

# From SUV's to Sewing Machines

by George Schmidt

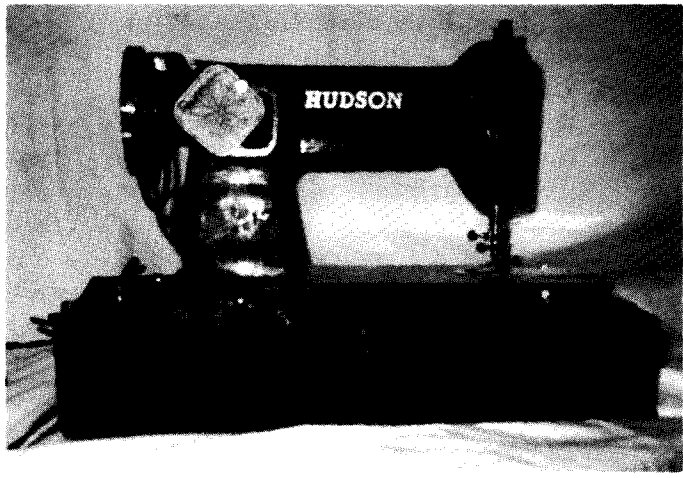


**T**HOSE BIG SUV's (sport utility vehicles) in recent years have aroused much controversy, but along with their own practical advantages, they may be well worth driving simply for their sheer environmentalist-baiting mechanical insolence. Image counts—as it also does with our beloved Hudsons, of course.

The unfortunate problem with many of these SUV's, however, appears to be their excessive top-heaviness and the consequent difficulty of keeping them right-side-up (and in their own lane) in the event of tire failure or other emergencies. This is an extreme contrast to our Hudsons, especially the stepdown models, whose outstanding stability has been amply demonstrated over the years (even in the case of tire blowouts, as I have twice discovered).

As for the large number of recent tire failures on SUV's, it is reported that one or two executives of the foreign company which now controls one major U.S. tire manufacturer have lately resigned. Allow me to suggest that hara-kiri might have been more appropriate.

**"HYBRID" VEHICLES**, too, have again been in the news recently, with several new examples being built. Similar in operating principle to the Woods Dual Power (which lasted just a year or two in production, circa 1915), these are cars which contain both a gasoline engine and an electric motor. Add a windup key and a few JATO bottles, and who knows—perhaps we'll have an eventual Indy or Daytona winner.



However, it does now appear inevitable that Californians soon will be put under extreme pressure to accept government-approved electrically-propelled transportation appliances (at whatever cost to themselves or taxpayers) in place of recognizable automobiles. Given the present shortage of electricity on the West Coast, this comes at an especially interesting time...although a few inconvenient facts of physics and chemistry still remain. How many horsepower-hours are there in a pound of gasoline? How many are there in a pound of electric battery plates when fully charged? And how many would there be in a pound of vitamin-enriched oats?

An important feature of the prototype hybrid cars is their special lightweight construction. No doubt they would be a delight to ride in on long trips, or in case of a collision.

**HERE'S ANOTHER GEM** from the automotive trade press. *Wisconsin Auto Body News* for May/June '01 contains a feature article, "Rural

Wisconsin Shop Draws Customers Nationwide," which describes what is obviously a very "upscale" old-car restoration facility. Among the "patients" photographed at the shop are a '34 Pierce-Arrow, '47 Bentley, '53 Cadillac, '31 Chevrolet, and others. The owner reportedly puts much effort into finding correct replacement parts for the old cars, and his shop has built up a reputation for excellent workmanship.

But about painting, his attitude is described as "strictly 21st century." He is quoted: "We ask customers why they would go with an old paint system when they can have clear coats which are much more durable...and remain much more maintenance-free."

Indeed. But why not simply buy a later car in the first place, complete with modern paint, clear coats, etc., if that is what you want? In short—do you want an authentic historic vehicle, or don't you?

It is true that some "clear coats" were also used in the very early automotive years. My father's old '23 Nash touring, as I recall, had black enameled fenders (as did many Hudsons and other cars of the time), but the body color featured dark blue low-luster paint which then was clear-coated with varnish to produce a high gloss. This painting method was retained from carriage days because gloss enamels in most colors would not have been very durable, or opaque, at the time. Today no doubt it would be difficult to duplicate this finish, and extra-

careful maintenance as to washing, polish, and weather protection would be necessary.

With the introduction of nitrocellulose (pyroxylin) fast-drying automotive lacquers in various colors by DuPont (and pioneered by Oldsmobile) in 1924, however, the varnish coat was no longer needed. (Does anyone know the exact year of changeover for the Hudson and Essex?) Improved enamels for automotive use appeared next, and were favored by some carmakers (notably Chrysler). Hudson used nitrocellulose lacquers, supplied mostly by Ditzler. The differences in appearance between lacquer and enamel (and modern finishes) are usually not obvious, but are perceptible in bright sunlight.

