

# Hudsonotes

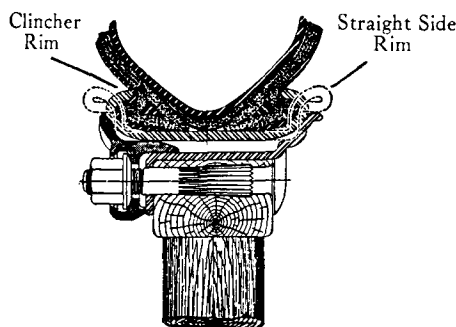
Column of Mechanical Miscellany  
by George Schmidt  
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## Accessories and Extras

HERE'S ANOTHER in the series of WTN columns about accessories, options, and extras available for Hudson-built cars over the years. Whether Benz's and Daimler's first automobiles, built in Germany a century ago this year, were offered with any choice of extras is not clear, but by 1909, when Hudson production began, optional equipment was a recognized part of the business.

Hudson's first model, the "Twenty," could for example be ordered with either gray or maroon paint, and either a single rear rumble seat or an oversize rear gasoline tank (25 gallons instead of 10), at no additional charge. Extra-cost options which added to the \$900 base price of the car included magneto instead of dry-cell ignition (\$80), the folding top (\$40), a second rumble seat at rear (\$25), and front tires of same size as rear, 32 x 3½-inch (instead of 32 x 3-inch), \$25.

The hickory-spoked wheels as standard equipment had plain clincher-type rims permanently attached (as on a bicycle wheel), but they could also be ordered with Marsh clincher rims which had one "quick-detachable" flange. This flange, held on by a locking ring and small bolted wedge, could be removed for eas-



## Kelsey No. 30 Rims

ier changing of tires. Price was \$50 extra (including 3½-inch tires all around). Or for \$60 extra, one could have the 3½-inch tires on Fisk rims which were entirely demountable from the wood wheels. These rims permitted not only quick changes, but also the carrying of a

fully-inflated spare tire and rim for emergency use (though no spare tire was listed among the Hudson options in that first year).

Various aftermarket items were available as well. Winter lap robes, foot-warmers, and the like were as useful for most cars of the 1909 era as for horse-drawn vehicles, and there also were accessory lamps, horns, and more---not to mention tire chains.

wood-spoke wheels, with demountable rims, as standard equipment; and owners were reminded that---as with large truck wheels today---the rim bolts and wedges needed to be tightened uniformly, each a bit at a time, for proper centering. However, the car could also be equipped with optional wire-spoke wheels from either Houk or Rudge-Whitworth. For these wire wheels, special inner hubs were mounted on car, and the entire

## HUDSON-ESSEX ACCESSORIES

### Luxurious Modernistic Motor Robe



IN the cut above is shown a beautiful robe of virgin mohair, designed to animate with its gay colorings and smart patterns the interior of the Hudson Landau, Town Sedan, and Club Sedan.

The deep, soft pile spells the acme of comfort and the lustrous sheen is a delight to the eye.

This robe adds a final, completing touch with enriching effects of luxury and good taste.

It is not possible here to list all of the Hudson factory options available year by year, but it appears that in general a larger-than-average selection was offered, including in many years an unusually wide choice of paint colors. Interestingly, during much of the 1920's on Hudson and some Brand X's, a two-tone paint job with colored body and black fenders was considered standard equipment, and any other fender color (to match rest of car, for instance) was an extra-cost option.

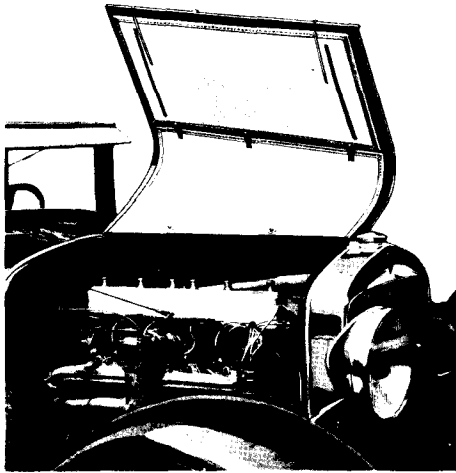
USUALLY A CHOICE of tires and wheels (or wheel trim) was available. Hudson's new Super Six in 1916, for example, featured the conventional

wheel could be removed from inner hub for tire changes. Wheel was held on hub by one large center nut, with left-hand thread for right side of car, and right-hand thread for left side, plus a spring-loaded lock.

Wood-spoke wheels continued in use through the 1920's, and in some years could be ordered with a natural rather than the standard painted finish for a few dollars extra. These were attractive (and still are, on a restored car), although the clear varnishes of the time required added maintenance.

