes did not stand up like the home-made ore-carriers "Wheelbarrow John" was turning out at ten dollars each. The design was not a fancy one; the body was strong and easy to dump. The hub was smaller but similar to that of a covered wagon. The radial spokes and fellies over which he shrunk a stout iron rim or tire was very strong, and the axle was heavy to support a heavy load, and smooth pick-up handles.[22] For five years he made wheelbarrows and never lost a shift; making a complete unit every day. During the interim many things happened.

Studebaker was a solid built young man. He was quick of apprehension, shrewd and affable. His hair was rather long and his trousers rather short. He knew a good horse, a good carriage, and a good customer at sight, and he knew how to get the most out of them. His mouth pointed upward, and he looked as though he was on the point

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21. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 30.
22. A Studebaker wheelbarrow is owned and on display by Marie Sharp and Harry Dunlap, 369 Main Street, Placerville. Pony Express Courier, August 1939.

of laughing out loud, but no man ever caught him laughing. He was silent in the opinions of others and talked but little. He took Placerville and its citizens at their best and made friends.

John M. Studebaker learned during his first few years in Placerville that hundreds of men who came to California to mine for gold never made much of a success. He staked a twenty-five by twenty-five-foot claim which he worked as a diversion for three months and did fairly well. He had in his possession as late as April 16, 1912, seven hundred dollars worth of the coarse gold which he had taken out of the American River near Placerville in the early 50's. Mining for gold had its influence on Studebaker, but, it never kept him from the blacksmith shop. Joe Hinds and John worked overtime every night, and many times all night; Hinds making new tools for the miners, and Studebaker repairing coaches, that came into the shop late at night to be repaired ready for the road before six o'clock in the morning. He was thrifty and saved his money. He never associated with those who gambled, for he had not forgotten his weakness and the bitter experience he suffered with gamblers at Council Bluffs. It had left him all but penniless, a condition that forced him to abandon his mining ambitions and accept employment in Hind's blacksmith shop making wheelbarrows. In those halcyon days, John M. Studebaker

was called "Wheelbarrow John" and became well known for making a superior wheelbarrow for miners. He enjoyed his nickname.

In the fire of July 6, 1856, when the entire business district of Placerville was destroyed, Hinds blacksmith shop and their home burnt. Studebaker arrived at the shop just as the fire broke through. He got his trunk, which contained his personal belongings and some gold. Starting up the hill with his treasures, he had to abandon the trunk on account of the heat and run to safety. The only thing he saved was the gold and the clothing he wore. No one in Placerville seemed to be discouraged by the loss. The town was rebuilt of fire-proof construction. Several buildings sixty to seventy years old are today occupied, their thick walls, iron shutters and doors still intact.

Hinds built a new shop on the other side of the road, a hundred yards or so above Stony Point. The name, Stony Point, was derived from a point of slate rock projecting above the ground at the junction of Main Street and Bedford Avenue. The projection was blasted and removed when Main Street was paved.

The site of the original shop was marked by a committee of Native Sons, some years ago. The late Fred Irwin was chairman. He had played, when a boy, in the Hinds & Ollis blacksmith shop and in the back room where Studebaker

made wheelbarrows. The front shop, which came out to the edge of Main Street, was torn down years ago to make room for a flower garden alongside the St. Louis House which stood where the Scherer Bottling Works now stands, while the little shop occupied by Studebaker did duty as a wood-shed and chicken house for the Weckmanns who owned the hotel. But it, too, has long since disappeared.[23]

Mike Mayer, by this time, had become part owner in the blacksmith shop. Studebaker and Mayer became regular yokefellows. They assisted each other at the town court of justice, and worked together at the shop. In fact, they were inseparable smithies.

When the Adams Express Company failed in California, Studebaker had 3,000 dollars on deposit in their local branch, all the money he had in the world. Joe Hinds, his partner, had 22,000 dollars there. The bank closed its doors at 2 p.m. Hinds was under the impression that the Adams people would try and remove their money out of the bank that night, for the failure elsewhere, was caused by lack of funds. The bank at Placerville was well supplied by deposits. The bank was situated right up against Hangtown Creek, and without a word Hinds hid in the brush

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23. "Studebaker Historic Site," Pony Express Courier, 13, June 1938.

and vines in back of the bank, just across the creek. There he watched and waited.

