

Lots of Lights

HUDSONOTES
by George Schmidt

BACKUP LIGHTS of the 1940's, like fog lights of the 1930's, were sometimes installed as single units rather than in pairs. The matching second lamp was a separate option (as was also the second tail/brake lamp on some models as late as 1940). Today a vehicle from those years with only a single accessory lamp may sometimes look a bit incomplete, even though perfectly authentic. Hudson used Appleton fog lamps for 1940-41, and Unity ones thereafter (no brand listing here for the 1937-39 lamps; perhaps Lorraine or Corcoran-Brown). From the early years, it was recommended that they be wired so that the dash and taillights were lit whenever the fog lamps were in use.

Sealed-beam units appeared in fall 1940 for headlamps, and later for accessory lights. Hudson's 1942 listing offers some Unity fog lamps with separate bulb, lens, and reflector, and others with sealed-beams—and for those with bulbs, a further choice of plain amber or clear-and-amber lenses, or an adapter to convert to sealed beams! We wonder how many of each kind were sold. And were the bi-color lenses more efficient? They were available with the Hudson (and perhaps other car?) name molded in.

Backup lamp kits for dealer installation are listed in Hudson parts books

for 1946-47 and for 1948-49; but not for 1940-42—an odd omission since the 1940 Hudson accessory brochure shows a backup lamp (single). New for 1939, it looked like a small uncolored fog lamp, and it could be used either with or without its built-in warning bell. For 1946-47, the Hudson-authorized backup light was a larger single unit with sealed-beam bulb (clear lens); and this same unit was also available, singly or in a pair, as "driving lights" for the front of the car.

Do any of these lights exist on a Hudson today? (If so, please tell us.) The single extra-large backup light may also have been used on a few Brand X cars at the time; but for a less awkward appearance, a smaller lamp of similar style might be preferred. Several aftermarket versions of these were offered, although they rarely were used in pairs before the early 1950's. Switching was manual on these Hudsons.

Two styles of accessory backup lamps were used on 1948-51 stepdown Hudsons. Unity's "Model B," fully authentic, matched the car's fog lights in miniature, and could be had with a Hudson nameplate. However, the beehive or bullet-shaped lights from Unity or Auto Lamp were probably more familiar on these cars. All used the 6-volt #1129 bulb.

Add-on backup lights generally had some kind of swivel, wedge-shaped base, etc. to permit adjustment. They should be aimed straight rearward, or with a slight outward spread. Check them at night to see where most of the light is being directed, both for illumination and to warn other drivers.

PLACEMENT of backup lamps was not always uniform on Hudson stepdown models before 1952. A few were mounted on a rear fender or on



the trunk lid. However, the best location I have found, for 1948-51 Hudsons, is on the narrow panel just below the trunk lid, with the two lights spaced 27 inches apart (13.5 inches from car's centerline), and 4.5 inches from the two body seams. Has anyone a copy of the original factory kit instructions, with recommended spacing?

Wiring of backup lights is extremely simple on Hudsons 1951 and up with Hydra-Matic transmissions, since the neutral safety switch on these (at base of steering column) has two leftover terminals which turn "on" in reverse gear, and need only a feed wire from the ignition switch.

On stick shift and Drive-Master Hudsons, 1948-51 and some others, the backup lights use a manual dash switch with matching knob (sometimes under dash), at driver's left. Also required is a small pilot light, matching the one for turn signals, and placed an inch or two below it in the far-left dash panel. A 10- or 14-ampere fuse, though not specified in the factory kit, should be in the feed wire from ignition switch (in a metal holder, as for heater or turn signals).

These small pilot lights were first used on some cars as a headlight high-beam indicator before the high-beam pilot was built into speedometers (late 1930's). A similar warning light for the fog lamps would also be helpful, especially for use in daylight, though one would rather not drill another hole in dash for it. My own non-stock solution (remember, you didn't read it here) was to wire one pilot bulb to both the fog and the backup lights, using two small rectifiers or "one-way" diodes (from radio shop) to keep the circuits separate. These gizmos look like small condensers or resistors, with two wire leads, and are rated at 5 amperes and 50 peak volts. Bullet-type terminals are added to make this entirely a "plug-in" modification. Another pair of these can be used, for example, with a small added underdash courtesy light if you wish it to operate with both right and left door lights.

