

HUDSONOTES

George Schmidt

The Well-Shod Hudson

RECENTLY LOANED to me were some old issues or *Farm and Home* magazine from 1914-20. The articles (despite very small print) are interesting to anyone who grew up on a farm, and so are the advertisements. Besides ads for nearly everything from cream separators to horse-collar pads to Victrolas, there are many for automobiles, including the 1915 Hudson Six-40 (price: \$1550). Tire ads, too, are plentiful.

"Mileage talks. Firestone mileage in a proved fact," said the company in 1916. "This handsome color combination, Red Side Wall with Black Tread, given the added value of an elegant appearance." We do not know whether many tires were produced with this black/red color scheme, but evidently they were available about fifty years before the "redline" sports-type tires of the 1960's and '70's. Though it is unlikely that these early colorwalls will ever be reproduced, they would certainly be attractive on any Hudson Super Six of the 1916-20 period.

A Firestone ad from 1915 advises: "Save Tire

Money," and pictures a cross-section of the tire with four plies, breaker strip, etc..Prices (for the 34 x 4 size, for example, made in two quality levels) were \$19.90 and \$22.50, plus \$3.90 or \$4.40 for the inner tube.

A 1920 ad for Goodyear truck tires (cord-type) states: "I haul on pneumatics and deliver fruit unbruised--direct from trees to town. Others here have ruined thousands of dollars' worth of fruit by jolting it on solid truck tires." Quote is from a Loomis, California rancher. Goodyear had pioneered pneumatic tires for heavy trucks (size 44 x 10) in 1917, but found few takers at first. A 1918 ad also states: "More motorists use Goodyear Tubes than use any other kind... Tubes are of laminated construction.... They are made in two weights-Heavy Tourist and regular."

"We must add \$175. to the Hudson-Super-Six," says a 1916 ad regretfully. It explains that this is due to much higher material costs, but that all cars already built will be sold at the old price," while they

last. If you can get one, get it." Prices range from \$1475 (Roadster) to \$2850 (Limousine Landaulet).

A small 1918 ad from a Kansas City mail-order firm offers "Tires For 1/4 Less." Freshly made tires (no seconds). Guaranteed for 6000 Miles." Although cord tires first appeared around 1913, it is not stated whether these in the ad were cord or fabric type. Many dealers offered both.

A 1931 Firestone ad in *Better Homes & Gardens* lists tires for Hudson, 6.00-19 size, at \$11.40 each; and for Essex, size 5.00-20 at \$7.10. The ad indicates that these are bargain prices as compared with those of a few years previous, and asserts that these tires are also a better bargain than private-brand or mail order tires selling for about the same price. Tires were 4-ply, cotton cord, with an added 2-ply belt (said to be of patented construction). In 1932 these two sizes listed at \$10.85 and \$6.75, and many of the sizes to fit earlier models sold for less than \$5.00.

A 1934 Goodyear ad deplores the scare-type advertising of so-called "blowout-proof" tires, stating that no completely blowout-proof tire exists, and that while Goodyears are more blowout-resistant than any other brand tested, only about 3 tire failures out of 10,000 reported at that time were blowouts. Goodyear's "Supertwist" was claimed to retain its strength longer than other cotton tire cords, but sales emphasis was on the company's "G-3" all-weather tread for safer emergency stops.

If you have found other interesting original period advertisements for Hudson-built vehicles or for tires or other accessory items used on these cars why not send a clear photocopy to this columnist or to the editor? We may be able to reproduce a few of these.

AFTER BALLOON TIRES were introduced in the mid-1920's, the next logical step in this direction was taken by General Tire in the 1930's, with the General Jumbo. These Jumbo tires were even bigger and plumper, and were usable at even lower air pressures. They were an option on many U.S. cars (though I do not have a specific listing for Hudson/Terraplane). They offered a soft ride but not very good handling or stability, and their vogue was fairly short. Unlike modern wide tires, they were nearly as tall (rim to road) as they were wide.

During the 1960's the greatest practical safety improvement in tires (in the snow belt, at any rate) was the introduction of hard carbide studs in the

tread for winter driving. These offered—at long last—effective traction on icy surfaces. But they were claimed to cause excessive wear of highway surfaces in urban areas, and so were outlawed a few years later. I do not have any statistics of the increase in winter accidents and deaths caused by the outlawing of studs, and no doubt such statistics, if they exist, would not be considered politically correct at present. However, my '49 Hudson, with studded snow tires at rear and soft-rubber recaps in front, was the surest-footed all-weather vehicle I have ever driven.

One feature which distinguishes a top-quality tire from a mediocre one is its exact roundness and its ability to hold that shape perfectly (without excessive stiffness), even when it is old and worn out; possibly even with a few damaged cords. In this it is somewhat like an extremely well-tailored suit of clothes.

As for the one-way "set" taken by radial tire cords in normal use, Ken (Rod) Hudson, Florida, notes that recently-made radial tires are not as sensitive in this respect as were the earlier ones, so that today they usually can be run later in the opposite direction without trouble.