As he surmised, the express people crept out of their building about two o'clock in the morning, carrying bags of gold. He trailed them to old Joe Douglas's store and saw them place the bags of gold in his safe. Quickly he returned to his blacksmith shop-home, awakened Studebaker and explained what had happened. He said he was going to levy an attachment on Douglas's safe, and from what he saw he was confident there was sufficient to pay both their claims, and requested Studebaker to stand in on the attachment suit. Douglas, the old sinner, denied that the money was in his safe, but the attachment officer found the deposit and served the papers. As there was no defense, Hinds and Studebaker threw the money into a wheelbarrow and pushed it through the streets of Placerville to the shop.[24]

Studebaker and Bruce Herrick chopped down the historic "Hangman's Tree" in front of what was then known as Elstner's Hay & Feed Yard. The old oak tree from which the town was named Hangtown, had its last public hanging before 1850 when the Vigilantes dispensed rough and ready justice to such good purpose that the community remained a law abiding one, notwithstanding the frontier conditions and absence

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24. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 34.

of law enforcement agencies. The name of the town was changed to Placerville in the early fifties by an act of the legislature. It was the change of names that brought about the removal of the fateful tree, and on its site a home is now built (307 Main Street).[25]

Meanwhile, back in South Bend, the little firm of H & C Studebaker was laboring under financial difficulties, was confronted with judgements. Brothers Henry and Clem appealed to John M. to return to South Bend and join them in business.[26] Studebaker, after five years in Placerville, yielded to their suggestion and took passage on the sailing ship Golden Gate from San Francisco to New York, via the Isthmus of Panama in 1858. He carried with him eight to thousand dollars in gold, in a leather belt strapped around his body, and which he did not remove during the entire trip. Upon his arrival at South Bend he invested the money in the business, and bought the interest of his brother Henry who had decided to retire and become a farmer.

The new money rehabilitated the firm of H & C Studebaker with assets that assured the future prosperity of the business. They built wagons that became widely known

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25. The State Department of Natural Resources and the State Park Commission in Cooperation with the California State Chamber of Commerce. "Hangman's Tree," Report No. 9, June 1934.
26. Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 21.

and almost universally used throughout the United States by teamsters and farmers.

Through the influence of Schuyler Colfax, Whig editor and congressman, and later vice-president under General Grant, the Studebaker firm received a contract to furnish wagons for the northern army during the Civil War. This was the beginning of the accumulation that grew into a large fortune. When wagons began giving place to automobiles and trucks, the brothers turned their attention to making automobiles, and the deserved success of Studebaker cars is evidence that their automobiles were of the same excellent quality as their wagons.

John M. Studebaker married in 1860, and his son John Jr., became active in the business. Peter, the fourth brother of John M., was also an important factor in the management of the company. In 1867, the factory buildings covered four acres; 140 mechanics were employed, and a large inventory of material was consumed by a steady production of vehicles.

On January 1, 1868, the net tangible assests of H H & C Studebaker to $223,269. On March 26, the Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company was incorporated under the statutes of Indiana, with a capital of $75,000. Clem, John M. and Peter E. subscribed $25,000 each. In 1875, the company increased common stock dividends to $1,000,000 and in 1896 to

$3,600,000 and in 1906, $1,500,000 six percent preferred stock was issued for cash.[27]

In 1870 Jacob F. joined the company and Peter E. was sent to St. Joseph, Missouri, to establish a branch house to handle the trade of the great number of pioneers who were crossing the country in wagons. Branches were later established in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Kansas City, Portland, Dallas, Minneapolis, Chicago, New York, Denver and other large cities.

John M. Studebaker was in charge of manufacturing for forty-five years, during which time he built into these products his sturdy, honest character, and to this fact is largely due the world-wide confidence in Studebaker products. Upon the death of Clem in 1901, John succeeded to the presidency but continued "to devote himself to the manufacturing department with the intensity and determination of purpose that was his chief characteristic."[28]

Sons and sons-in-law of the Studebaker brothers were active in picking up the management of affairs. Col. George M. Studebaker, Clement Studebaker, Jr., J. M. Studebaker, Jr., and Frederick Studebaker Fish served apprenticeships in different departments and rose to important

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27. Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 27.
28. Ibid., 32.

official positions. Nelson J. Riley, from St. Joseph; Charles A. Carlisle from Toledo; H. D. Johnson from Monroe, Michigan; and William R. Innis from New York, sons-in-law, served the organization many years.