ONE MORE electrical anachronism (which you didn't read here): some-times an add-on 4-way emergency flasher kit can still be found, and may be Inconspicuously installed (perhaps on one side kick panel) with the flasher and pilot bulb changed from 12 to 6 volts if necessary. Auto Lamp's

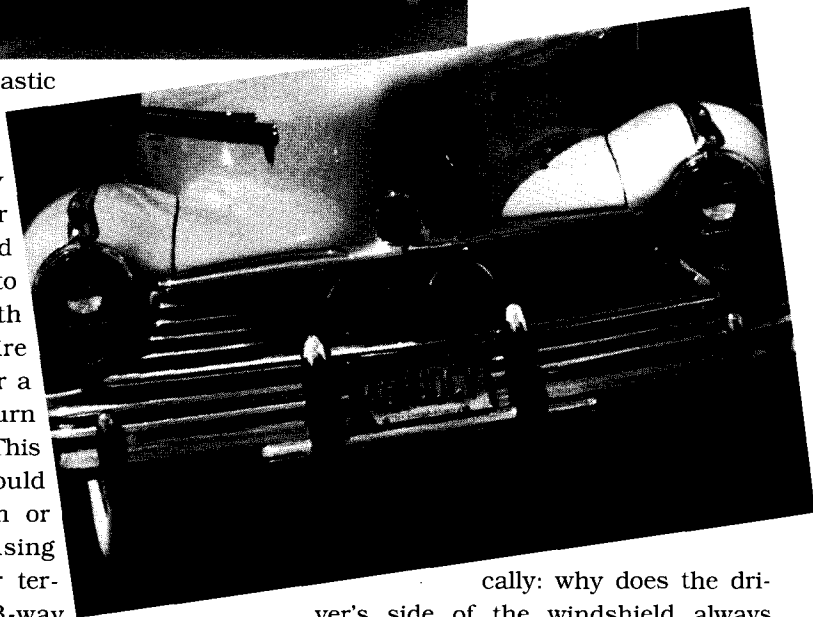


switch had a plastic knob of the same size and style as many Hudson heater controls, and had enough circuits to allow use with either a 5-wire (1952 and up) or a 3-wire (earlier) turn signal switch. This wiring, too, should be made plug-in or detachable, using bullet and other terminals and 3-way connectors—and also a fuse, if not wired through one of the circuit-breakers on car.

Turn-signal wiring on 1948-51 Hudsons is especially simple, so that an added 4-way switch need only join three wires—from left signal, from right signal, and from an auxiliary flasher (which connects to a circuit breaker, but not through ignition switch). Lacking a matching switch of this kind, I have sometimes modified a spare Hudson headlight switch so that only the "off" and "park/tail" positions are used, and a small added screw

blocks the "head" position. This modified switch (with Hudson knob and ring) can be used for the 4-way lights and also for fog-with-tail lights, if a proper original switch from Cole, Aetna, et al. cannot be found. But please don't say that you read it in *WTN*. Both signal flashers can share one pilot light, with no rectifiers needed.

NON-STOCK ADDITIONS to an old car are relatively harmless if they are easily removable, and unmodified replacement parts are kept as extras. My Pegasus hood mascot (J.C. Whitney, 1953) is mounted on a spare '49 Hudson Super hood ornament. More practi-