**SADLY, THE QUESTION** of what changes may be acceptable in the authentic restoration of an old car—and which ones certainly are not—will probably never be settled to everyone's agreement. This is surely one reason for the HET Club's longstanding policy against competitive judging at meets. No doubt there are many "modernizing" changes which can be made to Hudson-built vehicles without harming safety or drivability, but all changes detract from the car's authenticity, and tend to reduce its appeal as a functioning four-wheeled piece of history. Moreover, given the above-average quality of Hudson's original engineering, they should not be really necessary.

Changes which merely show another way in which the car could well have been "optionalized" when new, however, are generally permissible, and often add much to a car's appeal. For example, colors chosen for repainting should be from those originally offered for that model—which with most Hudsons still gives plenty of choices, especially including any added by the factory at midyear. (See Ed Ostrowski's "Step-Down Corner" column, Sept./Oct. '00 *WTN*.) Also, no one can object to authentic-type fog and backup lamps and switches, windshield washer, vacuum clutch control, overdrive, radio and rear speaker, and the like.

But some changes can be far more controversial. An odd one was mentioned to me in a letter a year ago from Kenneth Taplin, Maine. He says that his '46 Super 6 coupé has been converted from 6 volts to 8 (not 12) volts, using a 4-cell battery, "and everything works just a little bit better." Light bulbs were not changed (most old ones were rated at "6-8 V."); but the charge regulator was "tweaked" up to about 9.2 volts, and a resistor was added to slow the heater motor.

I had never heard of a 6-to-8 volt conversion except on one Packard, long ago, and certainly would hesitate to recommend it. Significantly, Ken's Hudson had no radio (if it had, exactly the right dropping resistor would have been needed to allow functioning without rapid destruction of radio components). Also, only one electric-type dash gauge remained (for fuel), and it operated on 8 volts, but needed correction.

I suggested adding a small "gauge voltage regulator" box like the ones used on

6-volt Hudsons 1951 and up, along with the usual King-Seeley (KS) "Distometer" dash gauges. This could also help to avoid any possible heating at gauge float unit in tank. Similar intermittent-acting regulators were used on some 12-volt cars which continued to use 6- or 7-volt dash gauge units.

**IF AN ATTRACTIVE** harmonizing accessory underdash gauge kit, usually for oil pressure (mechanical type, with tubing; or 6-volt electrical type), along with a matching ammeter, can still be found, note that this was a familiar add-on, particularly for the pressure-lubricated Hudson Sixes 1948 and up. To install, use a small T-fitting at engine so that both the gauge and the oil warning light will work, and select a bulb for gauge lighting so that brightness will approximately match the other dash lights. With the hot-

weather driving season again upon us, this added gauge may be of especial value on an old car.

The ammeter will work on 6, 12, 24, or other D.C. voltages, but for heavy-duty 6-volt use it should preferably read to at least 40 - 0 - 40 amperes, and its wire leads must be adequate (#8 or # 6 size should do, if finely stranded for flexibility). Ammeter is connected in series with the car's electrical system, usually at "B" (battery) terminal of main voltage regulator, and is customarily wired to register all currents except to the starter motor and perhaps the horns. It can warn of electrical trouble, including insufficient or excessive charging, and it will also indicate the amount of current drawn by various accessories.

The firewall on most Hudsons includes enough spare knockout circles so that no extra holes need be

**Springless replacement cork discs for Hudson clutches in both 9 - and 10 - inch versions. Note the slots in the 10" example.**

*Photo by Rod Hudson*



drilled for gauge, overdrive cable, or other accessory connections. Use a suitable rubber grommet at each hole.

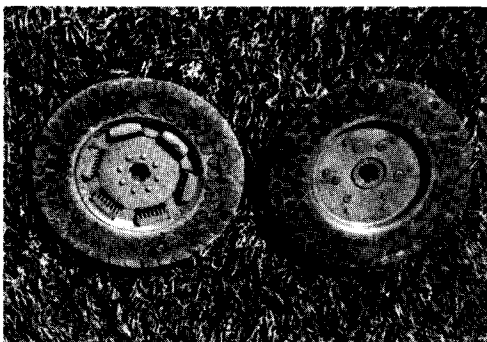
**YOUR COLUMNIST ADMITS** to an affection for electrical gadgets on his Hudson, particularly if they are authentic items (spotlight, Drive-Master, electric gas cap), or if they at least can be installed and removed later without leaving telltale marks. This would include plug-in 6-volt accessories (for cigar-lighter socket) too, if they can be found.

