

HUDSONOTES

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Merrily We Roll

CONTINUING OUR SERIES of articles about Hudson wheels and tires, we now come to the familiar 1948-54 "stepdown" models. The standard 15-inch rims for these cars were 5 inches wide, intended for use with 7.10-15 size tires. Rims 5-1/2 inches wide, with 7.60-15 tires, were an option, and also were standard equipment on a few models including convertibles. Width of the optional genuine wire-spoke wheels for these cars, too, was usually 5-1/2 inches.

The standard pressed-steel wheels, like the wire ones, were made for Hudson by the Motor Wheel Corporation; and at the time there was a gradual changeover from traditional riveted construction (12 rivets per wheel, helping to locate and hold the center spider on the rim), to a newer all-welded construction without rivets. On these cars, the 5" rims generally had rivets while the 5-1/2" ones did not.

Apparently the strength of either assembly method was more than adequate. Your columnist has never seen a Hudson wheel loosen at the rivets

or welds even when badly bent out of shape. A very few riveted wheels on Brand X's, it is true, have been known to develop a tiny air leak (with tubeless tires) around one or two rivets. I know of one repair shop which for many years kept a small can of red-lead primer at hand for use as a preventive sealant, and each countersunk rivet head in the center channel of a rim was given a touch of this paint before a tubeless tire was installed. Possibly it helped... but have any of our readers ever heard of this practice?

Some smaller Brand X's, and also the Hudson Jets, used rims which were the same except for a 4" or 4-1/2" width. These may also fit on full-size Hudsons, but are certainly not recommended either for stable handling or for satisfactory tire wear.

Wheels which will fit Hudson stepdown cars were also made by Kelsey-Hayes, though sometimes merely with holes in place of the hubcap clips. Spare clips can often be salvaged from a scrap wheel, and can be installed with 1/4" bolts (preferably fine-thread) instead of rivets if desired. Note, however,

that clip lengths may vary on wheels of various widths. Also, be sure that bolt heads will not interfere with perfect seating of the wheel against the brake drum.

In earlier years before the Kelsey-Hayes merger (World War I era), many Hudsons featured Hayes wire wheels or Kelsey demountable rims.

With tire removed, the name and size of a drop-center wheel usually can be found stamped on the surface where one bead of the tire will rest. A letter is used to indicate the height of the rim flange which holds tire on wheel. Almost all of these Hudson wheel flanges are of "K" height, which is nearly 1 inch. Total diameter of a 15-inch K wheel is thus about 16-1/2 inches. The "J" flange height is slightly less, about 2/3rd inch. These rim height markings must not be confused with the letters E, G, H, L, etc. as used to represent the nominal load capacity of tires according to one later tire numbering system (example: H78-15).

Sometimes a slightly wider rim size from a later model, such as 15 K 6, may be found which will fit these Hudson/Motor Wheel hubs (check AMC and Chrysler products, for example). Although not original, an over-width rim (with a corresponding few extra pounds of air pressure) can sometimes give a bit of extra lateral stability, if not a smoother ride in all cases. We would like readers who have tried using wider than-stock rims on a Hudson to tell us what advantage, if any, these rims can offer. Write to this columnist or to the Editor.

HAVE YOU HUGGED your tire today? Some tubeless tires can be quite difficult to seat snugly enough on their rims so that they can be inflated. Mounting a tire on an extra-wide rim may offer some added stability of handling, but it usually worsens the seating problem—as may also the use of a stiffer 6-ply tire. The usual method of spreading apart the beads of a tire (bias-ply only, not radial) for easier seating is to apply a squeeze around the outer circumference of the tire. Several devices for this purpose are available, including a screw-tightened steel band, and a loop of braided tubing which shortens when it is inflated. Lacking these, however, a healthy bear hug around the tire by a helper, while air is introduced through the valve stem (valve core removed), will sometimes do the job.

A more modern device which is usable with both bias and radial tires is a perforated metal ring slightly larger than the rim. Combined with a sizable air reserve tank, it can deliver an enormous blast of air

all around the bead area; and this along with more air through the valve stem will usually cause the bead to rise and seat itself. One desperate method which is distinctly dangerous is to use ether-type starting fluid to produce an explosion inside the tire. Not recommended!

"Safety" type rims have been used on some Brand X's. These have extra ridges in the rim surface, and are noted mainly for making tire beads much more bothersome to separate from the rim.

No drastic changes in wheels and tires were made for the 1955-57 American Motors Hudsons. Perhaps a reader can furnish details. Nash and A.M.C. too, had used Motor Wheel rims for many years.

We'd also like to know what experiences readers have had with shops which offer straightening of wheels that have been bent at the rim or center. Perhaps this service is unnecessary because so many good original Hudson steel wheels can still be found. Also, have any readers had repair or rebuilding work done on the older wood-spoke or wire wheels?

