

Automotive Adornments

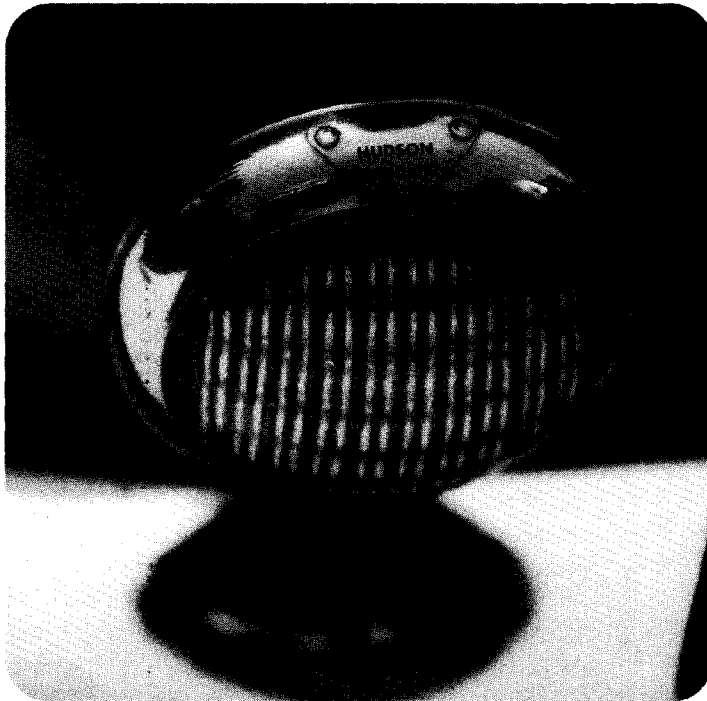
HUDSONOTES
by George Schmidt

THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR has been made in many varieties since it reportedly was invented in 1911 for the Indianapolis auto race. For a collector vehicle we favor versions which, even if aftermarket or brand-new, are faithful to the car's period and style—or at least do not require drilling of extra holes. Though external rear-view mirrors were not universal on U.S. cars until the late 1960's, Hudson offered a number of accessory types, including several in the 1920's and '30's which attached to a front door hinge or to the sidemounted spare tire. Another version c. 1926 clamped to the top edge of the car door and was available either alone or combined with a small spotlight.

Also offered in 1926 for Hudson and Essex was one spotlight with a shaft and bevel gears and a "split ball" inside control handle. A later version, the Unity "Sport-Lite," with gears and with the handle placed as on modern types, was available in 1929. After a few more years these spotlights, too, could be had with an attached mirror head, and this apparently was the first type of remote-control rear-view mirror available for cars. It was convenient, but sometimes not quite as practical on later streamlined models such as the Hudson step-downs, if the mirror was partly obscured by a windshield pillar, or could be too easily caught and broken with the closing of the car door. With through-the-door spotlight mounting on Hudsons '52 and up, this was not a problem.

Mirrors were attached to the rear of the lamp shell, or sometimes mounted on a short arm at the side. This lat-

ter type was more vulnerable, but was necessary on some models to give proper visibility. However, on a few cars a plain spotlight and separate outside mirror might be more practical—if a cluttered appearance can be avoided.



Has anyone seen front-fender outside mirrors used on a Hudson? A few aftermarket ones were installed during the step-down years (judging by the screw holes found later), but we have no idea as to the authenticity or appearance—or usefulness. Readers?

MOST OUTSIDE mirrors listed by Hudson were of the usual type with an arm for door mounting, and this was the style oftenest used. Some, including # HA 210654 for '48-49, fitted on either side of the car (or on both, in a matched pair); others were made specifically for the left or the right side. Outside mirrors were standard equipment on trucks.

Replacement mirror glass can be cut to fit (the circle shape is the easiest) at most auto glass shops, often utilizing the pieces which remain from making up large truck or bus mirrors.

For owners who wanted a larger inside rear-view mirror, Hudson during 1940-50 or longer offered an optional "rimless" oval one. The "glare proof" or day-and-night inside mirror was another Hudson option 1948 and up (though not as practicable on convertibles). In the mid-1930's Hudson and some other cars had offered an accessory inside rear-view mirror which included a small clock placed at one side. Most were daily-wind (via pull-chain), but an 8-day version was also listed.

Clamp-on accessory external mirrors for door edge were still available in the 1950's (now a bit more streamlined), and I have one of these on my Hudson.