Two friends who are acquainted with my bad habit of forgetting to turn off head or parking lights after using them in daylight have recently given me a small accessory warning "beeper" to assist my memory. It is a Mallory "Sonalert," # SC628J—a neat black plastic cylinder about 2.25\_ by 1.75\_ inches. It will work on 6, 12, or 24 volts D.C., and is polarized internally so

that, for example, it can warn of lights being "on" while ignition is "off"—but not vice versa.

Typical installation is with one wire connected to ignition (usually at terminal on key switch), and the other preferably to the tail/dash light circuit. This will include a warning for both head and parking lights (and also for fog lights if they are properly wired with extra contacts in switch to give simultaneous taillight illumination). For positive-ground cars such as most Hudsons, the minus (-) terminal on beeper connects to lighting circuit; but for negative-ground cars like most later ones, reverse the connections.

To avoid cutting original wire harnesses on Hudson and other old vehicles, make a short heavy jumper wire with matching terminals (usually Douglas "bullet" type), and use with a



3-way or "Y" connector. On many later 12-volt Brand-X's, one or both connections for beeper can be made at the fuse block. It's also suggested that one of the leads include an extra spade or bullet coupling (or mini switch) placed underdash within easy reach to silence the beeper when not wanted.

A lights-on alarm buzzer which operated in the same way was available in past years from accessory suppliers, including J.C. Whitney.

Please note, however, that all of this is recommended only for absent-minded drivers such as myself. Most others probably have enough beeps, buzzes, and similar electronic noises in their lives as it is.

**HOPE EVERYONE** was duly "enlightened" by the March/April column about Hudson lighting. Here are a few additional tips:

When removing an old sealed-

beam headlamp for later re-use, apply a penetrant such as WD-40 or CRC 5-56 to the connector plug. Excessive strain on the prongs (and on the screw terminals of fog and spotlight sealed-beams) must be avoided since it can easily cause a tiny air leak which will ruin the bulb. Clean these prongs, and also the bases and contact tips of other old bulbs, carefully with steel wool if they are tarnished; and then use a touch of light grease or oil on them when re-installing. (Avoid greasing wire insulation.)

Sockets, too, should be clean and smooth inside, with enough spring pressure to ensure good contact. The lubricant also helps to give better moisture-free contact, and there is no need to use a large amount of grease at this point, as is sometimes found on late models. Use the same treatment for old wire terminals (bullet, spade, eyelet, etc.). When removing most old

**Springless replacement  
cork disc for Hudson  
clutch, 10 - inch size  
(not a slotted version),  
beside a standard  
Hudson spring-type  
cork clutch disc.**

*Photo by Charlie Dorsey*

light bulbs, a shot of penetrant applied a while in advance may help to avoid broken-

off bases and perhaps a cut finger.

The reflectors on non-sealed-beam head and driving lamps must be in good condition, or visibility will be much reduced. Some re-silvering services can still be found; and a few years ago a non-silver (and non-original) bright metal plating, said to be more durable, was also offered for old reflectors, but I have seen nothing of it recently.

**TWO HET CLUB MEMBERS** have written me concerning the Nov./Dec. '00 column item about Hudson cork-faced clutch discs. These, like most standard dry clutches, normally included small shock-absorbing coil-springs at the center; but "rigid" versions, without the springs, were also available. Kenneth (Rod) Hudson, Florida, and Charlie Dorsey, California, both report seeing these "rigid" cork discs, and both of them also sent pho-

tographs. These discs evidently were not a Hudson factory item, and they bear no stamped triangle or other maker's mark. Both the 10-inch and 9-inch sizes were made, Rod notes. No doubt they were made for severe use, in racing or perhaps trucks.

Has any reader driven a Hudson equipped with one of these discs? How well did it work (with either pedal or vacuum control)?

About the various methods of expanding old pistons for re-use, Rod states that he has seen the internal steel clips, but does not know how effective they were. However, he reports that the "Nurlizing" process did work, and would bring pistons, if not too badly worn, back to correct dimensions. It was also claimed that the knurled pattern improved lubrication. Our thanks to Charlie and Rod for writing.

**TO SEW UP** the present column, Ralph Zimmerman, Tennessee, writes that his wife has a "Hudson" sewing machine of about 1953, made in Japan. It reportedly sews well, if a bit noisily. Apparently it is one of a number of Japanese sewing machines sold in this country using Hudson, Packard, and other U.S. auto brand names in the years after World War II.

This is one more non-automotive use of the Hudson name (see also July/August '00 WTN, p. 29), and we are grateful to the Zimmermans for their letter. They are also the owners of a '53 Hudson (automobile) which is undergoing restoration.

Charles Woodruff points out that there is a Hudson mentioned in Stephen King's story, "Christine," about the '58 Plymouth who slips out alone at night and gets rid of undesirable people by running them over. Sure wish I could train my Hudson to do that, and especially to repair its own body damage each time! Anyway, I enjoyed reading the story (which was also filmed). Hope that all of our readers, and their Hudsons, are enjoying a good summer!



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