

Herman Gubler's Saddle

Herman Gubler's saddle, now prominently displayed in the Santa Clara Museum, has a very interesting and unique history. Well over 100 years old, the saddle was used by Herman until his death in 1941.



Picture of Herman and the saddle on Sunny, one of his favorite horses, circa late 1930s



Herman's son, June had his own saddle, so after Herman's death, the saddle was used by his grandsons, Ward, Dutch and Doug, when they were growing up.

The saddle is unique from modern saddles because one of the stirrup straps is on the outside of the fender, allowing persons (children) with legs too short to reach the stirrups, to insert their feet between the strap and the fender. The saddle is also unique



as it has a very prominent Pommel and Swells and a high Cantle, making it ideal for breaking horses that liked to buck, and ideal for young boys.



After the boys went off to school, the saddle sat unused, forgotten and not maintained for many years in the granary in June's corral in Santa Clara. In 1977 when Dutch was living in Indonesia, he was home to visit his mother for a few days. While there he was digging around in the granary to see if he could find some of his grandpa's old tools which were missing. He uncovered his grandpa's saddle in a part of the granary that had been used as a chicken coop. It was covered with chicken manure and the leather was dry and brittle. He dug the saddle out and was tempted to discard it but couldn't because it was associated with fond memories of when he was a young boy riding it. Instead, he talked to a saddle maker to see if the leather could be restored. To his surprise, he was told that it could be if the leather was soaked in water for 3 to 4 weeks, allowing it to absorb the water. After the leather became pliable, the water had to be replaced by oil. So, with his mother's permission he packed the saddle, several cans of Neatsfoot Oil, new leather saddle strings, conchos and other supplies in a box and took it back to Indonesia with him.

Once home he threw the whole saddle into a mundi (a concrete tank used to store water) found in most Indonesian houses, leaving it there for 3+ weeks. By that time the leather had become pliable. He then had his "Jagga" (night watchman for his house) rub Neatsfoot Oil into the leather every night. This was a slow process, but ultimately the leather was rejuvenated. Dutch then disassembled the saddle as much as possible and rebuilt it. Unfortunately, the pommel had broken from the saddle tree, making it unrideable. Also, a stirrup, the latigo, back cinches, conchos and saddle strings were missing. He took the old stirrup to a shop in central Jakarta and had them copy it to replace the missing one. Dutch brought the saddle back to the US in his household shipment. It then had tenure in Illinois, Virginia and Colorado before returning to southern Utah.

There are probably not too many saddles that have travelled from Utah to Indonesia to be salvaged by soaking in a mundi and having an Indonesian

Jagga rejuvenate it by rubbing it with Neatsfoot Oil. What you see here is a historic saddle with a global travel history. Herman would never have believed it!