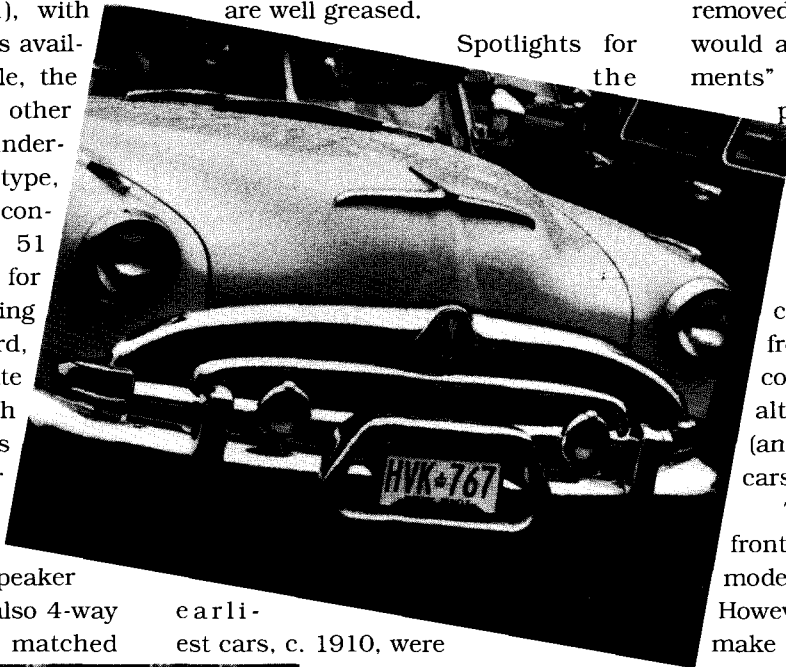


cally: why does the driver's side of the windshield always seem slower to de-fog? Nash for 1941-48 had separate butterfly-type manual shutoffs at blower for the two sides, and I've placed one of these (it's just the right size) in a spare Hudson defroster elbow to restrict flow at passenger side of car. But original undrilled parts—elbow, Super ornament, and also chromed strip for dashboard—are stored away. Authentic accessory controls are especially easy to place on 1948-49 Hudsons because of the long chromed dash strip which is molded from the back to be drilled for extra matching

switches. The symmetrical layout should be retained (as for example; Drive-Master or Vac. Clutch at one side of the center grouping, and fog lights or rear speaker at the other—or backup lights at one side of steering column, and top control or rear wiper, etc. on the other. Center of strip has provision for one extra-large hole, for cigar lighter.) The Hudson knobs also need to be all in chrome or a single color (not always found in the factory kits).

It is unlikely that anyone ever needed all of the eight extra spaces. For 1950 there were only two extra spaces (and one for 1951), with chromed underdash brackets available for anything more. Cole, the maker of many Hudson and other dash switches, also offered underdash brackets (clamp-on type, not chromed) to hold extra controls. However, the 1950-51 pushbutton-type switches for Drive-Master required cutting an extra hole in the dashboard, and did not permit separate use of the Vacuum Clutch (though a blank space was included in the switch). For now, my 1950 Commodore will have a 1949-type Drive-Master switch, and rear-speaker fader control (and perhaps also 4-way flasher switch), all with matched

SPOTLIGHT SHAFTS (July/Aug. WTN) from Unity, and perhaps others, have remained practically unchanged, except for the great variety of lengths available, since the 1940's or earlier. On Hudson stepdown models it is usually preferred to have them nearly as short as possible, especially inside the car. If this interferes with passenger glovebox door (or with both glovebox doors on 1948-49 Commodores), it is possible to change angle of inside handle by removing it and filing a third flat spot on one of the internal shafts. Wedge bolt should lock onto the new spot O.K. Be sure spotlight bevel gears are well greased.



Spotlights for the

earliest cars, c. 1910, were

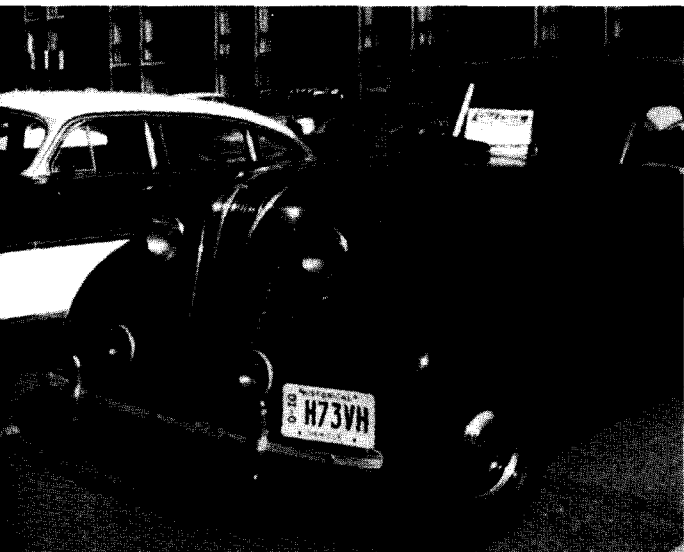
usually called "searchlights," since they were mostly of giant size, mounted on a pedestal on running board. They were an aftermarket accessory available from sources such as A. L. Dyke (the auto-encyclopedia man, also known for early-day special bodies, matching rear seats for cars which had none, and the like). Since not all cars at the time had an electric system, these lights could be had with their own battery (reportedly good for 50 hours), and provision for recharging. An acetylene-gas searchlight version was also available.

