

by George Schmidt



RADIOS, PHANTOMS, & MISCELLANEOUS

A BOOK BY British auto writer Cyril Posthumus (and recently loaned to me by a friend) offers us an interesting list of world-wide automotive "firsts." Although far from complete (it extends only to 1930, and includes none of Hudson's famous "firsts"), it contains many important items. A sampling:

Acetylene headlamps- 1900. A beam-dipping device for them (France) - 1909. Optional electric lighting, with battery (evidently British)- 1906. Electric- beam-dipping headlights (U.S.A.)-1915; and foot control for headlight beams- 1928 (though not on all makes). Vacuum-powered windshield wipers (also U.S.A.) - 1915; and electric wipers- 1922 (though hand-operated ones also continued in vogue). Triplex "safety" glass - 1912 (France), and 1927 (Britain). Brake stoplights (U.S.A.)-1916 (though not on all cars before 1927).

Unfortunately the author does not list specific car makes for most of these features. Then too, many of them were introduced by outside suppliers, and so appeared on several makes simultaneously. Example: balloon "low -pressure" tires (Goodyear, U.S.A.) -1924.

Car radios as an option are listed for 1929 (U.S.A.). Some car radios had been custom-installed since the early '20's, but they were cumbersome, and at first were not suitable for listening "on the go" - they required that the car and engine be stopped, and a large antenna temporarily erected. Also, these earliest car radios did not have the familiar vibrator system to raise 6-volt "A"-battery direct current to the higher voltages which the tubes also needed. Hence a separate "B" battery, or else an awkward "dynamotor"

(motor/generator) unit, was necessary to supply these voltages. Speakers, too, were bulky, nearly all being of the horn type.

Before those, it is likely that a few experimental installations (for headphones only) still featured a "crystal" instead of vacuum tubes. This crystal was essentially a primitive solid-state diode, and was usually made of galena (lead sulphide) - but with its thin spring-wire "catwhisker" contact, it would have been rather delicate for use in a vehicle.

THE LATE 1930's apparently were transition years for car-radio design, with several layouts offered (sometimes for the same car model). Besides the factory versions, there were aftermarket units, some cheaply made and also some of better quality; so that a restorer today may find more than one legitimate choice for his car. On these radios - Hudson and others - the tuner section, the amplifier with its power supply, and the speaker might all be integral, or they might be separate components. In a correction for the November/December '02 Hudsonotes, HET Club Radio Advisor Steve Engel points out that the 1940 Hudson radios (except for the smaller Detrola type) were of this three-piece construction; but the 1938-39 and 1941 Hudson radios were self-contained single units. Hudson radios 1942 and up

were of the familiar type, self-contained except for the separate speaker. A factory adapter kit was also available for installing the 1942 (Zenith) radio in 1941 cars.

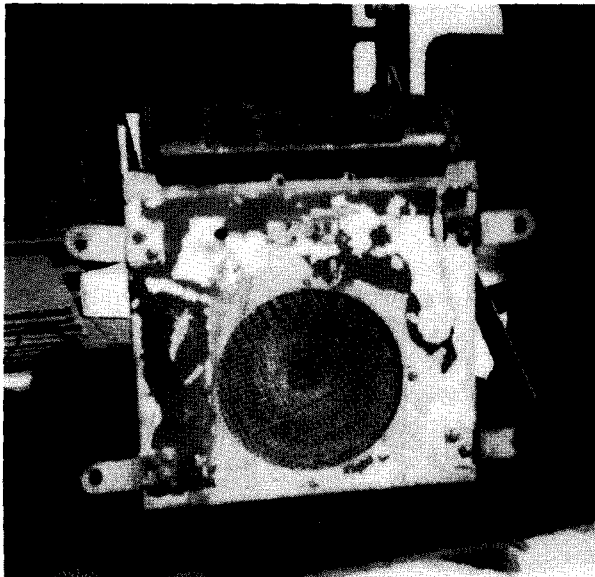
The 1942 and 1947 units had foot-controlled muting and station selection, and the 1946 version included a foot volume control besides. Procedure for pre-setting chosen stations also varied slightly on these radios. All apparently used single speakers, since Hudson did not list an optional rear-speaker kit until 1948.

The one-piece "Junior" (JA series) radios offered as an alternative for 1940-41 Hudsons were of surprisingly good quality for their size and price, Steve notes, judging by the one which he has repaired. Detrola, of Detroit, is listed as the builder of these, though it is believed that some of them (5 tubes; 5-inch speaker) may have come from Stewart-Warner along with the larger 6- and 8-tube sets. Retail price was about \$14.95.

RADIOS IN MOST 1955 Hudsons, from Sylvania, were the same as for 1953-54; but some late '55's used a Motorola HN5A8 similar to Motorola's custom aftermarket radios from 1952-55. The 1956-57 Hudson radios were again from Motorola, and were the same as on Nash (except for dial background). All of them were of the usual vacuum-tube type, apart from a very few (eleven?) late-'57 units which reportedly were of the then-voguish "hybrid" design, with tubes and transistors combined.