The "Disteel" flat disc wheel (from Detroit Pressed Steel Co.) first appeared in 1917, and soon became available on

## Protectahood



Safeguards the Motor During Cold Weather Driving Protects Hood Finish in Hot Weather.

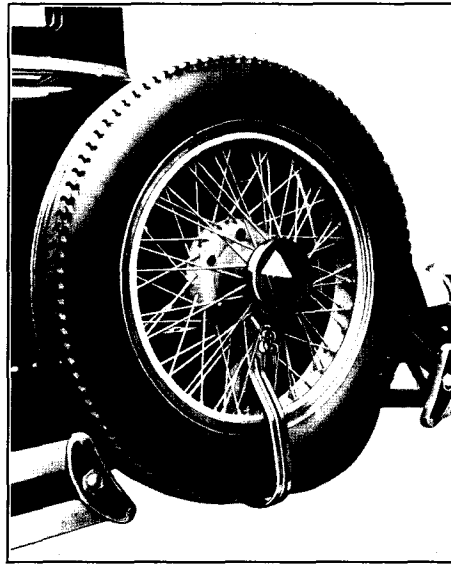
Hudson, Essex, and most other U.S. cars. It was probably the most fashionable optional wheel of the 1920's, and today has an unmistakable "period" appearance.

Wire-spoke wheels, on the other hand, retain their classic appearance despite problems of cost and practicality, and indeed are about the only type of wheels which would not look much out of place on nearly any model from 1886 through 1986. They were again offered as a Hudson option in the 1950's. Fake wire-wheel hubcaps (about which no more need be said) also became available at that time.

Except on a few sports cars, these later wire wheels were not of the "knock-off" type with separate inner hubs, but had the same 5-bolt mounting pattern at center as a standard wheel. They of course were also of modern "drop-center" design for tire changes, but even with tubeless-type tires usually required an inner tube (sometimes a truck-type rubber flap was also advisable), to avoid possible leakage at spokes.

A FEW AFTERMARKET steel-spoke wheels in the '20's or before looked almost identical to the standard wood ones, but were stronger (and heavier). Most early pressed-steel wheels in the 1930's (after the disc style) had a deep molded design and ring of holes to resemble spoked construction, and also featured the new drop-center type rims. They soon became standard equipment. Like earlier wheels, they often had painted-stripe trim.

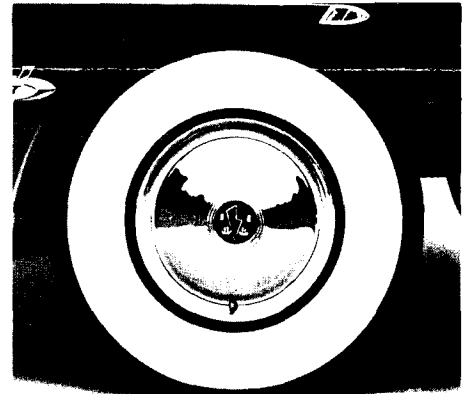
Later in the '30's, standard pressed wheels became plainer (similar to present types), although many retained a few stripe rings near the small center hubcap until just after World War II. These rings were the last stripework to grace stock U.S. cars until the 1960's revival of striping, and they dressed up the wheels sufficiently to avoid the "cheapy" effect that resulted in later years when small hubcaps were used on some models, without striping or other wheel trim.



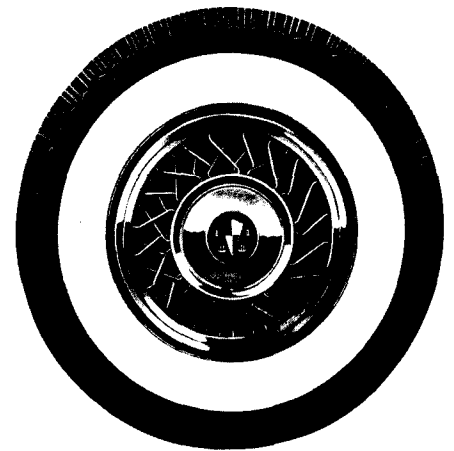
With larger hubcaps (sometimes optional), the stripes were not needed, but one dress-up option very effective with either size hubcap on late-'30's through early-'50's models was the chrome wheel trim ring or "beauty ring." Available in 15" and 16" sizes for Hudson and other cars, it was held in place by spring teeth, which could be bent in or out slightly for a good fit. This cap-and-ring combination is another feature which has been revived successfully on some cars of the 1960's and since, as an alternative to full wheel covers.

Full wheel covers were standard equipment on some 1954 Hudsons and optional on others. Also (as two H-E-T members have reminded this writer), the covers were available earlier, beginning in fall 1951, as a Hudson factory accessory for any model, '51 or '52 and up. These early wheel covers are attractive and not excessively heavy, but in some cases may require checking and tightening of the retaining teeth to ensure that cover will stay in place on wheel. Since a fairly snug fit is usually required, the cover should be installed using only a

rubber hammer or other soft-faced tool. If desired, a touch of heavy grease may be used on teeth (or on wheel) to reduce possibility of rusting or noise at that point.



