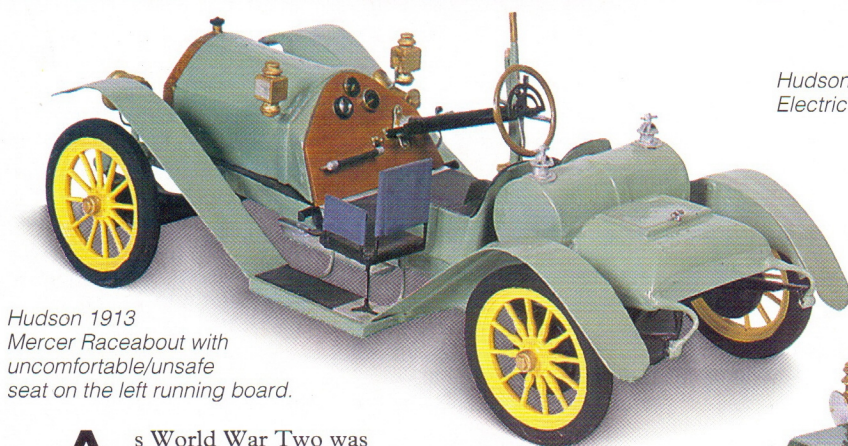


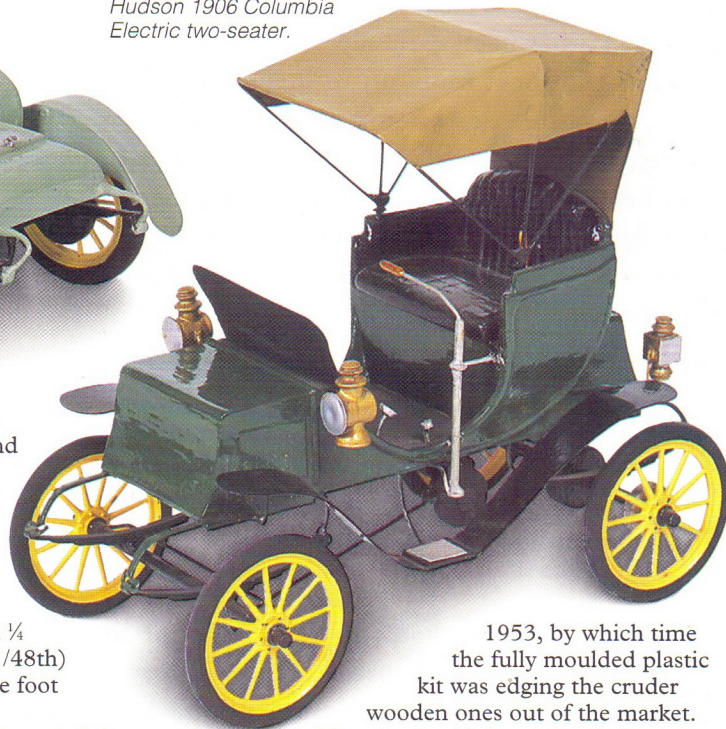
# Hudson Miniatures

A range of intricate wooden car kits, precursor to the more successful plastic kits, is examined by Mike Richardson.



*Hudson 1913 Mercer Raceabout with uncomfortable/unsafe seat on the left running board.*

*Hudson 1906 Columbia Electric two-seater.*



As World War Two was coming to an end, people's thoughts turned to more pleasant aspects of life, and they started planning for a return to normality. These plans obviously included leisure and hobby activities, which had been severely curtailed for nearly six years. No new private cars had been made, and private motoring had been reduced by fuel shortages, so it was reasonable to expect that cars would feature largely in the immediate post-war period.

When the war started one of the most popular car-related hobbies was petrol powered racing, on rails or tethered to a pole. However, when things started up again the fashion had passed on and the modelling public looked for something different.

Perhaps as a result of all the models made from scrap materials by engineers while waiting for their squadrons to return, there was a desire to make something. The introduction of the construction kit as we know it today dates from this period.

Before and during the war there was a variety of wooden aeroplane kits available, but these required a tremendous amount of work, and considerable skill, to make an acceptable model. After the war, enthusiasts wanted something more accurate, easier to make, and preferably a model which could be built using average skills at home. The first wooden kits were

already on sale in America by the end of the war, featuring military vehicles except for a couple of racing cars by Megow. The scales varied from  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch to the foot (1/48th) to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches to the foot (1/8th).

Hudson Miniatures led the field in 1947 when it launched its 'Old Timers' range of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch scale (1/16th) wooden car kits. The early kits had wheels and small parts of die-cast metal, but this was later changed to injection-moulded plastic. The kits were an instant success, and in total a range of 20 models was produced, with new introductions until 1952. Manufacturing ceased in

1953, by which time the fully moulded plastic kit was edging the cruder wooden ones out of the market.