Like all previous Hudson radios, these were for AM reception only. The first U.S. car to offer FM apparently was the 1958 Lincoln, using an add-on

FM tuner, Steve tells us. FM soon became an option on other makes as well, and aftermarket FM tuners for use with existing car radios (mono, 12-volt, negative ground) also became a familiar accessory. Of solid-state (transistorized) design, these consumed little power, and usually delivered audio quality as good as broadcast and the car's original radio would allow. Typically these tuners changed the incoming FM programs into an AM signal at about 1400 kilocycles which could be fed into the car radio's antenna socket. Normal AM reception was not affected, and connections were of the simple plug-in kind.



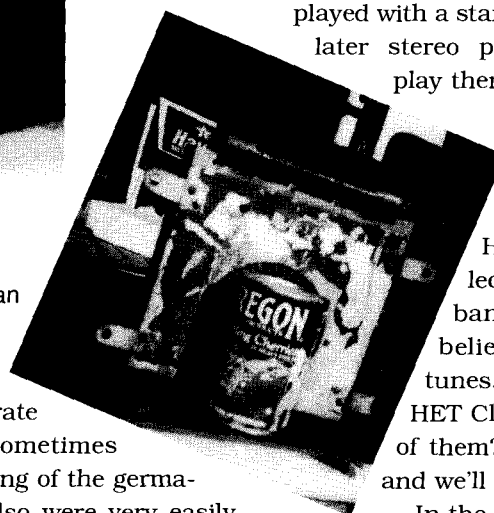
1940 Hudson Radio JA-40 by Stewart-Warner (or Detrola). Another view...the can gives an idea of the overall size.

For Hudson owners who wish to enjoy FM reception without compromising their car's original equipment—which is nearly always 6-volt, with positive ground—Steve suggests that one of these accessory tuners can be used along with one additional piece of solid-state electronic equipment: an “inverter” which will change 6 volts D.C. to 12 volts, with the same or opposite ground polarity as needed. He does not mention a brand name, but states that the inverter is usually about the size of two ordinary voltage regulators, with three wire connections plus ground. Some old-car owners have also placed a small 12 volt motorcycle battery, with trickle charger, in the trunk as a power source for the FM tuner, Steve reports. These tuners should be fused at about 1 ampere.

OTHER INVERTERS which can change 12 volts D.C. to 120-volts A.C. (so that small household appliances can be powered from the battery) are not unusual today, but I am not aware of any 6-to-120-volt versions (can a reader tell us?). These devices are more efficient than the dynamotors, etc. of

the past, but they tend to offer rather limited wattage output—or else to make very heavy demands on a vehicle's electrical system.

With the ubiquity of solid-state equipment at present, one may easily forget that early transistors in the 1950's were costly, and in short supply, due partly to



a high rejection rate in production (sometimes 75% or worse). Being of the germanium type, they also were very easily heat-damaged. Hence a tiny portable AM radio might sell in the \$70 range, and hybrid designs also were favored for a time. Generally the hybrids worked O.K., but could present servicing problems later.

A letter about earlier radio work arrived at column deadline time from Ken Krueger, Illinois. Ken is a longtime HET member and was our first WTN Tech & Ads Editor. He writes that when his mother first came to the U.S. in 1923, she worked for Grigsby-Grunow in Chicago as a coil winder for Majestic radios. Later she met the Galvins and worked for them at Motorola in the experimental department. Harry Kraus, Michigan, had his own radio repair shop, and also worked at Detrola for a time (he was later at Hudson, in Engineering; and afterward at Chrysler). Possibly we have many others in HET that can tell us about a family member who worked

for Hudson, or for one of its supply companies.

B.A. ROLFE'S BAND may be remembered today mostly for its appearance on Hudson-sponsored radio programs c. 1934. It is not likely that any transcription discs (which were 33 r.p.m. but not microgroove, and usually 16-inch size) of these programs still exist; but the Rolfe band earlier had also made records for home use, notably in the late 1920's on the Edison label. Edison's discs, produced 1912-1929, were standard-speed (78-80 r.p.m.) and unusually thick (about 1/4 inch); but like his cylinders they were vertical-cut, and so could not be played with a standard mono pickup. A later stereo pickup, however, will play them fairly well.

As some readers already know, this columnist's second bad habit (next to Hudsons) is record collecting. All of the Rolfe band recordings, I believe, were of dance tunes. Has anyone in the HET Club seen or heard any of them? Please let us know, and we'll report later.

In the mid-1950's there was also a “Hudson” record label, apparently one of several issued by a small New Jersey company. The sample I have is the usual 12-inch long-playing microgroove mono, 33 r.p.m., and is again a dance record—cha cha and mambo (remember those?). No listing on jacket of the label's other offerings, however.

The “Hornet” name has also had some non-automotive applications. From Kent Krause, Nebraska, I learn of a “Hornet” weed-killer compound; and of course both a fighter airplane and an aircraft-carrier ship have been so named. Any other examples?