However, the strangest clamp-on mirror I've seen is one given to me by a late friend. This has two round mirror heads pointed in opposite directions, the smaller one being labeled "Passing Eye."

A few years ago *Old Cars* published a "mystery" photo of an identical unit, showing the "futuristic" 1950's styling, and asking readers how this accessory might have been used. I still don't know—do you?

THE "SNAP-UP" electric locking fuel tank cap appeared shortly before World War II, made by a small company in Ashland, Kentucky. It continued available through the 6-volt era, and was sold mainly by new-car dealers, including Hudson 1946-51 or

later. A wood display stand with sample cap was featured in showrooms—as was one also for lights and other accessories. Control for the electric cap was usually a small underdash ivory-and-nickel pushbutton. Lacking this, a less conspicuous button (or a spare Hudson starter button, if space permits) may be preferred. Key-locking gas tank caps were also a Hudson option from '36 or earlier through '47 and were a familiar aftermarket item for most other years. Many were of a hinged type similar to the electric ones—recommended for : of us who tend to forget the cap on car roof or gas pump when refueling. The lock parts can be given an occasional drop of oil or lock lubricant if needed. Also, a new gasket at filler neck can be made of cork, leather, or fiber stock—but note that on most cars, the cap, locking or non-locking type, should not be totally airtight, or vacuum formation inside the tank can result.

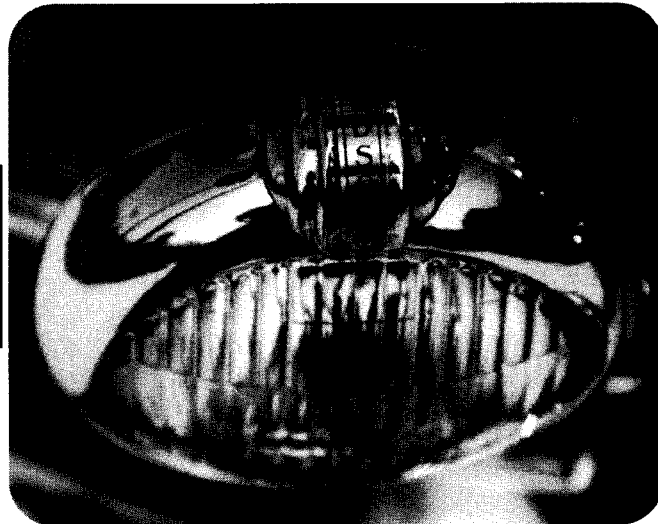
Various Hudson-branded accessory lights were available in most years. Here we see dealer-installed "Hudson" driving lights on Press Kale's newly restored '49 Cv.

MANUAL CHOKE control kits were available for years as an aftermarket item, and were occasionally installed on Hudsons. Hudson had included an automatic choke (Carter Climatic Control) on most models since 1936 or earlier, and this has usually been satisfactory if the thermostatic coil is the correct one and is an airtight fit on the carburetor, with no obstruction in the hot-air tube from manifold—and if the thermostat and the fast (cold) idle and "unloader" linkages are properly adjusted and not hopelessly worn out. Often more than one road test, at various temperatures, may be necessary to get all of this just right... and these days, sometimes readjustments are needed simply because of bad fuel (wrong volatility or the like). Possibly Hornets are a bit more sensitive to all of this than are other Hudsons (what do readers say?).

For those who wish to use an add-on hand choke, however (with Bowden wire and underdash control),

it can be made somewhat less unsightly if a spare matching Hudson dash knob is substituted for the one in kit. Or a spare Hudson hood-latch cable and T-handle can be used. For most of us, the main problem with a hand choke is probably in remembering to un-choke it gradually as the engine warms up.

An auxiliary hand throttle control was standard equipment on most early cars, and one 1917 book (Pratt: *The Automobile Instructor*) even suggests that beginning drivers learn to handle this (along with the spark lever) before attempting to use the foot accelerator. A few vehicles, in fact, retained a hand throttle for years afterward ('34 Ford and '47 Jaguar are two I recall). For the rest, this was only an add-on accesso-



Photos :M.A. Jackson

ry for specialized use (on some emergency vehicles, for example). Has any reader seen a Hudson so equipped?