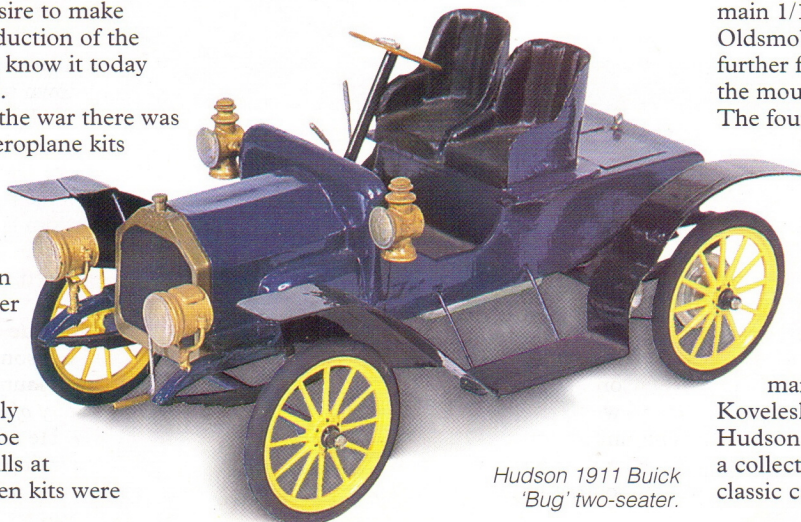
The wooden kit immediately became collectable in its own right, and as there was considerable stock of the kits in Hudson's warehouse, sales continued, albeit at a slower rate, until a major fire destroyed the remaining kits in 1958.

A diversion into a smaller scale, 1/32nd, was planned for 1951. These were called 'Little Old Timers' and were all plastic. They duplicated four of the main 1/16th scale kits, the Regal, Oldsmobile, Maxwell and Mercer. A further four were announced in 1953 but the moulds were never actually made.

The four original moulds were later sold to Revell, which used them in England.

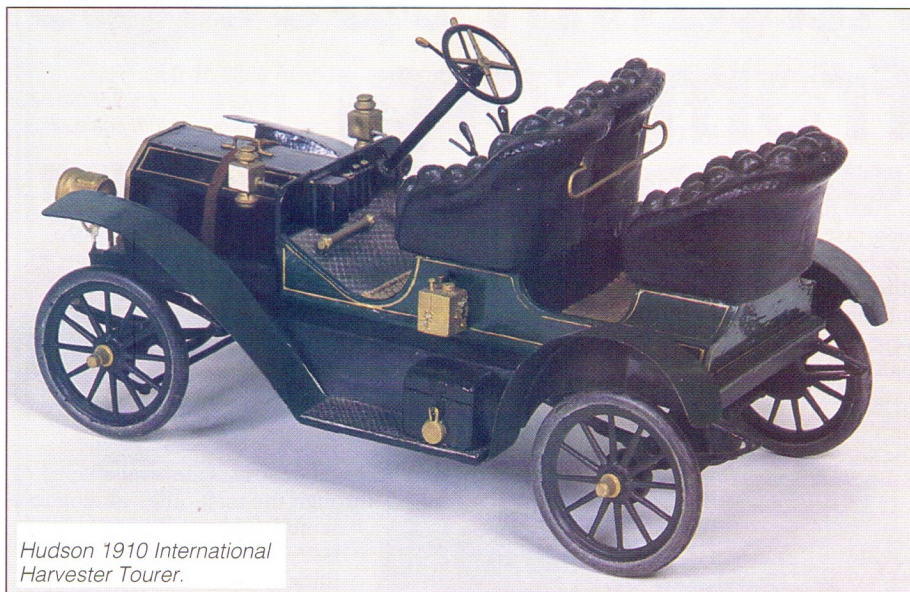
Aristo-Craft, of Newark, New Jersey, produced a small range of working electric lights in 1/16th scale for use with the Hudson kits. They were made of brass and used batteries for power.

The Hudson Old Timers were marketed very determinedly by Tony Koveleski, who together with Doris Hudson controlled the company. He was a collector and restorer of full sized classic cars and owned some of the



*Hudson 1911 Buick 'Bug' two-seater.*





Hudson 1910 International Harvester Tourer.

material was needed for realism, such as for the hoods, mudguards and similar, then thin card was used. Wire supports held the mudguards in place. The moulded plastic parts are quite well formed and the whole assembly is very effective, giving a pleasing result, though the finished models are very fragile. Building them was not a job to be attempted by the impatient or unskilled if an attractive model was desired! It is not hard to see why the appeal of quality, well fitting plastic moulded kits ousted the wooden ones completely from the market.

There is no record of Hudson ever allocating catalogue numbers to any of these kits, so the accompanying list is not in any significant order, just alphabetical for convenience.