Cracking or breakage of ordinary pressed-steel wheels is extremely rare except in cases of deep rust damage. Your columnist has never seen a broken Hudson wheel, though he has seen badly damaged bolt holes when wheel bolts were not properly tightened. Bent wheels are not likely to be caused merely by enthusiastic Hudson—style cornering, if road surface is uniform. The usual cause is lateral skidding on a wet or icy road, and then suddenly hitting a dry spot, or perhaps a chuckhole. Extreme overloading can also contribute.

If a wheel shows a slight lateral runout (wobble), and the brake drum is also suspected, mark the outermost "high spot" with a tire crayon; then shift the wheel around the drum by 2 or 3 bolt holes, retighten wheel bolts uniformly, and check again.

Occasionally a repair shop may perhaps still be found where, if you are a well-known and faithful customer, you may possibly be allowed to use the tire machine, tools, and wheel balancer. After the tire beads have been broken from rim, be careful not to insert any tire tool deeply enough to tear the inner tube if there is one. At the same time, and also while the tire machine is being rotated, be sure to push both tire beads (on the side opposite the tool) as deeply as possible into the drop-center channel, for easier tire removal and also replacement. For smoother removal too, use rubber lubricant or

soap solution on beads.

Usually only one tire bead need be taken off the rim to allow removal of an inner tube. When re-inserting the tube be sure it is turned right side up so that the valve stem and its hole will align properly.

WHITEWALL TIRES are handsome, but what does one use to keep them clean? Sometimes mild cleaning with soap and water is sufficient; or if not, any of the prepared whitewall cleaners (plus a stiff tire brush) will usually help. But when even these are not enough, especially on an old tire, the next step is probably to use a soap-impregnated steel-wool scouring pad of the S.O.S. or Brillo type. For best economy cut the pad and use half at a time. When tire is dry, remaining spots can sometimes be lightened with lacquer thinner and a clean rag, but be careful not to smear this over onto any black parts of the tire. For hardened surface spots, very coarse sandpaper may help (preferably old used scraps, since water loosens the grit). Do not use wire brush or metal wool without soap, since these will leave gray marks.

Most whitewall cleaners, used with a brush, will also help to give the black areas-and plain blackwall tires too-a clean and dressy look. When dry, any white showing through scuff marks can be touched up with black tire paint, or simply with a black felt-point pen or black leather dye.

It is difficult to explain the disappearance of white rubber tire paint from the market in recent years. This product was specially useful for re-coating an old discolored white area, and sometimes for touch-ups.

A few reproduction wide-whitewall tires have been made with a narrow black stripe left visible at the bead. This may make them easier to clean, but it also makes them look sadly inauthentic, and is especially conspicuous with bright-colored rims (red, cream, etc.).

Today the narrow whitewall remains in fashion but has become somewhat of a cliché. One wishes (for 1960's collectibles, not Hudsons!) that the 2-ring and 3-ring narrow whitewalls of the '60's would return.

MOST MOTORISTS today still recognize the importance of adequate tire inflation although not many still attempt to maintain it with the use of a traditional hand pump. Such a pump, of course, cannot start a tubeless tire on its rim, but can easily add a few pounds of pressure to a tire already well seated.

These days it requires much less force than with the old high-pressure tires, but does usually need more strokes for sufficient air volume. Piston of pump should be kept moderately oiled, if it is of the traditional leather-cup type.

Pedal-style pumps for foot operation appeared in the late 1940's, and are still occasionally seen (mostly now as imports). In case a pump leaks at the tire valve stem, new hose-and-fitting assemblies are still available, often at bicycle shops. Owners of a collector car may wish to carry a good hand pump (of about the same vintage) along with the spare tire, as was commonly done in the early years.

But probably not even our forebears were overly fond of pumping up tires by hand-judging by the large variety of power air pumps available as accessories in the 1920's, for example. Many were engine-driven for home or roadside use. A few of them attached to the transmission via a side panel much in the manner of truck power-takeoff attachments today. Some others could be coupled to engine through the hand-crank opening in front, and a few of the early ones could also fill an air reserve tank to operate a compressed-air engine starter.

One simple gadget merely utilized one of the engine's cylinders as an air pump, by temporarily replacing one spark plug with a hose fitting, although the effect of gasoline-laden air on the tube and tire was problematic. At present a few electric 12-volt tire pumps can be found, but apparently there were no 6-volt versions made.

"Free air" for tires has been a standard promotional item since the early years of garages and filling stations. Today many of us are somewhat bemused by the growing number of coin-operated air pumps which have been substituted-possibly inspired by present-day banking practices.

IN THIS SERIES of columns about wheels and tires for Hudsons, we have tried to present relevant automotive history and background information along with practical tips and suggestions. It was planned to conclude the series with this issue, but due to space limitations (and more facts to include), a final installment now is slated for a future issue of *WTN*. We're also hoping to receive some additional notes and comments from readers before then. Here's wishing you all a new Hudson, and a good springtime to all!