RECORD PLAYERS for cars were unheard-of in Hudson's time; and since then, magnetic tapes (and digitally dented discs) have proved to be much more practicable for use in a moving vehicle. A few custom installations using magnetic wire were heard of in the late 1940's (remember those

home wire recorders, mostly by Webster-Chicago?); and before W.W. II, there reportedly were a few experimental installations using optical movie soundtrack. It's not likely that anyone tried wax cylinders, except for mobile dictation equipment.

However, some 3-speed turntables and pickups (mono, that is) were built for 12-volt automotive use in the late '50's or so, mostly as an option for Chrysler-made vehicles. Speakers and amplifier of the car radio were used, but everyday practicality was uncertain, and extra stylus pressure (not ideal for microgroove) was necessary, especially on rough roads. An after-market version was available via J.C. Whitney.

With most old tube-type radios, the signal from a standard crystal (Rochelle salt) phonograph pickup cartridge could be fed to the grid of one tube, usually at the first audio stage, through or across a suitable control resistor (variable, 0-2 megohms). There may also have been a few old turntables, spring-driven but with crystal electric pickup, built especially for use with battery radios.

Nevertheless, I think I shall keep my cherished 78's for home listening only.

LISTED WITHOUT explanation in the 1946-49 Hudson parts catalogues are several accessory items including #HS 11678, "Tire static eliminator injector," along with #HS 116579, "Tire static eliminator powder-pkg." No doubt these were listed for many Brand X vehicles as well-but how did the injector work, and was the powder effective in reducing radio interference? Has anyone in HET ever seen these items? For now, they remain on our Hudson mystery list, along with the 1948-49 "Export" radios, the '46-47 radio shortwave adapter kit, the '46-47 "Export" headlights and dimming resistor kit, the '40-42 Guardsall Auto Alarm, the '40-42 Hudson "sleeper" kits (apparently not an exclusive Nash option!), the '48-51 electric shaver, home & auto combination (just how did this work?), the various '40-49 "tool kits" or "tool bag assemblies" or the "owner supply kit" ... and whatever

else of this kind that readers may suggest, especially from the earlier years. If you can describe or de-mystify any of these Hudson "phantom parts," please let us know, and we'll report in future issues.

MINIATURE MODELS of some Hudsons may not be as difficult to find at present as they were in years past. Columnist Richard Polese (November/December '02 WTN) mentions an attractive 1930 Hudson coupé in 1:32 scale, from The National Motor Museum Mint, Connecticut (present address apparently 1 Eversley Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06851-5844; phone 888-215-6468). Gene Chapman, Georgia, and Tom Gleydura, Ohio, have also written me about this model, and both enclosed color illustrations. The model reportedly shows excellent detail, and the cost is only about \$16 (with shipping included). Other Museum Mint models (same scale and price) include Packard, Duesenberg, several Fords, Reo, Imperial, and more. Most have hoods which open to reveal the engine (the original one, we trust).

Other Hudson miniatures in various scales are also available, though usually one will need to search beyond the offerings at summer old-car meets. Tom suggests checking all of the hobby shops in your home area and beyond, even those specializing in model trains. Toy stores and toy departments-even at a few chain stores such as Target or Wal-Mart-should be included as well, he notes. And according to my computer-savvy friends, the Internet is another possible source.

MOST HUDSON owners, we hope, have a spare set of proper brake linings (asbestos type, riveted, and top-quality) stored in reserve. It would be dismal to find a Hudson or other collector vehicle with the squeaks or other brake problems caused by modern "environmentally approved" lining materials-even if some may say "that's the brakes." Also, the brake shoes, especially in front, should be hand-adjusted regularly to maintain a fairly high pedal, for quick response and for even wear of linings. Next be sure that the cable-operated safety brake linkage underneath your Hudson is not merely

a curiosity, but is in functional working order (see manuals). Adjust the cables if necessary, and use a light lubricant on them-CRC or WD-40 spray, perhaps, or a touch of Lubriplate-type lithium grease. The penetrating oils can also be sprayed on the outer sheaths of these Bendix-type cables, to preserve flexibility and inhibit rust.

Plain motor oil, medium-heavy and non-detergent if possible, is O.K. to use on all ungreased pivot points in the linkage of brakes (and clutch, and gearshift) under the car, after a penetrant has been used if necessary to free any seized parts. One of the spray products designed to evaporate, leaving a film of lubricant, may also be useful here (as it is for door latches, Drive-Master, etc.). Let us know if you have a favorite brand, and how well it works.

In an emergency, the application of rear brakes alone (as by the safety system) may cause the car to "fishtail" somewhat... but it may also save your neck, and the car's. If you can find a large, flat, and completely deserted road area (scarce these days), you may wish to practice a bit, at low speeds.

Brakes are probably the first item to be checked when a car comes out of winter or other extended storage. If hydraulic (Hudson '36 and up), this includes fluid level and condition; also any possibility of leakage or lockup under hard use. On these cars, too, it may be prudent to operate the brake and clutch pedals every month or two while stored.

GOOD LUCK, a happy spring-time, and an enjoyable Easter to everyone in HET! And to Steve Engel, a special thank-you for his help with this column, which concludes a four-part series about radios in Hudsons.



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