

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
by George Schmidt
Mishicot, Wisc.

Gadgets Galore (continued)

AFTERMARKET accessory items, not factory-authorized but offered instead by various outside suppliers, have always been part of the automotive scene (as they still are today, particularly if one includes audio or stereo equipment). Some items were specially designed to fit a given model (most often the early Ford); others were intended as a more or less "universal" fit for most vehicles of their time. Many accessories, of course, were sold as gift items for Christmas or other occasions, rather than to the car owner directly. Selection ranged — as it still does — from the handsome and useful to the outrageous, with all sorts of in-betweens. A few examples are listed below.

H-E-T Librarian Charles Liskow has been helpful in supplying information, and sometimes illustrations, for this and several past columns. The Library at present has fairly complete listings of Hudson factory accessories for 1927 and up. A full list of aftermarket or non-factory items offered in any past year would be more difficult to compile, although old editions of a catalogue such as J.C. Whitney's (Chicago) usually show an astonishing assortment.

"NECKER'S KNOBS" for steering wheels were not a Hudson factory item, but were an occasional and typical add-on for cars of the 1930's and '40's. Some drivers found that the knob, if it could be solidly mounted without injury to the steering wheel, offered a slight added leverage or convenience for parking, turning, or other maneuvers in the days before power steering. Knobs were available in a few novelty designs and in colors and styles to harmonize with most steering wheels, or could also be painted to match. This is still an acceptable item for a collector car, though it may be considered illegal at present in some areas.

KLEENEX, anyone? Probably there have been more special dispensers built to fit Kimberly-Clark's familiar pop-up box of tissues than for any other brand. One made for cars of the stepdown era, by Auto-Serv, was available with a "Hudson" or Brand X car name on the chromed faceplate, and was of the pull-down (not swing-out) type. It was often mounted at lower edge of dashboard, though it was sometimes a knee-bumper in that position. It could also be attached directly underneath the cardboard glovebox, but this placed it a bit too far out of sight and reach on some

models. An alternative is to mount dispenser under glovebox using four wood or plastic spacers about 1½ inches high (sewing-thread spools will do), along with #10 bolts and nuts, plus wide flat washers inside glovebox. This works very well on 1948-50 Hudsons.

Glovebox itself should also be firmly mounted. For extra support, a tie wire or cord can be run from rear top edge seam of box (note pre-punched hole on some) to a point above this on firewall.

Tissues in car are often a convenience, for purposes from eating ice cream to checking the engine oil. Dispenser accepts standard box 2" high, generally holding 150 tissues. If retaining prongs do not hold box firmly in place, several pieces of black plastic tape may be used at top rear edge of box.



WHAT DOES one use to attach the license plates on a favorite collector vehicle? Ordinary stovebolts and nuts, generally unplated and with an appropriate coat of rust, are completely authentic, as they were the fasteners most commonly used for this purpose in the old days, but from a concours d'elegance standpoint (not to mention removal problems), they may leave something to be desired. Among the most practical license fasteners are the small nuts and bolts molded of nylon plastic. These are rustproof, self-locking, and not conspicuous, but (so far as I can learn) they date only from the late 1950's or so. Plated screws and nuts in the same size (usually ¼", coarse thread), with washers and lockwashers as needed, are of course acceptable on nearly any model, and they should be installed with a touch of heavy grease on each.

One alternative for license mounting on cars and bikes from approximately 1930-1955 is to use the small decorative reflector buttons of about ¾-inch size which have been available for many years in a variety of colors, usually with wingnut, washer or spring, and choice of a ½" or ¾" long stud. They were commonly used (4 per plate) without accessory license plate frames, and also with

nearly any style of frames having either 2 or 4 exposed holes. If plate surface is not especially reflective, the buttons also have a slight added safety value.

Although these reflector buttons for years have been made of plastic, some of the earlier ones (mostly prewar) were of attractive colored glass. If a matched set of glass ones can be found (in red, or a color to harmonize with car's paint job and plates), this makes an especially handsome and authentic add-on detail for a car of the period.

