

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
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Spotlighted

SPOTLIGHTS WERE used on some Hudsons and other early cars for years before other accessory lamps, such as fog, backup, turn-signal, stop, or courtesy lights, came into use. The spotlight—a lamp focused to give an intense, practically non-divergent “pencil” beam, and fitted so that it could be aimed manually from the driver’s seat—was often quite large in its early versions, some of which resembled theatrical models, and included a floor-type stand for mounting on running board.

Accessory spotlights of more compact design soon became available, usually with a swivel mounting which clamped to windshield post at side. Best-remembered of the early spotlights, however, (c. 1920) is probably the through-the-windshield type marketed by Floyd Clymer (later well known as an automotive publisher). The Clymer spotlight was convenient and quite attractive, with ball-and-socket mounting, and a pistol-grip handle inside the car. It was used on Hudson and most other makes, but was a financial failure due to too-frequent breakage of windshield when glass was being drilled for installation of the light.

Despite this problem, a few through-the-windshield spotlights of other brands were also offered, notably the Circlite Junior, which was shown as late as 1927 in the Gomery-Schwartz catalogue of special equipment for Hudson and Essex cars. Price was \$9.50, and a tool to cut the required circular hole in glass was available for \$2.25.

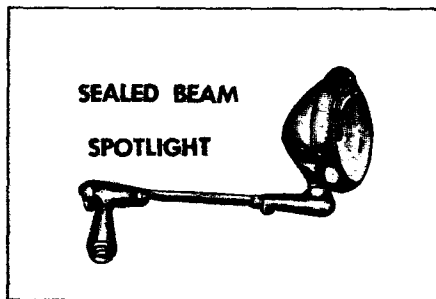
Spotlights for front pillar or door mounting, equipped with the conventional tubular shaft and bevel gears for control from inside car, made their appearance in the late 1920’s (perhaps a *WTN* reader will be able to tell us the exact year). The earliest example shown in literature at the H-E-T Club Library seems to be the one in a Hudson factory accessory catalogue, c. 1929. This is the “Sport-Lite,” a special Hudson model, with 5½-inch head shaped to conform to the outlines of the regular head and saddle lamps. It could be ordered to fit either closed or convertible body styles, and a deluxe version, with 6½-inch head, was available as well. However, there is also a catalogue from about the same year by the “Hudson Motor Car Co. of New York, Inc.” (evidently the Hudson

distributor for that area), which offers a “special Essex model” spotlight, with 5-inch head of about the same design, but with a different inside control handle, and a dash-mounted switch. Price for this Essex version was \$15, including installation.

Hudson factory literature does not list the manufacturer’s name for the Sport-Lite or most other accessory lamps. However, the Unity Mfg. Co., Chicago (maker of postwar Hudson spot, fog, and backup lights) offered “Sport-Lite” spotlights during the 1930’s, so may also be the manufacturer in this instance. Spotlights by Guide (GM) were likewise available to fit Hudson products for a number of years; and foglights by Corcoran-Brown (and later, backup lights by Auto Lamp) are also seen occasionally on these vehicles. *WTN* would appreciate hearing from readers who can tell us just which brands of auxiliary lamps were factory-authorized by Hudson in various years before World War II, and also which were some of the more popular aftermarket brands.

Spotlights of the type with shaft and gears apparently were offered to fit nearly all Hudsons 1930 through 1957, usually but not always as a factory item. Materials in the club Library indicate that spot and fog lights were factory items from 1937 on up except for a few war years. On the other hand, a 1936 listing of Hudson factory accessories sent to this writer last year by John Vanlier, Illinois, contains many interesting items (including the tail lamp for right side, which was still an option for some models of that year), but no fog or spotlights.

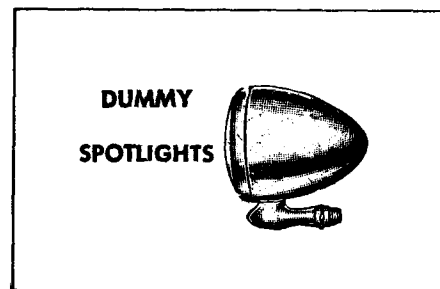
MOST SPOTLIGHT installations have been single (on driver’s side only), and although these lights have usually been available in versions to fit either side of car, it seems this has been mainly to allow fitting of both left and right-hand-drive vehicles. However, spotlights in pairs were featured on some Hudsons as early as 1916, according to the American Motors Family Album, and a matched pair of spots can still be an attractive addition to many models (especially convertibles).