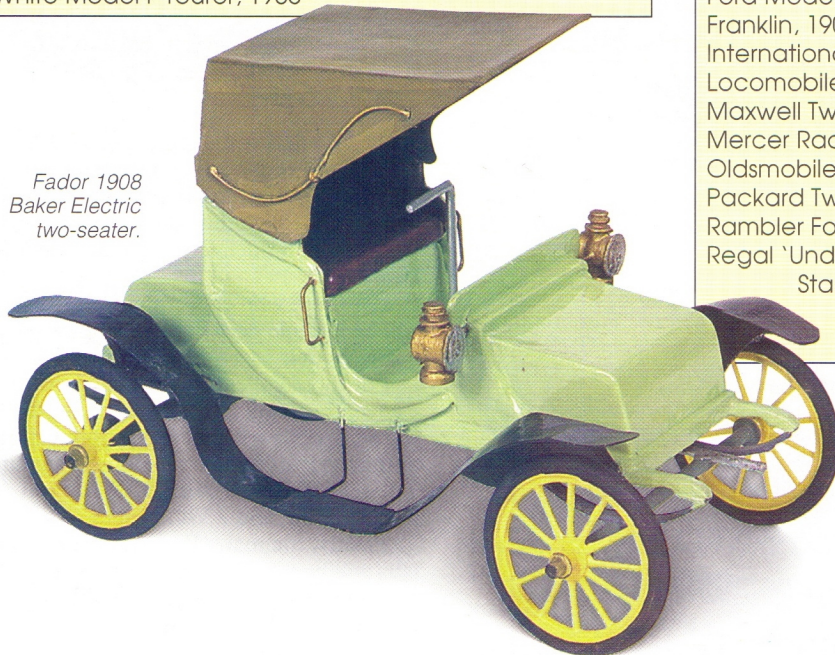
The evident success of the Hudson range caused other manufacturers to look

#### FADOR 'SMALLSTER' RANGE

Baker Electric Two-seater, 1908  
 Cadillac Two-seater, 1904  
 EMF 30 Racer, 1909 (Everitt-Metzger-Flanders Co, Detroit)  
 EMF '3 in 1' kit (this could be built as a two-seater, a three-seater 'Cloverleaf' or a full tourer)  
 Hupmobile Roadster, 1909  
 Reo Four-seater Runabout, 1905  
 White Model F Tourer, 1905

#### HUDSON MINIATURES 'OLD TIMERS'

Description	Aurora number
Brush Delivery Truck, 1911	574
Buick Bug Two-seater, 1911	
Cadillac, 1903	
Columbia Electric Two-seater, 1906	
Ford Model A Tonneau, 1903	
Ford Model T Roadster, 1910	
Ford Model T Touring Car, 1909	
Ford Model T Fire Engine, 1914	
Franklin, 1902	
International Harvester Tourer, 1910	
Locomobile 'Old 16' Racer, 1906	
Maxwell Two-seater, 1911	
Mercer Raceabout, 1913	572
Oldsmobile 'Curved Dash', 1904	576
Packard Two-seater, 1900	
Rambler Four-seater 'dos à dos', 1903	575
Regal 'Underslung' (chassis under axles), 1914	
Stanley Steamer Tourer, 1909	573
Stevens Duryea, 1904	
Stutz Bearcat Roadster, 1914	571



Fador 1908 Baker Electric two-seater.

prototypes of the Hudson range. Trade advertising was very professional and the 'collectable' theme was heavily promoted, with stands being taken at trade and hobby fairs all over the States. One spectacular piece of promotion was Koveleski's epic drive in his yellow 1914 Stutz Bearcat from the factory in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to Chicago for the 1951 World Hobby Exposition, about 500 miles in a 37 year old car.

The manufacturing rights for the 'Old Timer' range were later sold to Aurora Plastics, which reintroduced, as full plastic kits, six of the models from about 1960, still in 1/16th scale.

The general construction of the Hudson Miniatures consisted of a shaped balsa wood body which required a fair amount of surface finishing, while various smaller wooden parts served as fuel tanks, dashboards, steps, etc. Where thin

into the possibility of jumping on the bandwagon. One of the first was the FADOR Manufacturing Company of Elmira, New Jersey. It followed Hudson in 1949 with a range of seven wooden kits in 1/16th scale called 'Smallsters'. These were very similar to the 'Old Timer' series, even down to the moulded plastic wheels and small parts. The quality seems to have been comparable with Hudson. These kits were also overtaken by the new conventional plastic kit and disappeared from the market. Again, no manufacturer's catalogue numbers seem to have been used.

For the record, the models illustrated here were all made nearly 30 years ago by Dr Cecil Gibson, the man mainly responsible for launching the hobby with his book *History of British Dinky Toys, 1934 to 1964*. He and Reg Miles started the habit of writing articles on toy cars in magazines in the mid-1960s ■