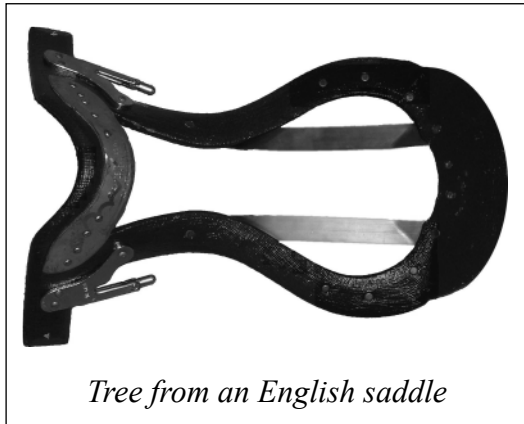


Chapter 1: The Saddle

The Purpose of the Tree, The Importance of Good Fit

Saddle Trees



Early saddles had many forms. Some might have been a simple pad to protect rider and horse, a stirrup strap (and nothing else!), simple or bulky creations that all had the same essential purpose: to protect rider and horse, to make riding more secure, to make riding more comfortable--for both rider and horse.

Today's basic types of saddles have a "tree." This "tree" is a fixed structure inside the saddle which allows the saddle to perform several functions.

The tree:

- 1) Allows for clearance across the horse's spine.
- 2) Distributes the rider's weight evenly along the length of the saddle, front to back.
- 3) Provides stability and security for the rider.
- 4) Contributes to the comfort of both horse and rider.

Without the tree, the rider would be sitting directly on the horse's spine. Without the tree, the rider's weight would be concentrated directly under the rider. Both of these functions of the tree protect the horse's back. Let's examine them individually.