ACCESSORY FRAMES for license plates have long been available, and were listed as a Hudson factory accessory from 1940 on up; and evidently earlier as well (see illustration for 1936 in May/June '80 *WTN*, p. 28). During the '40's these frames were necessarily offered in at least ten sizes plus one adjustable style. In the mid-1950's matters were simplified when most states finally agreed on the single standard license plate size of 6 x 12 inches which remains in use at present. Frames of modern angular or deep-drawn design can be used, but usually do not look as well on most Hudsons as the ones of a simpler, slightly rounded traditional design which are still available from several sources.

BUMPERS AREN'T an accessory item, but in the early years, and as late as 1927 (the first year for which the H-E-T Club Library has complete accessory information) they were definitely classified as such. We have been unable to find the exact year when accessory bumpers (probably aftermarket) were first offered to fit Hudson cars. Perhaps a reader can help us with this bit of information, or has a pre-World War I Hudson thus equipped. It is possible that most of the earliest examples were locally or blacksmith-made to fit a given vehicle.

Among the best-known accessory bumpers for cars of the 1920's, found on many makes, were those by Weed (American Chain Co., makers of Weed tire chains). Weed's most familiar style for years was probably the one with a double bar at center, tapering down to a single bar at each end (see *WTN* cover, July/August 1979 issue). This bumper combined liberal amounts of spring action and brute strength, and on a light car would undoubtedly still pass today's notorious "5-MPH" bumper crash standard.

Another bumper available for Hudson and other cars, and pictured in the 1927 Gomery-Schwartz accessory catalogue, was by Taylor, and was made in the then-fashionable tubular-bar style. As

with Weed, the Taylor bumpers were available for both front and rear, but were sometimes installed at front of car only.

Also seen in magazine ads of the time was the McKay "Red Bead" bumper, available for most cars. It was shock-resisting and would "add good looks and protect good looks," according to the ads.

The inclusion at last of bumpers as standard equipment and as part of a car's basic design, circa 1930, did not eliminate this part of the car as a place for options and add-ons. Bumpers for the more elaborate models during the 1930's often included vertical tabs or guards which could also be fitted to the plainer models as a dress-up extra. These pieces were mainly decorative, but also had some added protective value, especially as bumper heights at the time were generally well-proportioned to the car, but not perfectly uniform. In addition, by the end of the '30's there were various accessory grille guards, and sometimes rear-deck guards as well, available to fit the bumpers on Hudson and most other makes. Although made by outside suppliers, these guards were commonly listed as a factory-authorized item.

Most of these guards were for center mounting, but for the 1940 Hudson and a few other makes, there was also a pair of guards, made of tubular stock, chrome plated, for each end of the bumper. For 1941-47 Hudsons and some other cars of the World War II era, there were optional bumper end extensions which gave a somewhat more modern "wrap-around" effect.

The upper center crossbar on 1948-49 Hudson front bumpers (and the two center upright guards slotted to hold it) was listed as standard equipment for Commodores only, but it was in fact supplied on nearly all Supers as well. In the sports-car world this piece would be called a "Badgebar," and it could be used for display of any club or organization badges or insignia available with a clamp-on type mounting.

Of the add-on center-mount bumper guard kits, Van Auken was one of the better-known brands, and was the one specified for Hudson stepdowns of the '40's and '50's. Although these front guards were large, fitting over the stock factory guards, they blended in quite well and did offer added protection, even underneath car where a steel strap extended from the bottom of each one to the No. 2 frame crossmember. (See *WTN* cover, April 1977 issue, for il-

lustration of this type guard, along with Karvisor, side ventshades, and other extras on a '48-9 Commodore). There was also a Van Auken rear guard kit available, which harmonized with the front one, but was not as popular, perhaps because it could be an inconvenience when lifting heavy objects in and out of trunk.

AN "AIR-SPEED" indicator was available in the early '50's as a plastic novelty, usually bright chartreuse or neon pink in color, which mounted just behind or in place of the car's hood ornament. It featured a small speedometer dial and pointer visible from driver's seat, operated by air entering a passage at front of unit, and was said to be fairly accurate. Reading might be lower or higher than that of speedometer in car, depending upon the presence of a head or tail wind.

WE'VE ALSO been researching some of the other options and gadgets used on Hudson-built vehicles over the years, and are planning to bring you another report in a future issue.

Next time: more tech tips from the '81 National Meet.

BEST WISHES to everyone in H-E-T for a Merry Christmas and a happy (and Hudsonly) 1982. See you next year.