

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
by George Schmidt
Mishicot, Wisc.

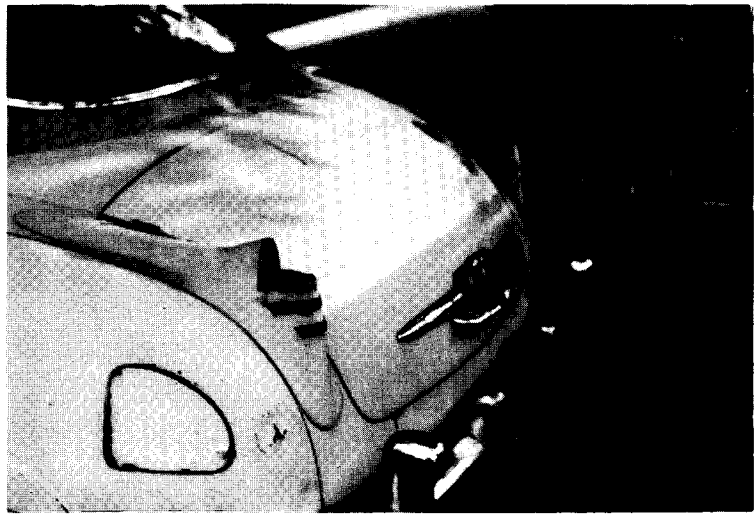
Gadgets and Accessories

AUTO ACCESSORIES and options are generally divided into two groups – those offered or authorized by the carmaker (whether factory or dealer-installed), and the many “aftermarket” items from other sources, usually bought and installed later. Though factory-authorized accessories are usually favored on a historic or collector vehicle, aftermarket items are often acceptable if they fit the era and design of the car, and were perhaps commonly used on similar models when new.

Sometimes an accessory item is harder to classify – as for example, if it were not a factory authorized part, yet it was prominently featured by dealers as an intended aid to new-car sales. We recall reading about one enterprising Volkswagen dealer several years ago who offered his “bugs” optionally equipped with everything from oversize cylinder barrels and pistons to fake radiator grilles. It is also reported that in the early 1920's, E.L. Cord became the country's top salesman of Moon cars by customizing each one slightly.

Was anything like this ever attempted with Hudsons? According to information presented in a letter from John O'Halloran, Chicago, it was. Most of us have heard of Jim Moran and his Courtesy Motors, the controversial but largest and enormously successful Hudson dealership in the Chicago area during the stepdown years. One of the “customizing” options available on Hudsons from this dealer in 1951 was a pair of tall fin-shaped attachments containing special taillights, in obvious imitation of a familiar GM-built vehicle of the time (see illustration). These were fitted in place of the original Hudson taillights (one wishes we had those spare originals today). Only about three '51 Hudsons equipped with fins are said to survive at present, and one problem (evident from the picture) is in finding replacement red lenses for them.

Although these fins were unusual as a dealer option, several similar styles to fit other U.S. cars were available on



the aftermarket for a time, under such names as “Finliner” or “Cad Fin.” Some required painting to match car; others were fully chromed. Two relatively inoffensive styles were the extended “Smoothee-Lite” to replace the round taillamps on Fords of the era, and a kit with lights which fitted into the stock unlighted fins on Kaiser's compact Henry J.

THE EARLY '50's WERE also an era of especially poor quality chrome plated trim on most new U.S. cars. Although this was less a problem with Hudson than with most Brand X's, the fault lay not with the manufacturers but with the government metal restrictions imposed in connection with the Korean “conflict.” Much of this trim required the use of a special clear baked-on enamel coating at the factory, and was quickly ruined if standard abrasive-type metal polishes were used on it. When the coating cracked or yellowed, it had to be removed using nonabrasive cleaner or solvents (perhaps with extra-fine steel wool if absolutely necessary), and then replaced with one of the wipe-on or spray “chrome protector” lacquers available from dealer or elsewhere. Because these lacquers needed to adhere to a polished surface without primer, most were relatively soft, but they were inconspicuous and usually served well for a year or more before a new coat was required.

Clear chrome protector spray (usually acrylic type) is still available today and is often useful on an older car, particularly for plating which is in borderline condition and will not stay bright unless coated. The safest material for polishing such chrome is usually extra-fine steel wool (#0000), used either dry or possibly with a mild metal polish or with kerosene. Finish by rubbing well with a soft dry rag; then

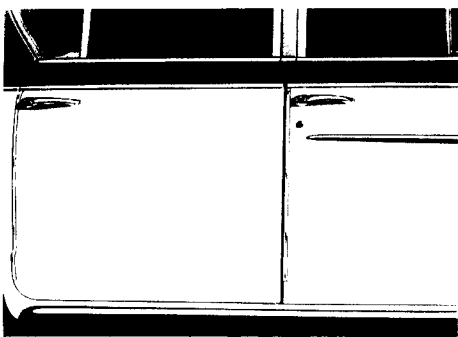
remove all dust and apply protective lacquer if desired.