HUDSON TRUCKS, '47 and earlier, are a temptation to "optionalize" completely, as is popularly done with pickup trucks today, since virtually all of the dress-up and other extras made for the Hudson passenger models of those years will fit, and are authentic parts. Spot and fog lights, wide-white-wall tires, overdrive, bumper guards, radio and electric clock, deluxe steering wheel, front-fender "eyebrow" lights, extra chrome trim... the list is long. Of course few if any of these trucks were ever thus adorned in their own era, when they were regarded simply as practical workaday vehicles.

A truck with authentic Hudson add-ons can be quite handsome (May/June *WTN*, p. 27), although the adding of aftermarket items requires more caution. Possibly a set of small "clearance lights" for the roof might be acceptable, if these can be found in a style true to the period, and of better quality than most of the black-enamelled specimens which once were common. Lens color is usually amber (green, blue, or clear may also be allowable, but not red at front of vehicle). On a pickup they are mainly decorative, and can be wired to either the tail or the headlight circuit. A white "cargo light" at rear of cab is convenient, but would be an anachronism here. Maybe it would be tolerable if a small round free-standing backup-type lamp is used.

Trucks—pickups and a few others—are an important part of Hudson's history. Even the '48 Hudson pickup (the prototype, never manufactured) is remembered, and was pictured not long ago in one of the nostalgia magazines. Note too that although passenger-car-based trucks disappeared after 1947, they later returned in force — Ford Ranchero, Chevrolet El Camino, and a few more; and today we seem to have an ever-increasing number of vehicles which attempt to bridge the gap between "truck" and "car."

GEARSHIFT KNOBS of solid onyx (with metal bushing insert) were a Hudson accessory c. 1929. A spotlight with matching onyx ball handle was also available, and various onyx items of this kind were offered for several Brand X cars as well.

The conventional column-mounted gearshift lever and knob, or "Handy Shift," appeared on Hudson and other cars ten years later (1939), taking the place of Hudson/Terraplane's exclusive 1935-39 "Electric Hand" optional shift system (also column-mounted, with its tiny selector lever). A factory kit was also available for retrofitting the new Handy Shift onto 1937-39

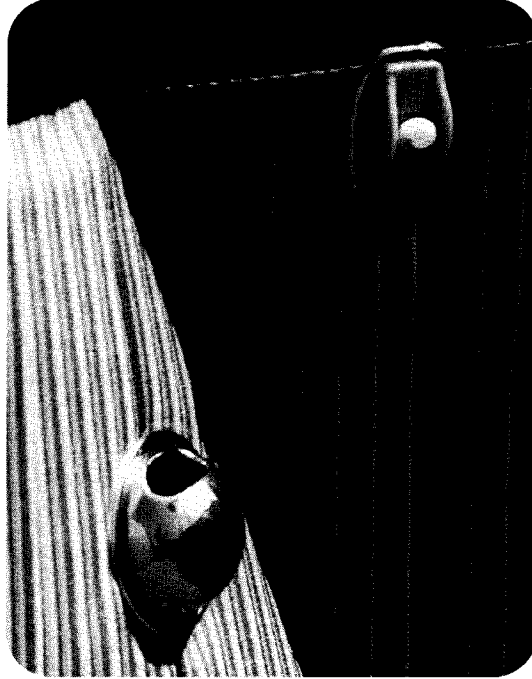
floor-shift models (making this a legitimate changeover).

For the all-new 1948-49 "Step-Down" Hudson Super, the gearshift knob was made of brown marbled plastic (like other interior parts), but with a molded ivory plastic inlay featuring the Hudson ship and "H" castle motifs. The brown Super horn button had a matching inlay. On '48-49 Commodores, the colors were simply "negated" — an ivory plastic shift knob (handsome but not as durable), with brown inlaid design. For 1950 and up, the ivory inlay was retained, with knobs made in various colors—turquoise, maroon, etc.—to match dashboard knobs and car interior.

These inlaid shift knobs were distinctive and still are, and it is disconcerting to see one at a car show which has been stolen for use on a Brand X vehicle! Does anyone know of the plastics manufacturer who worked with Hudson to make these knobs, and also the steering-wheel emblems (including the ones 1950 and up, with their deep-molded clear plastic and jewel-like colors)? One sees far less of this on today's vehicles, despite the much greater use of plastic—most of it now about as beautiful as a typical computer housing.