Being the world's largest producers of horse-drawn vehicles, it was inevitable with the advent of the automobile in the late 90's, that the company should become interested in this new type of conveyance. In 1899, it built bodies for electric runabouts, and in 1902 actually launched into the building of electric runabouts and trucks. Twenty were sold in that year, and 1,841 sold up to 1912, when it abandoned electric machines. Also in 1904, the company began building gasoline propelled automobiles, and during the next seven years built and sold 2,481 passenger cars and trucks with a total sales value of $9,169,563. In 1910 the company purchased the entire Everett-Metzger-Flander's Company, its business, plants, assets and trade name. Great automobile plants were constructed and acquired at Detroit, Chicago and Walkerville, Ontario, with a capacity including facilities at South Bend, for 100,000 automobile per annum.[29]

Mr. Erskine continues:

> During the forty-three years that Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company operated as a corporation,...

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29. Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 29,43, 49, 97.

> it manufactured and sold over one million horse-drawn vehicles of all kinds, and large quantities of harness, the total sales value of which amounted to $119,249,000....
>
> Industry, economy and patience characterized the Studebaker brothers, whose hearts, as well as heads, were in their business. Profits were always secondary to the conservation of reputation and good will, and hence we find that during the forty-three years in which they operated under the name of Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company, they and their stockholders withdrew only six million dollars of dividends from net profits of sixteen million dollars, and left the larger part of ten million dollars remaining in the business.

When John M. Studebaker left Placerville for South Bend in 1858, he promised his friends that he would some day return to pay them his respects for their friendship and the material assistance they had so generously given him. This had formed the nucleus of the industrial and personal wealth he later enjoyed.

Placerville celebrated that eventful day on April 16, 1912. The streets were gaily decorated. Garlands hung above the sidewalk were made of fragrant boughs from the pine trees of the hillsides and were enriched with golden California poppies. The pioneers and citizens were in happy mood to honor the return of John Mohler Studebaker, (Wheelbarrow John) President of the Studebaker Corporation. He

had traveled across the continent to pay his promised visit to the town where he had received his start in life. Surviving pioneers, in joyful expectancy, hastened from the surrounding ravines to meet and greet this friend of their young manhood in Placerville which in its pristine glory was known to fame as Hangtown. They were proud to renew the fraternal bonds which had joined them so closely in the frontier days.

More than fifty-nine years ago a gaunt youth had stepped down from an emigrant wagon and had taken his first look around at the country where he hoped to make a fortune. In his pocket was a lone fifty-cent-piece. Today a kind-faced elderly man stepped from the tonneau of a luxurious automobile and looked around at the country where he had laid the foundation for his fortune. It was John M. Studebaker "Wheelbarrow John" returning to take, perhaps, his last look at Placerville, the scene of his early struggle.

His automobile drew up in front of the Ohio House. He stepped out and greeted the group of old-timers gathered on the wooden porch.[30] He called each one by his first name:

> 'Hello, Newt, you around here yet?' ...
> 'And you, too, Charley Von Weidierwachs,

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30. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 20. (From an article printed in the El Dorado Republican and Nugget in honor of the occasion).

> where is that rip-snortin' Jayhawk, Blackhawk, Mohawk father of yours?'... shaking hands with a bent figure, beneath whose black hat hung locks of silver gray hair....
>
> 'Well, this town hasn't changed,' Studebaker paused to glance about him as he shook hands with men who were young and full of hope when he first came here.
>
> 'And where's Mike Mayer; one of the men who worked with me?' he asked.
>
> Studebaker was told. A few minutes later he was driven up to a white painted cottage and was shown inside...
>
> 'Is that you, Wheelbarrow John?' a tremulous voice asked,... as a thin and emaciated hand came out from beneath the coverlet and groped for a hand to press in greeting.
>
> 'Yes, it's I, Mike,' answered Studebaker as he looked into the sightless eyes and drawn face of Michael Mayer.