A FURRY ANIMAL TAIL such as fox or raccoon, tied to the radio antenna or perhaps to the windshield post of an open car, was considered a very sporty decorative accessory by some car owners during the 1930's. While the aesthetics may be debatable, this is an item which possibly should be brought back for its sheer environmentalist-baiting value. It was at any rate no more distracting to the driver than the assorted objects often tied to the inside rear-view mirror during the 1950's, ranging from large fuzzy dice (recently revived) to baby shoes to phony shrunken human heads. Use of the traditional high-school or college graduation tassel here apparently began somewhat later.

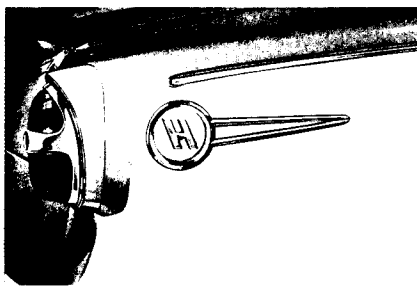
CHROME DOOR EDGE GUARD moldings were available to fit front and rear doors on Hudson and most other cars for years although they were not a Hudson-authorized item. They perhaps prevented an occasional paint nick or chip (especially in parking lots), but they were not a very harmonious dress-up accessory, since the bright vertical chrome line tended to clash with every other body and trim line on the car, seeming almost to cut the car visually in half. They were also nearly impossible to install and remove without further chipping paint. If extra protection for door edges is really necessary, it may be possible to find flexible plastic molding in a clear or harmonizing tint; and on Hudson stepdown bodies, usually only the vulnerable lower (sweep panel) portion of edge need be covered.

A small chromed guard for edges surrounding the fuel filler door in rear fender apparently was not a Hudson-authorized item either, but did blend in

somewhat better with body lines. These guards could help to prevent paint chipping caused by careless use of a filler nozzle or funnel, and they were available from aftermarket sources to fit Hudson and most other postwar cars which had door in fender. Guard was usually held in place by two screw-in rubber bumpers replacing the stock bumper buttons for door. One rather slender attractive style c. 1949 fitted all 1948-53 stepdown models (though the chrome was not always well applied, and this style often needs replating). There was also a later style, of somewhat heavier appearance, to fit these same cars; and a third style to fit the 1954 Hudson.



One precaution needed when refueling these cars (whether the added trim is used or not) is to avoid forcing the filler door too far open, since this can cause a visible kink in the outer surface. To avoid spitting and spillage, be sure that the small vent hose (which passes over car frame), and the drain hose for filler box, are in place and not obstructed or loose.



Another 1950's aftermarket item offered to fit Hudson and most other makes was a bright chrome or stainless shield which fitted behind each

door handle on car, presumably to prevent fingernail nicks in paint.

While add-ons of this kind are undoubtedly authentic for cars of the period, they may or may not add to the appearance of a collector vehicle. Sometimes a similar model thus equipped can be seen at meets for comparison; and sometimes it is well to place the piece of trim, accessory light, etc. loosely in position on car (hold temporarily with bits of wire, clear tape, soft putty, etc. if necessary), and then to stand back and view car from several angles, in daylight, at approximately across-the-street distance, to check on the overall effect, before deciding on a given item or combination. (Paint color is often a factor here, as is the stock trim already on car.)

SMALL DECORATIVE VISORS for the free-standing headlamps of the 1920's and '30's, often including a colored glass "jewel" ornament, were once a familiar dress-up item, and reproductions of this type visor are reportedly again available (they can also be used with in-fender lights if desired). The jewel is also designed to help indicate to driver whether lights have been left turned on. Another decorative accessory of the 1940's and '50's serving about the same purpose (and also as a parking guide) was a short plastic wand which was fastened at the outer side edge of headlight lens, so that it would glow when lights were on.

A somewhat more graceful style of headlight visor (without jewel) was available to fit 1954 Hudsons and some other models of the time. It fitted over the standard headlight trim rings and was shaped to match the front fender line, extending it forward.

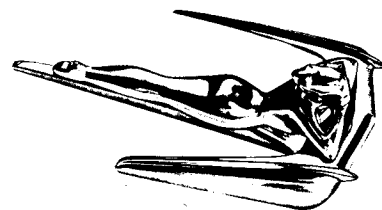
Unlike some other headlamp accessories which covered part of the lens, these visors and wands did not interfere with the normal headlight beams. One 1950's accessory metal cap which covered the top half of a standard 7" sealed-beam lens may have had some value in fog (if car did not have separate fog lights), but it reduced visibility at other times.

