

# Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany  
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## Handy Extra Lights

COURTESY LIGHTS for car interiors, with switch door-operated as on some home closet doors of the time, were found on a number of early custom coachbuilt models; but the first ones on production cars, it is reported, were on some early-1930's Buicks. Hudson, according to available wiring diagrams, first introduced this feature on some models for 1937. As on most cars, the courtesy-light wiring simply included an added door switch wired in parallel with the manual dome-light switch. Hudson continued the feature in following years, but except for '37, it was normally not an option or add-on, but was supplied as standard equipment on certain models only, generally top-of-the-line. Manual control switch remained on side pillar. In addition, models for 1936-39 (and perhaps earlier) had a front "flood light" or "service light," and models '39 and up had a front dome light, with separate switch.

Hudson wiring diagrams 1942 and up, however, also show a separate courtesy lamp which is wired to the door switches, independent of the front and rear dome lamps. Models 1948 and up, of course (Commodore and Hornet only) had courtesy lights placed in door frame to illuminate the new "Step-Down" sills for easier entry and exit at night, plus twin rear dome lights with their own manual switch. The front dome light, with built-in switch, was standard on all stepdown models.

If front domelight switch on these cars does not make proper contact, remove lamp assembly (bezel and glass are a snap-in fit; the rest is held by four small screws), and tighten prongs holding the insulated back of switch. Give switch a few drops of light oil or a touch of white grease so that it will work freely; then re-install lamp. If switch must be taken apart to clean contacts, do not lose the bronze slider or small coil spring. The rear dome-light switch (on side pillar) can be given about the same treatment if necessary.

Stepdown models (1948-54) without

rear dome lights can have them added quite easily, since a pair of metal "ears" to hold the lights is provided on these cars, and can be readily felt through the headliner cloth on either side of rear window. Lights mount in place with three small screws (bezel and glass are snap-in fit). Avoid cutting or tearing a hole any larger than necessary in headliner. On the passenger-side center or "B" pillar, check the back of interior trimboard: there is usually a pre-stamped hole where switch should go. Wiring can be run behind rear-quarter trimboards and underneath rear shelf.

A CONTROL for rear dome lights which is accessible from driver's side of the car is found on many vehicles, and is often a real convenience. The best way to provide this on most of these Hudsons is to install a matching extra switch on the driver-side center pillar. Often the pillar trimboard on this side of car, too, has a pre-punched hole for switch (or one can be cut.) The extra pair of wires can be run underneath front or rear seat, and connected in parallel with original switch on other side, using double-type Douglas (bullet-shaped) connectors.

Hudson's door-type courtesy lights and switches can also be added to stepdown Super, Pacemaker, et al., especially if one has these items from a parts car. Usually the only tedious part of the job is the accurate cutting of an oval hole about 1¼ x 2 inches, to fit the plastic courtesy lamp lens, in its proper position near base of B-pillar on each side. Hand files, and also a rotary file for use with electric drill, will help in shaping and finishing the hole. To support lamp socket and bulb in a vertical position just behind hole, it seems that the pillar on convertibles and 4-door sedans already has a mounting hole into which socket will fit.

On the other 2-doors, however, it is necessary to provide a bracket inside the pillar, like the welded ones on Commodore or Hornet coupes, to hold socket. If these two brackets are salvaged from a parts car, they can be installed with sheet-metal screws, but be sure screw heads are positioned to fit into the two small recesses in underside of plastic lens. For front door switch, drill 1-inch round hole in the A-pillar, about 1½ inches above lower door hinge.

The added dome and courtesy lights and switches will not look out of place on these cars provided they are original Hudson parts, correct for the car's

year, and fitted in the positions intended by factory. All of these lights should be wired through the 20-ampere circuit breaker under dash, or they will require a separate in-line fuse (about 14-amp. size); this is especially important when old original-type wire is being used.

ADDITIONAL COURTESY LIGHTS --for trunk, glove compartment, and under hood--were listed as approved accessories for these cars. During the postwar years (if not earlier), the John W. Hobbs Corp. of Springfield, Illinois made a variety of these lights for Hudson and a number of Brand X cars (including GM products).

A light for the trunk was listed by Hudson as early as 1943, and in most (though not all) of the following years as well. The 1935 parts list includes a "vestibule lamp," but we have not seen a picture or description of this item. An underhood light (the type with extension cord) was offered for 1936, according to Club Librarian Charles Liskow.