Main difficulty when installing a shaft-type spotlight is usually in drilling the hole (½-inch diameter on most models) in windshield pillar or front door. Special care should also be taken when locating and drilling hole so that pillar will be as little

weakened as possible, and so that there will be no danger of chipping edge of windshield glass (though the surrounding rubber may need to be notched slightly). Convertibles have reinforced pillars and are a bit more difficult to drill. A large round file can be used to correct any rough metal edges inside hole. For a door-mounted light, be sure that the hole will not interfere with window lift or windwing mechanism. With either door or pillar mounting, the shaft of spotlight should be as nearly level or horizontal as possible. Best procedure is to find correct position for the external spotlight bracket, and then to mount this part firmly in place so that it can serve as a guide for drilling the hole.

This bracket on a Unity or other spotlight is necessarily a special piece shaped to fit each individual car make and bodysell design, and usually the right or the left side of the car as well. Pieces for roof mounting and for use on boats are also available. On a Unity light this part is made of cast bronze, chrome plated, with a number, such as 28L or 45R, molded on back. Those without an added letter, such as 27, are symmetrical, for use on either side of car. Although your columnist does not have a listing of bracket numbers and car applications, it appears that the #28L (and #28R) should normally be used for pillar mounting on Hudson stepdowns ‘48 and up, and that the #27 fits some earlier Hudson models. More detailed information may be available from the H-E-T Club Store.



A recent mail-order accessory catalogue still offers dummy teardrop spotlights (!), 1950’s-style, to fit most cars. Also, Unity for a time had a dummy model available, for use on passenger side of car. It matched the working spotlight on driver side, and used some of the same parts, including a spare bulb.

REAR-VIEW MIRRORS (round, 3¾-inch diameter) were provided by Unity in two styles for use with these spotlights: one mounting in hole at rear tip of lamp shell, and the other with a short lateral arm attaching to side of shell. Although these were apparently the only type of remote-control outside mirrors then available, they were not usually included on Hudson spotlights, since on most of these cars the light mounted in a position which was not best for mirror visibility. This writer has found, however, that on ‘48-51 stepdowns, if a

#12L bracket is used in place of #28L (file base of bracket slightly to fit if necessary), the spotlight will be placed somewhat farther to the side, and the side-arm type mirror can then be used with it quite effectively, although care must be taken not to catch and break mirror when closing the car door. For 1954, a Hudson "Custom Tailored Accessories" folder shows a spotlight model which is factory-equipped with mirror.

Unity spotlights have featured a high degree of parts interchangeability for many years, so that it is often possible to assemble a good working unit from pieces of several old ones, Brand X and Hudson. This is fortunate since the manufacturer reportedly does not take kindly to small repair-parts orders. Other maintenance suggestions:

Bevel gears, inner and outer, will last longer if they are lubricated occasionally perhaps every year or two; and if they are not subjected to excessive force (if mechanism sticks, take apart and find the trouble before gears are broken). Original lubricant was a non-runny white grease similar to Lith-Ease or Lubriplate, and this can again be used if desired, but a few drops of heavy gear oil (or motor oil thickened with STP or a similar product) also work well. Be sure electric contact surfaces at switch and at both ends of shaft are clean and smooth. If felt friction collar at base of lamp shell seems loose even when adjusting screw is tightened, give collar about ¼ turn (and oil lightly).

Friction should be fairly uniform as lamp head is turned in a full circle (especially important on models with mirror). If it is not, try removing spotlight head by loosening one ⅝-inch nut inside shell, and without disturbing gears, turning head 180 deg., and then tightening nut and reassembling light. This will also help equalize wear on the bevel gear at base of light.

The glass in an outside rear-view mirror, whether spotlight-mounted or one of the more usual Hudson accessory types, if it is broken or has damaged silvering, can easily be replaced at many glass and mirror shops, especially if it is of plain circular shape. Replacements are generally made out of scraps or remnants of high-quality mirror glass too small for use in truck or trailer-type mirrors, and are shaped using a compass-like tool which has a suction cup on one leg and a standard glass-cutter on the other. Cut edge of glass is then buffed smooth on an abrasive belt, and the finished circle could be of a size which will just slip into the metal shell (without altering edge of shell).

Cost is usually moderate, and the mirror can be reassembled at home. Check and oil ball-and-socket swivel on mirror. If loose, it can commonly be tightened from inside shell (if screw will not hold proper adjustment, try a slightly longer one). Be sure backing pad is in position (cement lightly to shell), and of correct thickness. Finally, cement the new glass in place (at edge only, making a watertight seal). There are several adhesives which can be used

here without injury to mirror silvering. This writer has had good results with gray rubber automotive trim cement. Allow cement to dry for a day or two; then remove smears and excess with a solvent such as lacquer thinner. A few mirrors may have glass held in place by a locking ring or other retainer, and thus not require cement.