DURING THE 1960's, before the current fad of using auto headlamps in broad daylight (with attending energy waste), the "running light" became a familiar accessory item. It was usually a small clear lamp, similar to a backup light, placed at the center of the front grille or bumper, and wired to operate along with the ignition at all times. It does not belong to Hudson's era, even though some models seem to have a natural space for it (inside the 1950 grille triangle, for instance). If a non-authentic accessory of this kind is to be used, it needs to be carefully installed so that it can later be removed without injury to the car. This would also be true of such "improvements" as an auxiliary brake light placed at the rear window (quite easily connected on Hudsons which have separate bulbs for the brake lights and rear turn signals).

However, I think I shall continue to do without. Ditto for front-fender clearance lights, cornering lamps, et cetera—although halogen headlamps (and radar detectors) for 6-volt cars might be another matter!

The famous white triangle at front was lighted on most Hudson models 1946 and up, but not on all. However, if a purist does not wish to make a 5/8" hole in the blank backing plate from his unlighted triangle ornament in order to add the light, he can probably use the plate from a parts car, complete with hole, socket, wire, and #55 bulb (this was a legitimate option, I believe; and some underhood harnesses included a spare plug-in for it). Interestingly, a recent *Car and Driver* article commented on Pontiac's taking of the Duesenberg "J" and "SJ" model designations for its own use a few years ago, but neglected to mention Pontiac's similar purloining of the Hudson lighted white triangle emblem.

A TROUBLE LIGHT with cord and battery clips (or cigar-lighter plug) is still an oft-seen accessory. Most have used a bayonet-base auto bulb, but later ones may have a household-size bulb and socket (ordinary 1-inch



Hudson knobs and Cole brackets, placed under dash at center. It ain't exactly original, but please don't tell anybody.

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Edison screw base). The 12-volt frosted bulbs in this style are readily available, as were the 6-volt ones for years. They have also been used for interior lights in trailers, housecars, etc. (but not on house current!). However, the 6-volt versions have become very scarce these days. Any suggestions from readers? At present I have an adapter (from photoflash gun) which reduces the screw base to the smaller bayonet size, allowing use of tie 6-volt #1129 or #1133 bulbs. The brighter #1133 size can sometimes be found today because of its use in high-intensity reading lamps (with transformer).

The "Magnalite" trouble light, with bulls-eye lens and red plastic warning shield, was offered by Hudson and other new-car dealers during the 1940's and 1950's—as were the familiar Hobbs accessory lights for glovebox, trunk interior, and under the hood. A few underhood versions included a shell containing wire which could be unreeled, making this also usable as a trouble light. Many of the glovebox lights (with mercury switch) were also double-duty, with shade adjustable for map-light use.

Next time: a few more lights.

THE "WRINKLE" PAINT finishes on Hudson stepdown-era radio speaker grilles can be easily restored, Richard Cashion (New Jersey) tells us. The grille must be clean, and should be sprayed with the wrinkle paint which is available in black from most large auto stores. When dry, it can be re-sprayed with a fairly thin coat of satin-

finish enamel in the correct lighter color. He used Rust-Oleum's Hunt Club Green, #7944 (from Home Depot) for his '55 Super Wasp radio grille, but brown, blue, etc. to match other models should also be available. If original wrinkle paint is in good condition and merely a bit

shabby, the top color coat

may be used

alone.

Paint the grille only

(not the floored

screen). Rear-

speaker grille

(if any) should

match the front

one.

Another letter, from Leonard

Briggs (California),

states that brown

wrinkle paint is available from the makers of Kennedy toolboxes—either directly or from machine shop/industrial supply stores which carry Kennedy products. Our thanks to Dick and to Leonard for these practical suggestions.

A surprise package received from our WTN Editor contained Kleenex paper tissues in the standard original-size boxes which will fit the Hudson/Auto-Serv and other typical dispensers. The boxes are plastic-wrapped in 5-packs and labeled, "Professional. Not for individual or retail sale. Distributed by Kimberly-Clark Global Sales, Inc., Boswell, GA." These packs are reported to be available in office-supply stores. Thank you, Sam!

A MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a good holiday season
to all of our Hudson friends!



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