Trunk and underhood lights were made by Hobbs in several styles. Among the most popular styles on Hudson and other cars over the years were the two which are illustrated.

### Automatic TRUNK & HOOD LIGHTS



• Fits all cars with 12 volt system  
• Automatically lights when trunk or hood is opened  
• Turns off when trunk or hood closes. Light up entire hood or trunk compartment. Provide night-time safety, convenience—enable you to make under-hood repairs, load or unload trunk more easily. Operated by positive action mercury switch. Easily installed. With wire connections, instructions. Shpg. wt. 10 oz.

74-4050—Trunk Light .....Each \$3.50  
74-4051—Underhood Light .....Each 3.50

These two can probably still be ordered from the J.C. Whitney catalogue, although now at an inflated price and with 12-volt bulbs (which can easily be changed to 6-volt). An early version of the round trunk light had only a miniature socket, for #55 or #51 bulb, but the later type uses #63 or #81 (6-volt). The underhood light pictured uses any 6-volt size from #63 to #1129.

Both of these lights have mercury switches fitted into socket just below bulb base. If light is to operate in an inverted position, switch capsule can be inserted upside down. Several types of mercury switch capsules have been used in these lights, the glass type with metal ends being the most reliable. This writer has not found a source (other than an occasional Brand X at junkyard) for replacement switch capsules, though they are sometimes needed for these lights, and also (in the

same size) for some Hobbs glove-compartment lights.

Base of the round trunk light must be mounted on a surface which is at correct angle to operate mercury switch properly as lid is opened and closed. On most Hudson stepdowns, a spot near center of trunk lid underside (just under trunk ornament, if there is one) works well. The underhood-type light can be adjusted slightly to the proper angle by bending bracket.

Hobbs also offered one model which looked like the hood light shown, and could be used for hood or trunk, but required a separate external switch, usually pushbutton type, although a separate mercury switch, or a manual switch, could be used instead.

"TROUBLE LIGHTS" for cars, battery-operated and including extension cord, were made in several styles during the Hudson years, and can still be very useful in the event of tire, engine, or other problems when driving at night. One style mounted underhood where its pushbutton switch would be held down by hood when closed. It usually had a bulb and shade like those on hood light shown, but these were attached to a round metal cover that could be removed, revealing a spool inside lamp with several yards of wire, to be unrolled as needed. Light and cover could be hand-held, or set on any flat surface. Some models had a glass lens, clear or red-and-clear, instead of the metal shade over bulb; and some may require a bulb with a double-contact base (but single filament) such as the 6-volt #210, for this combined hood/trouble light.

The other style of trouble light, still a familiar accessory-store or homemade item, usually has a plug which fits into the car's cigarette-lighter socket. "Universal" plugs of this type are still available, and can be used with a wide variety of 6 and 12 volt accessories. An older-style plug, made slightly larger so that it will fit into a 6-volt lighter socket but not a 12-volt, may be preferable here, but is not essential. An alternative--and no doubt more time-honored--method of connection is simply with two spring clips, for use at battery.

Bulb and reflector on these trouble lights are usually small, often with hook and clip (this can also be added) to help hold them in place. Hudson's 1948-49 parts book lists an accessory "Magnalite" trouble light, which presumably would stick wherever it was placed on a steel surface.

For stronger illumination, hand-held spotlights have been available through most of the sealed-beam era, and perhaps earlier (we'd like to hear about any older separate-bulb versions, including age, brand, etc.). One advantage of the sealed-beam units is that they are interchangeable in a given size, between spot, fog, general-service, and other type lamps (and colors); and between 6, 12, and special voltages. Sometimes, also, a spare 7-inch sealed-beam headlamp, with accessory stand-up wire rack and connector cord, has been carried in the trunk for emergencies (even an old bulb with only one good filament will do for tire changes, etc.).

It is true that many motorists since the earliest decades have carried along simply a dry-cell lantern or flashlight. Though some prefer to store these out of sight, one very inexpensive accessory popular for years was the underdash clip for holding a standard flashlight. Some also prefer a magnetic-type flashlight (unless car has plastic dash panel). For a vintage vehicle, if an old flashlight or electric lantern can be found, in good condition and of about the same age as the car, this makes a quite legitimate and sometimes useful accessory (and one without dangling wires or connectors).