SIZE NUMBERING for tires was fairly uniform until the early 1930's. Up to then, a size such as 29 x 5, for example, gave the tire's outside diameter and its rim-to-road height, with the rim diameter, 19, not stated but clearly implied. All were inch measurements except for some early metric sizes in Europe. This numbering system has survived longer for bicycle and other specialty tires (e.g.: 27 x 1-1/4).

But ca.1931, automotive sizes such as 29 x 5 were re-numbered thus: 5.00-19, giving the casing height or width (with a decimal, not a fraction), and then the rim diameter. This continued until the 1960's, with the second decimal digit nearly always a zero (7.50-14, 8.20-15, etc.). At that time, "low profile" tires were introduced, with about an 83% aspect ratio, and numbers with decimals usually ending in 5, such as 7.35-14. But the 7.35 inches here meant nominal width--not height--so that, for example, the older-style 7.60-15 tire was actually larger (taller) than the newer 8.15-15 size, and also had greater load capacity.

When the above confusion finally was resolved, it obviously was time to change once more to a new system. Now an alphabet letter was arbitrarily as-

signed to show, not the actual tire measurements, but the nominal load rating. This was followed by a figure for the aspect ratio per cent, and then the rim diameter. Example: F78-14.

Radial-ply tires are indicated by a letter R inserted in the number. Radials, however, have mostly followed their original European practice of stating the width in millimeters, even if the rim size remains in inches, thus: 175/R13. These days a few extra complications are usually added, as in P175/80R13 (the 80 refers to aspect ratio per cent).

Tire size numbers for many years were generally molded in clearly legible sized figures. An added frustration at present, however, is that the size figures are usually not only miniscule, but are buried amidst a jumble of irrelevant other lettering as well. Figures placed near the tread also can sometimes be buffed off by a recapper.

A correction for the May/June column: The "K" flange height on drop-center rims is about 3/4 inch (not 1 Inch as stated), so that the total outside diameter of a 15-inch K wheel is about 16-1/2 inches. Hudson drop-center wheel flanges are usually of K height.

WHAT IS THE owner of a stepdown-model Hudson to make of this jumble of tire sizes? Because of small on-going changes in tire design, no newer size number is ever the exact equivalent of an older one, but nearly always a close approximation can be found. For example, 7.00-15, 7.10-15, 8.15-15, and G78-15 are quite comparable. Or as a better choice for these Hudsons, the 7.50-15, 7.60-15, 8.45-15, and H78-15 sizes are comparable. These can be used effectively even with 5-inch rims, although the wider 5-1/2-inch rims are preferable, especially since those permit the use of a few extra pounds of air pressure without causing added center tread wear.

Ken Krueger, our club's first Tech Advisor, noted long ago (July '62 WTN) that owners of these cars found the 7.60-15 tires to offer a better ride and longer mileage than the 7.10-15 size.

Original sizes for Jets were 5.90-15 and 6.40-15. These along with 6.70-15 and F70-15 will also fit onto the larger cars, but are much too small in terms of load capacity, handling, and appearance. On the other hand, the oversize 8.20-15 and comparable L78-15 will ride and handle very well on full-size Hudsons. Used in front, these big tires will also improve the already excellent fast cornering

ability of these models perceptibly, although there may be slight fender interference on extremely sharp turns. We'd like to hear from readers who have used either of these larger sizes (or perhaps tried 9.00-15) on 1948-54 Hudsons.

For pre-stepdown Hudsons, 1940-47, the largest stock tire size on standard models was 6.50-16, but it appears that there is ample fender space for at least 7.00-16 if desired. Possibly an owner will let us know for sure. We'll report all reader comments in a future issue.

For radial-ply tires, a local distributor (Lakeshore Automotive Wholesale, Inc., of Two Rivers, Wisconsin) suggests these size conversions: 185/SR15 (an imported size) for 7.10-15; and P195/75R15 for 7.60-15. This source also reminds us that serious under-inflation is not as easily seen with radials as with bias-ply, with the result that too many tires today are soon ruined by being run too soft. The only safe rule is to use an accurate tire gauge regularly.

Another source, the Tires Plus agency at Manitowoc, suggests that slightly larger radials could be used: 205/R15 for 7.10-15, and 215/R15 for 7.60-15. (Aspect ratio of these two radial sizes is about 75%.)

Both sources here, however, note that for 16-inch rims, a suitable radial equivalent for the 6.50-16 size may be hard to find. The 7.50/R16 (7.50 inches, that is) and the 205/55R16 or the 225/60R16 are readily available but are somewhat too large.

Your conservative columnist, of course, favors replacement tires which closely resemble the originals-high-quality bias-ply, in the optional larger original size, with fairly soft tread rubber (and firm inflation). The classic wide whitewall, and an extra-careful check of wheel alignment, are additional plus factors. But as in many other aspects of our Hudson hobby, there is room here for individual judgment.

THIS CONCLUDES our "tire-some" 8-part column series, except perhaps for a short future postscript about spare tires and accessories, and reader letters. We hope you have found the series entertaining and useful, and we also hope your Hudson (and you) are enjoying a good summer!

