

Hudsonotes

Column of Mechanical Miscellany
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More Add-Ons and Extras

THE SERIES of columns about auto accessories had its beginning long ago, in the July/August and November/December 1981 issues of *WTN*. After an interval of several years, it was resumed in the May/June 1986 issue, and continued since. This is Part 9 of the series. A number of accessories, too, have been mentioned in other columns, and a separate series about lighting accessories such as fog, spot, backup, signal, and extra interior lights also appeared from time to time during 1980-1983.

Today it seems difficult to imagine an automobile, either new or old, being kept in entirely "stripped" condition, without any optional or accessory equipment whatever, though it is true that a fair number were so built originally. In the early years, of course, even items such as headlights and pneumatic tires were often optional items (particularly on trucks). The first Hudson (1909) included both those items as standard, but the car's top was still an option. Speedometers and windshields were also commonly optional at the time.

Engine options, on the other hand, did not become commonplace until later. During the 1940's, for example, Hudson and Ford were among the relatively few makers offering a choice of either six or eight-cylinder power for a given car model. By the 1960's, however, engine, transmission, rear-axle, wheel & tire, suspension, paint, trim, power-assist, etc., etc. options had multiplied to an extent that at least one of the Big Three was able to state that it could theoretically operate its production lines at full capacity for an entire model year without ever building two exactly identical vehicles. While this added to manufacturing costs, it was also the ultimate answer to critics who had long maintained that mass production inevitably meant an endless flood of output all numbingly the same.

Sometimes, to keep the base price of a car low, the manufacturer would list as

"options" or "extras" a few items about which the car buyer was given no choice — they were, in today's doublespeak phrase, "mandatory options." Often, too, manufacturers have found that a popular optional item could be included in the car's base price and made "standard equipment," thus simplifying both production and sales. American Motors pioneered the inclusion of air conditioning as a standard item on its Ambassador models in this way. Today we are accustomed to finding items such as automatic transmissions (wanted or unwanted) and troublesome "antipollution" gadgetry (unwanted) as standard inclusions even on "economy" models.

SMALL ACCESSORY PARTS for dealer installation were often listed in Hudson parts books as "service" rather than "optional" items. Examples might include oil and gasoline filter kits, magnetic drain plugs for engine and transmission (usually with standard pipe thread for most Hudson models) to help trap any stray ferrous particles, a similar magnetic plug for rear axle, oil-bath (rather than merely oil-wetted) engine air filter units, alternative metering rods (usually a bit "leaner" than standard) for the Carter carburetor,

Advertisement for a magnetic plug. The ad features a dark background with white and yellow text. At the top left, it says "CAPTURES DAMAGING METAL PARTICLES from". Below that, "1 ENGINE 2 GEAR CASES". To the right, "ONLY 65¢" is written in a large, stylized font. Further right, "WON'T WEAR OUT." is written. Below that, "BUY 3 for CRANKCASE TRANSMISSION DIFFERENTIAL". At the bottom, "MAGNETIC PLUG" is written in a box. Below the box, patent information is listed: "PATENT RE 20291, 2214248, 2225203, 2242830, 2345029 AND PENDING. CAN. 1943-44 & PENDING." At the very bottom, it says "MANUFACTURED BY Lisle CORPORATION CLAYTON, OHIO".

a rear window wiper kit, a small hydraulic jack (with hook), the metal Karvisor (to be painted matching body color), an outside rear-view mirror for both right and left door mounting; and special inside rear-view mirrors — either the large oval style or the "glare proof" day-&-night type with two-way lever — to replace the standard one in car. Although front fender-mounted outside rear-view mirrors apparently also were popular on early stepdown Hudsons (c. 1948-49) in some areas, they are not listed in the '48-49 parts book.



Other "service" accessories listed in the 1948-49 book for Hudsons not already so equipped at factory included direction-indicator (turn signal) kit, cigar lighter, electric clock kit, large hubcaps, deluxe large (18") steering wheel, assist straps (for B-pillar), windshield drain tube kit, front windwing drain trough kit, the Hudson/Zenith AM tube-type radio and the overhead antenna with inside knob, supplementary sealing kits for rear-shelf area and other parts of body, extra ashtrays for underdash and seatback installation, and more. Although a single front-seatback ashtray was specified for sedan models, two were needed for best appearance on 2-door cars with divided front seatback.

