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Saddles

Russel H. Beatie

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Saddles is the first complete work on the subject to appear in print. It is an exhaustive survey, in words and more than eight hundred illustrations, of the one indispensable item of horse equipment, whose history began about the time the horse was domesticated, in the dim mists of unrecorded time.

More than history, Saddles also explains the construction of the basic saddle, describes the different saddle types, and explains how they have been altered to meet the changing needs of riders down through the centuries.

Those who work with horses for pleasure or profit, from novices looking for suggestions on buying saddles to professionals who want to round out their knowledge, will find this book useful, absorbing, and a delight to the eye. It covers virtually every aspect of saddlery, saddle measurement, selection, and care, plus tips from a knowledgeable horseman on the intricacies of fitting horse, rider, and saddle into a dynamic whole.

The aesthetics of the craft are also presented in detail: the uniquely American leatherwork of the show saddle, the elaborate use of silver (now undergoing a revival), the adoption by American saddlemakers of useful accessories from other lands (the tapadero from Mexico, for example).

The construction of the saddle is described and illustrated in careful detail, along with descriptions of the many accessories of early and modern times. The section on famous saddles shows now-priceless gem-studded examples of the saddlemaker’s skill.

The first compilation of American saddlemakers is given in the appendix. A glossary of saddle terms and a thoroughly researched bibliography conclude the book.

In undertaking the enormous task of compiling this work, one of the author’s underlying purposes has been to enhance interest in the few surviving old saddles as collectors’ items and as artifacts of American history. For, as he says, "Much of that history was made on horseback."

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