THE SMALL ADD-ON automatic light for glove box or locker box can be traced to the years just before World War II, and possibly earlier (we again hope a reader can help us with date, model, etc. of older examples). In those years when most car clocks were mounted on glovebox door, some cars combined the electric clock and the light (including mercury switch) as a single optional unit.

Hobbs offered glovebox lights in several variants, most of them with a convenient adjustable aluminum shade for the bulb. Early versions included an in-line mercury switch and bracket to be mounted inside glovebox door, and this was the type specified for any Hudson 1950 or earlier, two being required on models with twin compartments. Mercury switches were used on these cars since the dash panel did not include a pre-punched hole or other suitable space behind edge of compartment door where a pushbutton switch could be mounted.

This hole (5/16-inch size) is provided on Hudsons '51 and up, so that these cars should have a glovebox light with pushbutton switch (it is usually more reliable than the mercury type, and on

some cars the spring action of switch helps make door easier to open). The later style of glovebox light with switch button and light socket combined in one unit will also fit here. Light must be placed and adjusted so that it can not shine directly into driver's eyes. If the mercury switch on a pre-'51 car fails, a small aftermarket bracket with 5/16-inch hole can sometimes be found (or adapted) which will permit mounting of pushbutton switch at one corner of compartment; but this appears a bit less authentic.

TO PREVENT courtesy lights from wasting battery power when they are not wanted, accessory spring clips to swing over door-jamb pushbuttons have long been available. Trunk and underhood lights are sometimes wired to operate only when tail and dash lights are in use. This writer, however, has preferred to connect all courtesy lights (doors, trunk, hood, glovebox) through a manual cutoff switch placed at lower edge of dash. A spare dome-light switch from doorpost will fit perfectly in the holes pre-drilled under dash edge on most models (same as for the dash-light rheostat or dimmer). If there is space on dash, a rotary on/off switch with matching Hudson knob can also be used. A #14-gauge feed wire runs from the tail-light circuit breaker to manual cutoff switch. Dome lights (unless door-controlled) need not be wired through this switch.

The rheostat to dim or turn off dash lights when wanted was included on Hudson's top models from 1939 on up. This was a separate unit (not part of headlight switch), and it can still be added quite easily to any model which does not have one. On stepdown Super and Pacemaker, for example, pre-drilled mounting holes will be found at lower dash edge, and the dash wiring harness has a 2 or 3 wire Douglas-type connector which can be removed and the rheostat connected in its place. Check used rheostat before installing, making sure that it turns freely and makes good contact (center part may be lubricated lightly).

REAR WIRING harnesses on many later Brand X's include a few dummy wires for accessories which are not on the car, and these extra wires can be great time and trouble savers when accessories are added later. Since this apparently was not done during the stepdown era or earlier, your columnist has found it very practical, on an old car, to make up a single cable of extra

light; 4) backup lights; 5) rear speaker; 6) electric gas cap; 7) spare (or feed wire for courtesy or rear dome lights, if car does not have them). Speaker and gas wires for whatever rear-of-car accessories are being added, plus some which may be added in the future. On a Hudson stepdown this cable can readily be run through the driver-side rocker panel, though it should be double or triple-wrapped with plastic tape and/or cloth friction tape to protect it from abrasion and moisture. The wires included might be these: 1) & 2) right and left signal lights (if not included in headliner wiring); 3) trunk cap can use #18 wire; backup lights #14; the rest #16; and the wires should be chosen in different colors for identification. An extra #14 wire may also be included, 8) for rear lighter socket or perhaps rear defroster. A cable of this kind will greatly simplify installation of accessories, and will eliminate running of most wires under rug in car.

One problem when repairing the electric wiring, or adding more, on a collector car is that automotive wire with the original type braided insulation, in good usable condition, is becoming harder to find; and one prefers not to use anachronistic-looking modern plastic-coated wire where it will be visible under hood or dash, in trunk, etc. The add-on cable, for instance, may need to be made mostly of modern wire, with good braid-insulated pieces being reserved for the end portions only, where they can be seen. Finished job should be safe, and look about the same as accessory wiring that might perhaps have been done originally by dealer.

An article by Fred Palmer about wiring harness restoration was published in the February 1975 issue of WTN. It contains helpful suggestions for making needed electrical repairs without compromising original appearance of the wiring.