STOCK HUDSON HOOD ornaments over the years, including the gold-plate crested ones on some Hornets, were generally adequate, but of course many aftermarket add-on varieties were also offered in the past (and perhaps have staged a comeback recently, judging by catalog listings). Most of the add-on types mount simply

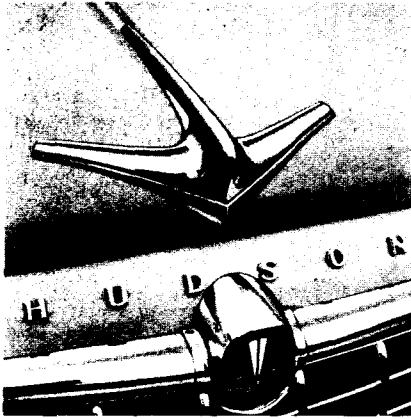
with two studs, but for best appearance need to have the car's stock hood ornament (one of the plainer styles without separate crest over it) retained as a base. Occasionally an add-on ornament can perhaps be found which blends well with the lines and era of a collector car (and helps add an illusion of a few extra inches to hood length). However, owners will not wish to drill a good original hood ornament for use as a mounting base, and it is better to use only a spare one (even if not quite perfect) from a parts car for this purpose. A few add-on ornaments contain an optional light, which will require a 6-volt bulb (usually #55).

A more conservative addition, for those few Hudsons which had the conventional White Triangle plastic emblem at front, but unlighted, is the small bulb and socket needed to illuminate the triangle at night, as found on other Hudson models. If there is a blank steel plate behind emblem, a 5/8" hole can be drilled in center of plate for standard small snap-in socket and #55 bulb; or a similar plate with hole, along with socket and wire, can be installed from a parts car. Connect to tail light circuit (a spare connector is provided on some underhood harnesses).

On older Hudson-built vehicles with exposed radiator cap and no temperature gauge on dash, the accepted cap ornament is the Boyce Moto-meter (it is also highly functional, and was standard equipment on many models.) These meters are again available in reproduction form, complete with car insignia; and repair service and some optional trim pieces (wings, wreath, etc.) may also be available. (See March/April WTN, p. 37.)



In the early '50's, George Petty (of "Petty Girl" fame) designed his celebrated "lady doing breast stroke" hood ornament as an option for the Farina-styled Nash models, and it is conceivable that this ornament (with its original base and wings) could also be fitted effectively to post - '54 Hudsons which use the Farina body style.



CAR COMPASSES, of the type with an indicator ball floating in liquid, and usually mounted on the center windshield post, were extremely popular in the years just before World War II, and were styled to harmonize with the car interiors of that era. Unfortunately this was shortly before better-quality wartime magnetic alloys, such as "Alnico," became available, and the magnets in these earlier compasses usually were not very reliable after a time, particularly for use in a steel-topped vehicle. However, the accessory was a typical one, and we are interested to know whether any reader can tell us of a practical method to remagnetize the working elements in one of these without altering external appearance of the unit.

Since the mid 1980's, compasses for cars and recreational vehicles have apparently regained some of their popularity, and several types (some of them lighted) are still available. One wonders whether a market niche might not also be found for a "collector" model, featuring original prewar appearance, but with modern magnetic parts.

A SERIES OF columns about auto accessories was begun a few years ago, in the July/August and November/December 1981 issues of WTN, and we are resuming the series this month. More about accessories in a future issue. (Also coming soon: Hudson carburetion notes.)

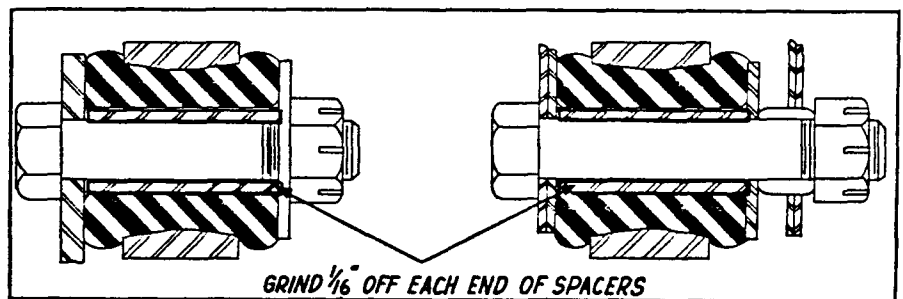
REAR SWAY BAR

NOISE

by C.M. Lang,
Mechanic with
Downtown Hudson
Detroit, Michigan
May 1952

"On the late Model Cars (1948 and later), I have experienced considerable noise in the rear of the car. When traced to its source, we found to be the rear stabilizer bar. No amount of tightening or shifting of position will remedy this noise.

"The thing I have found that will correct this condition is simple: First, remove the stabilizer bar. Inside the rubber bushing you will find a steel sleeve. Remove the sleeve from each end of stabilizer bar and grind approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ of one inch off each end.



"Reassemble with soap grease—or castor oil which is better if available, tighten thoroughly when reinstalling. I have removed the heavy body rattle at the rear in approximately ten Hudsons in the past two years in this manner, and never have had a comeback."