A few suspension parts were also "service" items. The standard rubber "jounce bumpers" on lower control arms for Hudson stepdown and some other models are bullet-shaped, about 2 3/4 inches high, molded to a disc with 5/16" threaded stud for mounting. Their purpose is to prevent excessive and harmful "bottoming" of car's front end under severe use. They should be in place at all times (check to be sure rubber has not

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Your new, low cost (dealer net price) on genuine Hudson Outside Visor (1948 through 1953 models, except Jet) has been reduced to only \$... each!

This greatly reduced cost enables you to offer your customers a real bargain on this much wanted comfort and appearance accessory.

As you know, the Hudson Outside Visor is one of the finest on the market. It fits and attaches as an integral part of the car. It relieves eye strain, keeps out the sun, and protects front-seat passengers from excess heat.

For extra sales and profits... stock up, display, and actively promote this big accessory bargain!

You have a real opportunity, here, to sell your best used cars, for quicker sales and better prices, at very low cost to you.

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broken away from metal), and the car should not be driven on rough roads without them. Similar, slightly shorter bumpers are located on small frame brackets for the upper control arms. For added protection on bad surfaces, however, longer 4-inch bumpers were available from dealer for the lower control arms. These would also restrict suspension travel somewhat. The rear jounce bumpers on these cars (standard only) are in the form of oblong rubber blocks on steel plates, bolted to "kickup" on frame at rear axle. These too should be in place at all times.

HEAVY-DUTY FRONT coil springs were available as an option for Hudson stepdown models (#301621, with a 450 rate, vs. the standard #300442 with 386 rate, in 1948-49). The part number can usually be found stamped at upper end of spring, near the flattened top turn.

A variety of rear leaf springs were used on Hudson stepdown models, but as with the front coils, all were production-line items in 1948-49 (perhaps a few extra "service" ones were added later). The eight or more types available were all of the same length and size, so that

any of them (in a matched pair) will fit any of these cars 1948-54, but, in addition to differences in thickness of the main and other leaves, some had 7 leaves, some had 8, and some appeared to have 7½, since there was a "rebound leaf," extending only from center of spring to the front, included above the main leaf. Parts book lists one early-production light-duty spring, first and second type medium-duty springs, first and second type heavy-duty springs (load, 975; rate, 140) which were available as an option, and first and second type extra-heavy springs which were intended mainly for convertibles, due to the extra weight of this body style.

Also, a third type of medium-duty spring (load, 950; rate, 120) was used intermittently, and is easily distinguished from all of the others since it has no sheet-metal cover and is not designed to be greased, but instead has the ends of the three middle leaves cupped to hold a small inserted rubber spacer button. This type of "greaseless" rear spring has generally proved itself very serviceable on these Hudsons over the years, except that it may begin to squeak or grunt

under load when the insert buttons are worn out. If original replacement buttons cannot be found, one may need to adapt buttons from a Brand X spring (which are usually somewhat larger) by grinding them slightly to fit.

It is reported that there were occasional breakage problems with some of the lighter or earlier-type rear springs on these cars when subjected to severe use, such as taxi service. Today spring breakage is less likely unless leaves are weakened by rust, shock absorbers are poor, or there is much driving over rough road surfaces. However, it is wise, as with any car or truck, to check all leaves for possible cracks near center whenever vehicle is raised on hoist for lubrication or other work.

MORE COMMON IS the slight drop in riding height which normally occurs on older cars as the springs age. If this drop is less than an inch from original (check factory manual for specifications), and is quite uniform at all four corners of the car when parked on a level surface, it is harmless under normal road and load conditions, and may even improve an older vehicle's appearance slightly. However, it sometimes appears that Hudson stepdown models and some other cars may tend to sag a trifle more at the left (driver) side in front when old; and this should be corrected for both appearance and handling reasons. One method is to replace the front coil spring on that side only with either a new standard spring (if available), or a used heavier-duty one.

A simpler method may be to add a spacer to the left front coil spring. These spacers in various types have been available as aftermarket accessories for many years, and in fact were nearly indispensable for some droopy-nosed Brand X's of the past. The types such as

RUBBER COIL SPRING STABILIZER



Installation tool

- Raises front end up to 1 inch.
- Cushions and absorbs shock.

Made of finest quality molded rubber, nylon reinforced for extra strength. Spring spreader tool is needed to install stabilizers. Set of 4 for front or rear coil springs, with or without installation tool.

Front Size: 2" x 1 3/8" x 1 1/2" **Part No. Set of 4**
 With Tool, Shpg. wt. 2 lbs. **83-232 \$3.99**
 Less Tool, Shpg. wt. 1 lb. **83-233 1.99**
 Rear Size: 2" x 1 3/8" x 2"
 With Tool, Shpg. wt. 3 lbs. **83-234 5.99**
 Less Tool, Shpg. wt. 2 lbs. **83-235 3.99**

grooved rubber blocks or adjustable steel bolts which fit between turns of the spring are easiest to install, and also effectively stiffen the spring somewhat, but they entirely disable one full turn of the coil and thus may put undue stress on the rest of the turns and other suspension components.