SHAFT LENGTHS on Unity spotlights vary widely for various applications. Those for pillar mounting on most Hudsons are quite short. The shaft, if too long, is somewhat bothersome to shorten, since it is made of three concentric tubes with an insulated wire at center, and the differences in length between inner, intermediate, and outer tubes must be retained exactly; but this can be done if necessary (or one or two replacement tubes can be shortened to match the originals). To remove wire from innermost shaft, carefully unsolder the special terminal at geared end. At opposite end, note the enlarged bore and the slot which must be duplicated after shortening. On intermediate tube, note right and left flat spots near inner end: a matching new one must be filed after cutting tube, although if desired, this spot can be relocated slightly to place the inside handle at perhaps about a 90-deg. angle to the external lamp head, rather than the stock 150 deg. or so. On some models this will help eliminate interference between handle and glovebox door.

Exposed wiring for Unity spotlights during the Hudson years had insulation of silver-lacquered braid (not plastic). Feed wire for a single 6-volt spotlight (as for a head or fog light) should preferably be #14 gauge. Best method of connection is with an in-line fuse, about 10-ampere size, wired independently of the circuit-breakers for other lights on car; but if spotlight has no fuse, it will need to be wired through one of the circuit-breakers.

The ivory plastic interior handle used in these lights for many years matches perfectly with the interior trim on Hudsons for 1948-49 and some other years; but handles in colors to harmonize with the trim in certain other models (turquoise, maroon, etc.) seem to be more difficult to find. On models with painted steering wheel, the handle can be painted to match wheel.

A diagonally-cut rubber grommet is used as a seal inside car where spotlight shaft enters. If necessary, it can be ground slightly to fit surface better; or a replacement can be cut from hose (½-inch I.D.). The use of a thin gasket (or perhaps a bit of non-hardening body putty) under external spotlight bracket appears to be optional on most models.

Many Unity lamp shells after World War II were built to accept either the traditional bulb, lens, and reflector, or a sealed-beam unit. On this type, the front ring clamps onto shell, using a small bolt concealed under ornament at top. Later models (of identical shape) were for use with sealed-beams only, and had front ring held on with a single exposed screw just below lens. Preferred sealed-beam bulb

(6-volt, 5-inch) is the original #4515, with metal cap over filament, although the "hand spotlight" #4516 (without cap) also will fit. Bulb used in the older 6-inch Unity spotlights (with reflector, and an added metal cap over bulb) was the prefocus-base #1209. Purpose of the metal cap is to suppress direct, uncontrolled light from the filament, so that the spotlight beam will include only controlled (reflected) light. It may be noted that although 5-inch fog and spot lamps are the size ordinarily used on stepdown-era Hudsons, the 6-inch sealed-beam spotlight (bulb #4535) was an option as late as 1951, according to the owner's manual.

Both sizes of spotlights were of the conventional "teardrop" shape, with an ornament at top which matched those for foglights, and was available with a "Hudson" or Brand X car name tag (also with a "Unity" tag, or plain, without tag). Post-Hudson Unity spotlights were mechanically similar, but with re-styled heads (often with mirror), 12-volt bulbs, and no top ornament. The 12-volt 5-inch sealed-beam bulb for 1955-57 Hudsons is #4403, as listed by Tung-Sol.

EXTERNALLY ADJUSTABLE spotlights (without inside control, but sometimes with a handle on the lamp shell) of course included all of the earliest types, and there were some later versions as well, often available as an alternative to the inside-control type. The late-1920's Hudson Motor Car Co. (N.Y.) catalogue, for example, shows a combination accessory spotlight and rear-view mirror, chrome plated, which "can be attached to enclosed cars without drilling or defacing the car." This writer also recalls some aftermarket examples, c. late 1950's, with chrome finish and an external handle, shown in J.C. Whitney catalogues of the period.

Spotlights (single or paired) on a collector car are mainly decorative, and they can be a very handsome dress-up item on most cars, if the emergency-vehicle look can be avoided, and if they are correct for the car's model and year (and especially if combined with matching fog and/or backup lights). However, they can also be useful, since the light can be pointed in any direction needed, and offers a longer range of visibility than any other automotive lighting except some high-powered modern driving lamps. Today the spotlight's original use, as a long-range driving lamp, is tolerable only on deserted roads, or off-road; but the beam is still helpful in finding house numbers, road signs, and other landmarks in poorly lighted areas; and in a very heavy fog or storm can be used (if aimed at a downward angle, to keep it out of other drivers' eyes) as an emergency supplement to head and fog lamps.

TIME TO THINK OF the holidays, and to wish every H-E-T member and friend a cheery Christmas and a good 1983. Happy Hudsoning!