ADD-ON SOLENOIDS, 6-volt and 12-volt, were a staple item in accessory catalogues during the 1950's and longer. Their main use was by auto customizers to construct electric-powered door, trunk, and other latches, as auxiliaries or sometimes to permit removal of the stock external handles. I recall being tempted to order one for building perhaps the ultimate power-assist power ashtray. Many Brand X cars since then, of course, have included an optional electric trunk release; and even the electric locking fuel tank cap, I'm told, has lately staged its return. Without doubt the electric release would also be a convenience on Hudson trunks, particularly 1951 and up, if it could be installed without mutilating the original latch mechanism or other parts. Has anyone tried this, and was it a success? (No, I didn't suggest it!)

Ash trays (non-powered) apparently were adequate on most Hudsons. The 1926 Gomery-Schwartz Hudson catalogue offered a "smoking set" with ash receiver and spaces for matchbox and cigarette pack, in polished aluminum, for \$1 (front or rear seat usage not specified). For 1940-47 and some other Hudsons the dashboard and



Chromed revolving rear seat ashtray was factory-installed optional trim on Press Kale's '49 Convertible. Photo by M. A. Jackson

rear-quarter ash trays were all standard inclusions (not accessories). On most "step-down" Hudsons 1948 and up, the ash trays set into the door and rear-quarter "pockets" were a very distinctive feature. The '48-49 dashboard thus had no ash tray, though a rather prosaic underdash add-on, # HA 216258, with ivory plastic handle, was available—and the in-dash ash tray reappeared 1950 and up.

I've never seen an accessory front-seatback ash tray for these cars, but it, too, was listed, # HA 216370 (although a rear-seat cigar lighter was not). Some Hudsons c. 1954 had a rear-quarter ash tray which was surface-mounted but had a chromed cover to match the pocket-mounted ash trays. No doubt this would also make an appropriate seatback ash tray if one is needed, with lower body painted to match the car interior.

A pinch of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) is sometimes recommended to sweeten or deodorize auto ash trays. It is helpful but may also be somewhat corrosive if used constantly.

VAN AUKEN auxiliary oversize front bumper guards or "grille guards" —with the knob-shaped tops — were a familiar post-W.W.II accessory, and were available on Hudsons 1948-49 and later, # HA 210828. They fastened over the large stock bumper guards, and included a tubular center crossbar and also two steel skid straps which extended back to the main second frame crossmember underneath. To avoid two non-matching crossbars above front bumper, the Van Aukens could be used over the plainer Hudson "Super" style front bumper guards. Similar bumper add-ons were also seen on other U.S. cars before and after the war, and apparently were the predecessors of today's "brush guards."

An accessory rear bumper-guard kit (# HA 211125—same brand?) was also offered for 1948-49 and some '50 Hudsons, but it seems to be much rarer, perhaps because of inconvenience when loading and unloading trunk.

For 1946-47, extension pieces for the ends of front and rear bumpers were optional (or standard on some). These too were featured on Hudson and several Brand X cars. The 1940-42 Hudsons had a sizable variety of front and rear bumper guards. The big Country Club models had guards at rear with an upper center crossbar, but this was pivoted for better access to the trunk. It was an option on the other models.

CAR COMPASSES were a familiar accessory (usually aftermarket) around 1940 and again in the late 1960's, as I recall. The later ones, using modern magnetic alloys, were more effective but still not fully reliable, especially in a steel-topped vehicle or when placed too near other ferrous parts or stray magnetic fields.

Also, no magnetic compass is very accurate in some areas, including portions of Wisconsin and neighboring states (see any isogonic map), doubtless due partly to most of the famous Mesabi iron still remaining underground.

Nevertheless one wishes that some of the old compasses could be reproduced (or perhaps re-magnetized), as a finishing touch for one's collector vehicle. Nearly all of them featured a magnetic ball floating in liquid, sometimes with a correction adjustment and/or optional lighting. Usual mounting spot was near top center of windshield. Recently I found a much-simplified later version which has merely a 1-inch clear outer globe and suction-cup mounting. I've put it on the plastic dash panel of my Brand X, and note that its readings are not exact but are well within reason, except while the car's starter motor is being used.

Anyone for a gyrocompass, or maybe guidance by satellite?

AT THIS time of writing (May), I am still eagerly awaiting the return of my '50 Hudson Commodore 8 to the world of the living. Despite a few unexpected problems in putting the critter back together and readying it for the road, plans have been made for myself along with two friends to bring it to the HET National Meet here in Wisconsin this year. We're not yet sure how this will work out, but please wish us luck. Also planned: a more complete report on this car in a future *WTN*.

Good luck too to you and your Hudson at the HET National and other old-car events this summer!



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