There was feeling in his voice as Studebaker told Mayer how sorry he was to find him in bed, instead of on the welcoming committee. They clasped hands - these two partners of the days of '49 - one worth millions and the other - well, not so rich. Studebaker spoke softly - what their conversation was, no one ever knew; Mike Mayer was smiling, his face reflected contentment as if some heavy burden was lifted from his heart. Studebaker's voice quavered with grief and sympathy for his friend, as he released the withered hand and said good-bye. Mr. Drury continues:

> Before Studebaker would sit down to the banquet in honor of his return to Hangtown he must see some of the old places he knew. He saw not many. Hangtown was swept by fire while he

was here in the early days; it was destroyed again many years after he left. But the old-timers who rode alongside him pointed out the place where he went to work for Joe Hinds to make wheelbarrows for $10 apiece.

Studebaker said: 'Yes, boys, I was here in the fire of 1856. You will remember that we had to abandon the old fire-engine in the street and we took to the hillside...'

The group laughed in response with the easy familiarity of their earlier days. Their laughter was sincere and genuine; a fellowship of absolute equality of the pioneer days and customs that never could be obliterated, filled their hearts. It was just as it had been in the early days, when one of them had made a lucky strike in the placers and had come to town for a celebration with "Set 'em up for the boys!" Studebaker renewed the old memories and the old time sentiment of friendship.

He visited the old blacksmith shop where, with the crude implements as the day and place afforded, he had worked at his trade.[31] He shook hands with the bronzed and bearded men bending over the anvils and benches, remarking that he was delighted to see the work going on as it did so many years ago, and marveled that there was so little change. The same old wagons, it almost seemed, were standing in front

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31. Studebaker's old anvil is on display at the Adolphs Blacksmith Shop, near the center of Placerville. Pony Express Courier, August 1939.

of the shop waiting to be mended; the same old tools, some of which, possibly, he had beaten into shape at this same forge, were in the racks above the batted old anvil.

"'Boys, I never did better work in my life than I did in this shop,' was his parting remark.'" A rusty hammer, which he recognized as one used by him years before, and which he had shaped out of a bar of steel for a special use, was given to him as a momento of his visit.[32]

A testimonial dinner was tended to John M. Studebaker by the old time citizens of Placerville at the Ohio Hotel to commemorate the times and days of old Hangtown. The banquet tables were decorated with bouquets of wild flowers, and the walls of the room were banked with yellow poppies against a solid background of fern. The menu card, on which was emblazoned two pictures, one of a man swinging from a limb of a tree, and the second showing a man dressed in overalls and boots trundling a wheelbarrow load of gold, was printed after the manner of pioneer typography. Many of the old citizens attended. Those seated at the dias were J. M. Studebaker, Charles H. Townsend, Stephen T. Gage, Alexander P. Murgotten, William Bell, D. W. Earl, Chester N. Weaver, Thomas B. Richards, J. M. S. Johnson, F. F. Barss, Charles H. Weatherwax, Ed Christian, R. K. Berry, J. R. Partridge,

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32. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 24.

Tom Stevens, G. H. Thompson, N. F. Spencer, Rev. E. E. Clark, A. J. Blakeley, James Patton, Max Mierson, Dave Simon, Dr. J. Q. Wrenn, Abe Darlington, A. Baring-Gould, S. S. Inch, Sr., M. P. Bennett, George W. Kimball, N. L. Kohn, E. W. Witmer, Frank Goyan, Frank Goyan, Jr., B. G. Parlow, Q. Hardy, James Hughes, A. Koletzke, Charles E. Merrell, J. C. O'Donnell, J. F. Limpinsel, N. Fox, Warren Crocker, S. G. Beach, H. K. Marks, Peter Watt, Dr. S. H. Rantz, C. P. Winchell, Adam Brooks, Sam Maginnis, Robert Blair, John Pearson, J. M. Anderson, J. R. Baird, W. S. Kirk, William Parker, George Hilbert, W. H. Ward, Robert B. Baird, and Wells Drury. Rev. E. E. Clark gave the invocation, and F. F. Barss was toastmaster.