Hence a much preferable type of spring spacer, even though it requires more work and care in installation, is the large C-shaped ring, 1/2 inch or thicker, usually of aluminum although there have also been rubber versions, to be fitted between bottom end of coil and the lower suspension control arm. Experience indicates that the 1/2-inch thickness, used on one or both front coils, is practically always sufficient for Hudson stepdown models, including Eights. Any thicker spacing here will usually cause the car to hold its nose at an ungraciously haughty angle.

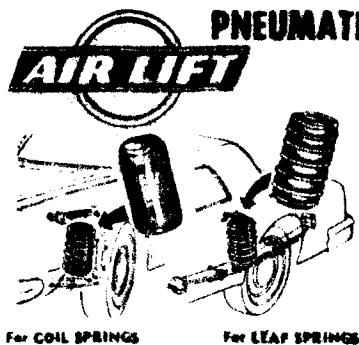
SEVERAL ACCESSORIES FOR use with the car's rear springs have also been familiar aftermarket items since the 1950's, and were not uncommon on Hudsons and other cars at the time. One of these devices was a steel bar pivoted near the forward end of the rear spring, and with its rear end attached to center of spring, at rear axle. "Traction Master," the best-known brand, was offered to fit 1942-54 Hudsons and many Brand X's, and was especially recommended for models such as the Hornet which had massive low-speed torque. A few other brands were also available. This type of "torque bar" was not designed to affect load capacity or ride, but it firmly prevented wheel hop and other problems caused by twisting or "wind-up" of the rear leaf springs upon hard acceleration or braking. It could be used on the right side alone (where these problems tend to be more serious because of the direction of driveshaft rotation), or on both sides. It was effective but reduced ground clearance somewhat.

There were also (and still are) helper spring leaves, made of flat steel with a somewhat reverse curve, to be fastened underneath front half of each rear spring. Besides raising rear of car slightly and increasing load capacity, these helpers tend to reduce axle windup problems, similarly to the factory's "rebound leaf" or to Traction Master.

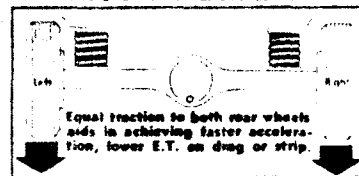
Inflatable cylindrical-shaped bags, under the "Air Lift" and perhaps other brand names, were designed to fit inside either front or rear coil springs, and when inflated would stiffen the spring rate and increase load carrying capacity. This type of bag could not be used on most Hudsons, since shock absorbers are located inside the front coils on these cars, and the rear springs are leaf type. However, an alternative version of these air bags, made with a reinforcing coil built into the wall of the bag itself, was designed for leaf-spring cars, and so could no doubt be fitted to the rear suspension on most Hudsons, perhaps in place of the rubber jounce-bumper blocks on frame. Does any reader know of a Hudson equipped with these or any other accessory suspension aids? How successful is the installation?

SHOCK ABSORBERS supplied as factory equipment on Hudsons c. 1948-49 were of two brands, Monroe and Delco (interchangeable in sets). Some Monroes were labeled "MAECO" (for *Monroe Auto Equipment Co.*). Delco units can often be recognized by the spiral groove pressed into outer shell (though this may be partly hidden by a dust cover). Both brands were available from factory in three grades: light-control shock absorbers for use with light or regular-scale springs only; heavy-control shock absorbers normally for use with heavier-scale optional springs; and extra-heavy shock absorbers which were optional for use with any springs.

A few aftermarket shock-absorber brands have also been available to fit these cars (e.g., Columbus, including some "upside-down" models which had movable stem at bottom rather than at top of unit). However, shock absorbers which have a coiled helper or load-leveler spring placed around the shell, either as an add-on or as part of the unit itself, apparently belong to a later period. Gas-filled, inflatable, and similar special shock absorbers also came later and so would be somewhat of an anachronism



INFLATE WITH AIR—ADJUST WITH AIR. Enjoy new driving comfort, more safety, cushion your springs with air for smoother driving. Air Lifts will carry up to 1500 lb. overload. Air Lifts are tough butyl cylinders that fit inside present coil springs and also are available with cylinders mounted in springs to fit cars equipped with leaf springs. Air Lifts are sold in pairs complete with mounting brackets where necessary and easy to follow installation instructions.



on these cars, even if they can be made to fit and work satisfactorily. This writer has not discovered whether any of the better-known imported shock absorbers, such as Koni or Boge, were available to fit these Hudsons, as they were for some other U.S. cars.