**SPOTLIGHTS** OF the conventional permanently-mounted type, discussed in a previous column (WTN, September/October 1982) can also provide emergency lighting, sometimes with the beam aimed to reflect off the ground or any nearby light surface. More information about these lights fitted to postwar Hudsons has been supplied to us by Randy Maas at the H-E-T Club Store. Mounting brackets used with Unity spotlights on 1955-57 models are #108L and #108R (same as for Nash). The 1953-54 Hudson Jets

use #21L and #21R. Stepdown Hudsons with door-mounted lights use brackets #31L and #31R (authentic for 1952-54, though these will also fit 1948-51 cars). The post-mounted spotlights specified for 1948-51 Hudsons (and also usable on any 1952-54 stepdowns which do not have wide chrome molding covering the windshield pillar) were supplied with brackets #28L and #28R.

Several of these brackets were also used on various Brand X's, but the number (which is cast underneath the base of each bracket) is helpful in finding a spotlight to fit a given Hudson. Unfortunately the Club Store at present has no listing of bracket numbers for the 1941-47 or earlier models. Can a reader help us with these, either for Unity or perhaps for another brand of light used at the time?

## The Way I Restored A 1949 Cracked And Discolored Steering Wheel

by Paul Loch

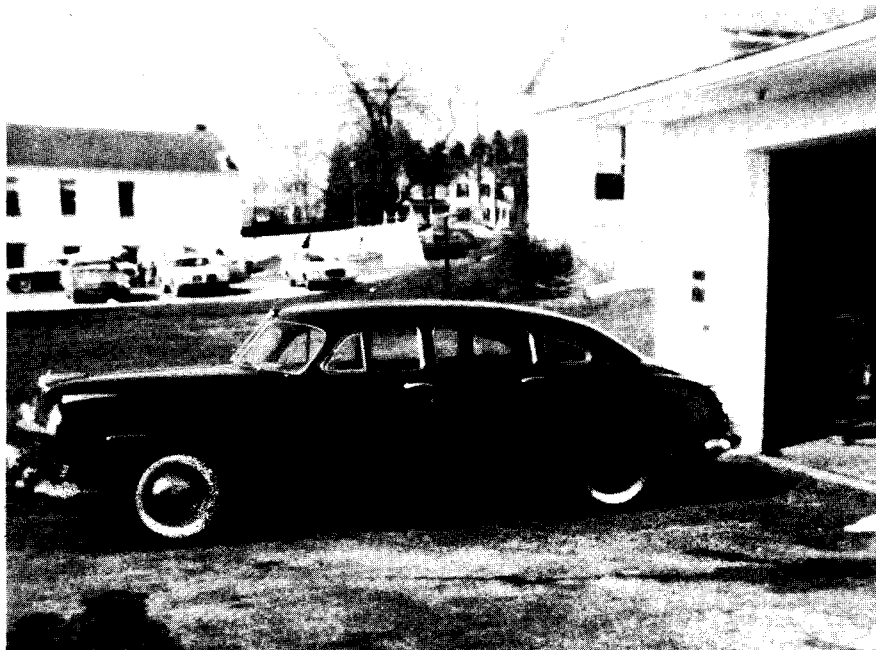
I don't know whether what I did was right but at least it has not cracked in a year under extreme temperatures.

The first thing that I did was to get lacquer paint mixed to the color of the center of the wheel. Next I made all of the cracks in the wheel bigger with a thin hack saw blade. Then I put the wheel in the freezer.

I mixed some lacquer glazing putty with thinner to make a thin paste. I put a two foot piece of 5/8" threaded rod thru the hub of the wheel and fastened it with two nuts. This I did to make it easier to turn and to hold. I next poured some thinner in a long dish and

turned the wheel thru it until the surface got soft and slimy. Wearing a rubber glove, I rubbed the lacquer paste together with the soft slime into the cracks as uniformly as I could.

Now the first phase of the restoration was finished and in need of curing so I let it cure in the freezer. After about a week, I started to sand it to the original shape and thickness with 300 and 600 grit wet. After a lot of time, patience and work, I was satisfied that it looked like a new wheel except that it was red, so I started spraying the paint onto it. After about twenty handwet sanded coats with 600 grit and rubbed with rubbing compound, it looked like a new wheel but it needed a protective clear coating. For this I used Tempo 9-19 clear lacquer. This develops into a very hard coating and the wheel was purposely exposed to extreme conditions while I was restoring the rest of the car and it is still in perfect condition.



1949 Hudson Sedan owned by Paul Loch, Schnecksville, Pa.