John Studebaker received a heartfelt ovation. He thanked the citizens of Placerville for the freedom of their city, and for the homecoming celebration tendered to him. He reminisced in his speech, of early days and of experiences he had with his old friends of Hangtown. He recalled many who had passed beyond the great divide and paused with bated breath while a tribute was offered to the departed brothers. Mr. Studebaker refreshed the memories of his venerable guests by reading the lines of Joe Fisher,[33] composed when Bruce Herrick

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33. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 44.

was planning to fell the tree which had made Hangtown renowned:

Herrick, spare that tree!
Let not its branches fall;
Here let it always be
A warning to us all.

For it was in forty-nine,
When our good town yet was young
Three men for murder vile
Upon that tree were hung.

Yes, on this same old tree
These miscreants met their doom;
Keep it, for all to see--
As a grave-tree o'er their tomb.

This tree let always stand!
For 'tis of great renown;
Then, Herrick, stay thy hand;
Spare this relic of our town.

But the plaintive wail of Fisher's muse was unavailing, as the tree was chopped down, and Mr. Studebaker testified that he helped the axmen, and also carried brick and mortar used to construct the building which stands in good repair today, and for nearly sixty years has been thronged with the eager populace of that lively burgh.

Many old songs of '49 were sung. On behalf of the citizens and friends, Max Mierson, President of the Board of Trade, proposed the toast "Speed the Parting Guest," bespeaking the good will and kindly wishes of the community for the man whom they were proud to refer to as their former townsman.[34]

After singing "Auld Lang Syne" the final handclasps were given and the

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34. Drury, To Old Hangtown or Bust, 48.

company separated, many never to meet again.

The return trip from Placerville was begun as the sun was sinking. The rythmic throbbing of the automobiles fretted the echoes of the hills and canyons. At the foot of a sharp grade ... an owl spoke from the dismantled casement of a tumble-down stage station.

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting
The river sang below;
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
Their minaret of snow.

Studebaker was seventy-nine years of age when he visited Placerville in 1912, and he continued to be active in business at what was the peak of production in the history of the Studebaker company. Shortly after the outbreak of the World War in August 1914, the English Government, which had used Studebaker wagons in the Boer War, cabled an order for 3,000 transport wagons selected from a Studebaker catalogue. The order was filled in six weeks. This was followed by, perhaps, the largest single order of its kind ever placed: 20,000 sets of six-horse English artillery harness and 60,000 artillery saddles. The order was manufactured and shipped within sixteen weeks. France and Russia also ordered large quantities of wagons, harness and automobiles.

When the United States entered the war, the Studebaker Corporation placed its plants at the disposal of the

President, John M. Studebaker was commissioned a colonel in charge of manufacturing military supplies, of a character in line with the company's experience and equipment. After a life of incessant industry and hard application, this philosopher and friend of man, crowned with worldly success and held in high esteem, died at South Bend, March 1917, at the age of eighty-three. He was the last of the five Studebaker brothers.

In December 1917, the combined plants covered 4,704,118 square feet of floor space, and the annual production totaled 100,000 automobiles, 75,000 horse drawn vehicles and $10,000,000 worth of automobile and vehicle spare parts and harness.[35]

On August 27, 1939, Placerville paid homage to John Mohler Studebaker at its annual Home Coming Week Celebration and Studebaker Wheelbarrow Race. At high noon the Ancient and Honorable Order E. Clampus Vitus of Placerville, unveiled a beautiful bronze plaque, designed and executed by the renowned sculptor, William Gordon Huff. In the center of the plaque appears the venerable Studebaker. Around him, are shown different scenes depicting the eventful periods of his remarkable life. First is the pioneer entering

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35. Erskine, History of the Studebaker Corporation, 79.

Hangtown; next the old smithy at his forge surrounded with wheelbarrows; the third scene shows him back in South Bend building wagons, then carriages with solid rubber tires; and last there is a replica of the first automobile which is of ripe old vintage now. Beneath his likeness is inscribed the years of his birth and death, 1833-1917, and between these two dates is the inscription:[36]

Pioneer Blacksmith Soldier

Inventor Builder

Colonel John Mohler Studebaker

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36. Plaque dedicated August 27, 1939 by the James Marshall Chapter #49 E. Campo Vitus. Pony Express Courier, 2, September 1939.

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