A proper balance of stiffness between front and rear shock absorbers (and springs) is important for safety, handling,

and ride comfort. Extra-heavy-duty shock absorbers, for example, should not be installed at front of car only, with light (or worn-out) ones at rear, since this can cause sudden and dangerous understeer or "plowing" of the front end on fast turns. To avoid this problem, the rear suspension must be stiff enough to do its share of resisting body roll when cornering. On the other hand, extra-stiff suspension components at rear without correctly matching front stiffness can help to cause loss of traction and control at the rear end, particularly on turns or when trunk and rear seat are not loaded. Also, to avoid pitching or "hobbyhorse" motion over bumps at normal speeds, the front should be slightly slower on rebound than the rear, so that both will return to level position at about the same time. Extra-large tires (such as 8.20-15 or modern equivalent), along with the built-in superb handling of most Hudson models, can partially mask some of these problems, but are not a substitute for correct front/rear suspension balance.

READERS WHO ARE curious about Trico's accessory vacuum booster pump of the 1930's (March/April WTN, p. 34) will be interested in the reprint of an original factory illustration recently sent to us by Jon Battle.

We have also received letters from two readers concerning the South Wind gasoline-powered heater, which was a Stewart-Warner product (January/February WTN, p. 40). Both of them describe retrofit installations on a prewar (and pre-Weather Control) Hudson-built model, which probably had more need for an accessory heater of this type. Louis Gehring, New York, reports that he acquired a 1931 Essex coach in '79 (in use until '56) which he has since restored. As found, the car had 132,000 miles and a South Wind heater (which worked very well), along with non-original carburetor, fuel pump, headlights, radio, and hydraulic brakes. Heater control had been mounted on the steering column (see photograph).

Harold Biggs, Alabama, tells us: "While working in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1939, I purchased a 1937 Terraplane convertible coupe which was equipped with a South Wind gasoline powered heater. It always supplied adequate heat, or more if I wanted it, in that car in that climate. It was highly satisfactory."

(More about Hudson accessories and extras in a coming issue.)

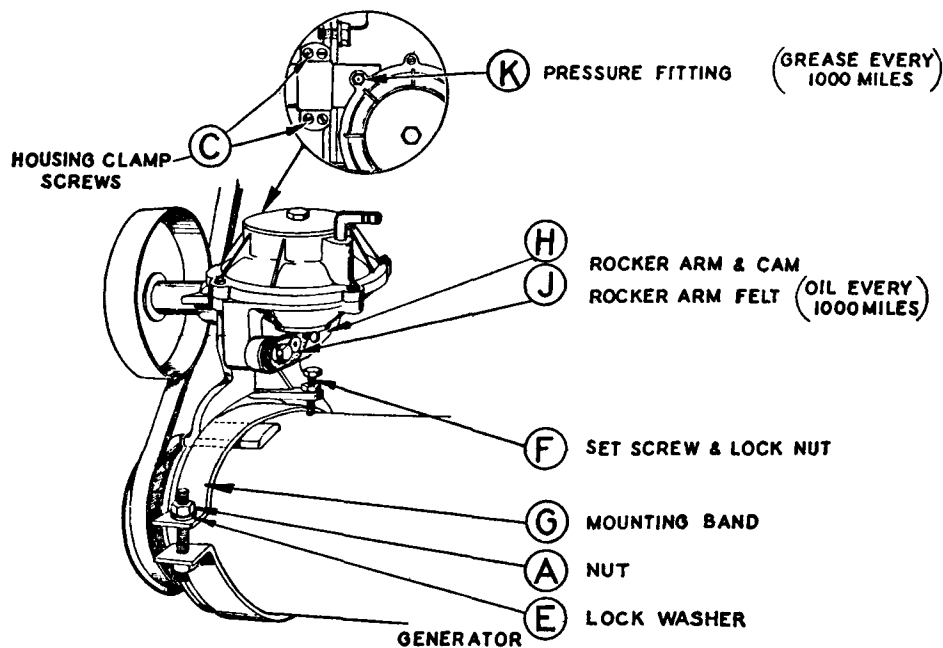


Fig. 2



Joe Guide Jr. waiting to qualify at Daytona in 1953.



Jasper Kleinjan photo

1952 Hornet Hollywood belonging to Don O'Rielly, the editor of Speed Age magazine.