Similar problems with standard hubcaps can usually be corrected by slight bending (and greasing) of the five spring clips on wheel. When a bent or damaged wheel must be scrapped, it is wise to salvage the clips, especially since some later replacement wheels may not have clips, but only the mounting holes for them. Clips may be installed either with original-type rivets or with short 1/4" bolts and nuts.



TIRES HAVE usually been offered with some optional choices on new cars from 1909 or earlier down to the present. Probably the most common option has been tires one size larger than the standard-equipment ones. Although Hudsons were not as under-tired in standard trim as some Brand X's, the larger tire size was generally a wise choice in terms of handling, mileage, and ride quality, and it was usually far cheaper if specified on the original order, rather than being installed later. White-sidewall tires were another option which gradually increased in popularity (in the U.S.) over the years.

It appears that the white-sidewall tire was originally invented mostly for practical reasons. Early tires were usually of white or light-colored rubber (containing zinc oxide); and when black rubber compounds (containing carbon) came into use, some manufacturers found that the black rubber was best for treads because of its resistance to wear, while the white rubber was preferred for sidewalls because of good flexibility and resistance to cracking. The resulting tires, of course, had a wide whitewall on each side, along with black tread. Though more costly to produce, they were handsome, and so continued to be made even after all-black rubber compounds were developed which were suitable for sidewalls as well as treads.

Whitewall tires nearly disappeared in the late 1920's, but were reintroduced in the 1930's as a dress-up option. One practical advantage remains: the white rubber (now containing titanium dioxide), because of its reflective ability, has better resistance to damage from the sun's rays than black rubber of equal quality. Light, ultraviolet, and infrared rays are simply bounced off the surface rather than being absorbed into the rubber.

NEARLY ALL whitewall tires since World War II have been made with one sidewall left black (which does not show under envelope fenders). In the early 1950's, one maker (U.S. Rubber, now "Uniroyal") also offered pastel colorwalls in pink, green, and blue to harmonize with a car's paint job, in addition to the classic white. In the late '50's however, fashion dictated a narrowing of the white ring, which in the '60's finally became narrow enough to show a black band at tire bead, next to the rim. This narrow-whitewall design (some attractive narrow two and three-ring whitewalls were also made) harmonizes well with most automotive styling of the 1960's to the present, and it is also easier to keep clean than a full-width whitewall.

On pre-1960 cars, however, the narrow white trim line, besides being an anachronism, tends to clash with body design; and indeed with the rather convex styling of the Hudson stepdown era, tends to suggest nothing so much as an overweight person standing on spike heels.

Plain blackwall tires, though prosaic, are perfectly authentic for any model

from the 'teens to the present. On 1948-60 cars, the narrow whitewall can be faced inward if necessary. One after-market accessory generally available since the war, in 16", 15", and other sizes, is a set of add-on rubber whitewall rings. A few have even been made in narrow-whitewall or special styles, or for permanent vulcanizing to tire when it was recapped. Although purists may flinch, the wide-whitewall rings are sometimes useful if one cannot immediately afford a new set of collector-type whitewall tires. They are especially handy for completing a partial set of whitewall tires, particularly as they are not at all conspicuous when used on the rear wheels, for either street or mud-&-snow tires. Normally the rings also give an improved seal at the outer bead of tubeless tires, unless they are in poor condition or installed off-center.

Another type of accessory whitewall rings available circa 1950 were those made of plastic. Although quite breakable and not very convincing, they were briefly popular, and would doubtless add to the period appearance of a car from that era, if an undamaged set can still be found.

AT ONE SHOW this past summer, your columnist was a bit disconcerted to see a 1948 Frazer which was in beautiful original condition, except for narrow-whitewall tires, a modern in-line fuel filter (without glass bowl), and---in the rear window---a present-day auxiliary brake light, similar to the ones which are compulsory on 1986 models in the U.S.

Whatever one's opinion of this current "safety feature," the idea of an added warning light placed at rear-window level is of course not new. One 1950's version, intended mainly as a novelty or decorative accessory, was a furry white toy cat named Winky, who sat on the rear shelf and had two small red bulbs for eyes. These would light up either with the turn signals or with the brake lights (or with both, depending upon the car's wiring arrangement). Later a few other animal models were also offered. The toy cat is possibly still available from some sources, but it may now be difficult to find suitable 6-volt red bulbs for the eyes.

HOPE TO SEE YOU in 1987, with more about Hudson accessories and other topics. A happy holiday season to all!