

# Packs, Packing and Pack Saddles

A Breezy and Instructive Talk by an Expert on One of the Great Essentials of Wilderness Travel

by W. N. MILLAR

**T**HERE are but three fundamental requirements for successful wilderness travel. The first is the ability to find one's way about. The second is the ability to cook. The third is the ability to transport one's necessary impedimenta. It is this third essential that is to be discussed in this article.

A well-known writer on woodcraft has pointed out that of all the nume-

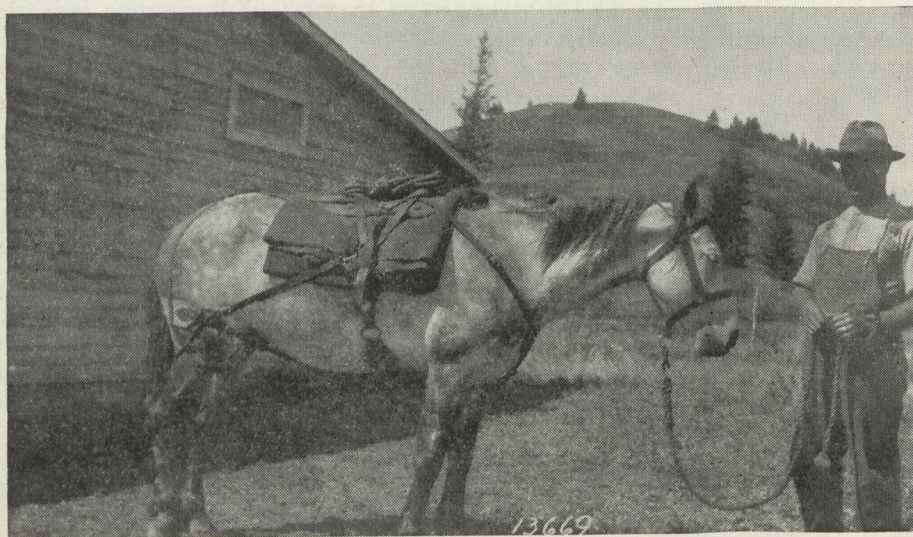
equipments. The writer has a preference for the type of saddle known as the Decker. This is a modification of the common sawbuck saddle in which the forks have been replaced by steel bows. The advantages are virtual indestructibility and a certain leeway to alter the shape of the saddle so as to secure a better fit if necessary.

Pack-saddle rigging is much more varied than are the saddles themselves.

moderate loads the writer has found the double cinch without breast or breeching straps entirely satisfactory even in mountain country and would use this equipment on account of its simplicity whenever his pack train was numerous enough to allow of light packs. If, however, he wished to reduce the number of horses and increase their loads,—a practice not to be recommended,—then he would employ the Britten rig and give most careful attention to the adjustment of saddles and rigging to each individual horse.

Besides saddles, a pack outfit includes much other equipment. Saddle blankets are essential. A packer does well to treat his horses in this regard just as well as he does himself. The best blankets are none too good. Two are necessary, a good grade of close woven wool such as the army blanket for a sweat pad and over this a single Hudson Bay blanket, that is the regular four-point blanket cut in half for a top pad.

Satisfactory side packs or alforjas are almost impossible to buy. The best procedure is to get the heaviest canvas side packs available and then reinforce the ends with leather and the top edge with a  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch rope



Decker pack saddle equipped with improved Britten rig.—An off side view.

rous methods of wilderness travel, only one, that of pack horse transportation, calls for a high degree of individual skill. Given the requisite strength and persistence almost any tenderfoot can pack on his own back or load and paddle a canoe or drag a hand sled. But the successful packing of horses or mules is in a class by itself. It might be well to point out at the start that while certain elements of packing may be learned by reading and observation, others from diagrams and experimentation, without actual experience with the packer's equipment yet the kind of knowledge gained in this way is almost valueless until supplemented by an actual experience with horses that can be gained only by personal association with pack animals on the trail.

The question of pack saddles and accessory equipment is not a difficult one. A skillful packer will pack successfully with almost any saddle or in a pinch will get along with none at all, but as in everything else, the best results are secured with the better



A lone packer adjusting the side pack.

Single and double cinch rigs, with and without breast and breeching straps or with only breeching and no breast straps are all in use. For light or

sewed in all around. Sling rope is 20 to 24 feet long and  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch in diameter. Lash ropes are 36 feet long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter. Lash