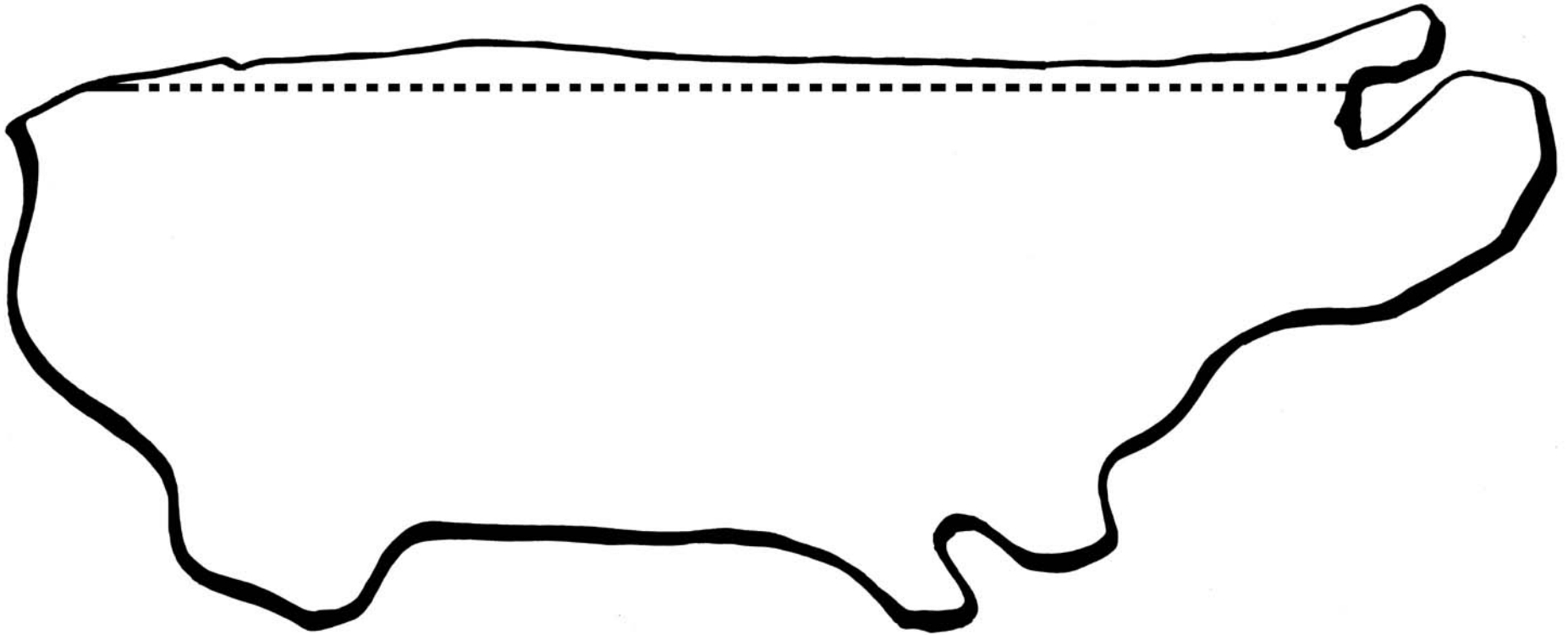


Squaring up a side

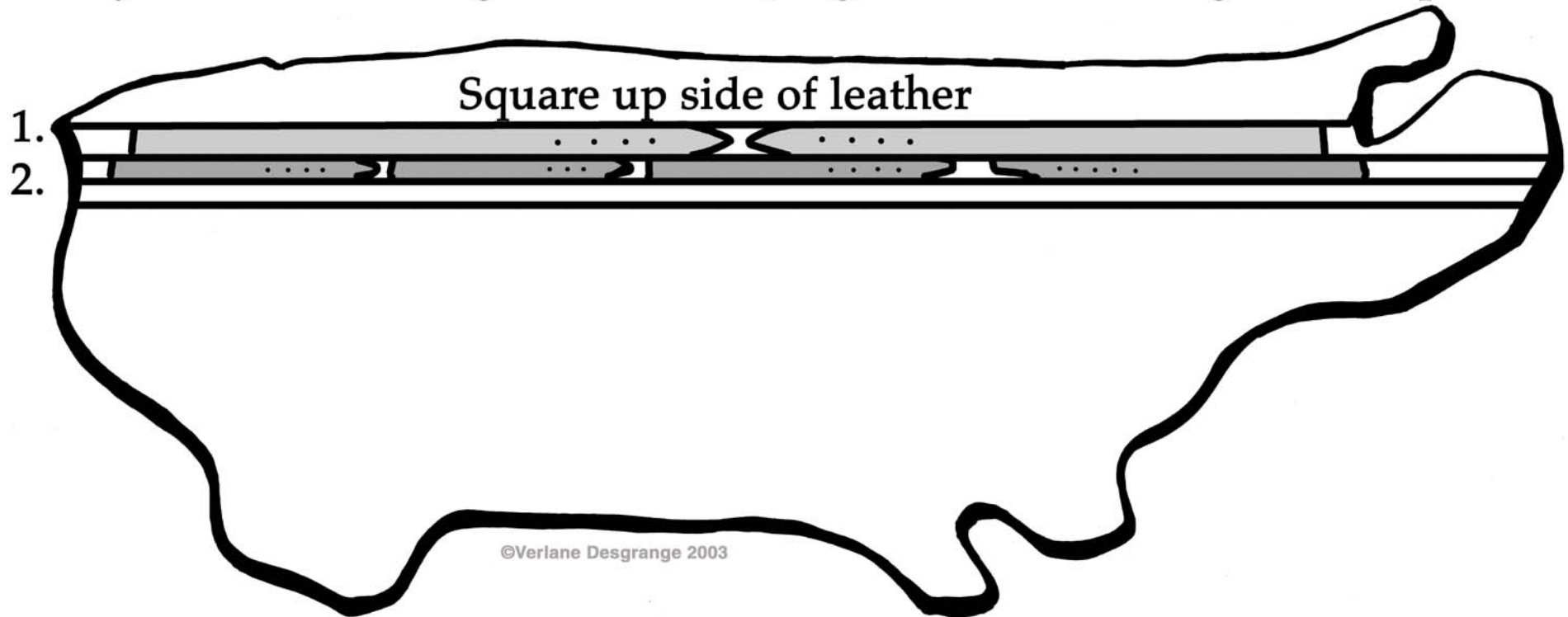
in preparation for cutting straps



Mark a line along the back (top) that most closely approximates the shape of the side in a straight line. The leather you cut off should eliminate any nicks or clamp marks from the tanning process. Ideally the less you cut off from the top, the better cutting economy you'll have. There are times when you may have to bend your top line just a bit so as not to waste as much leather. Bend only slightly if you have to do it this way. Cut this top line as accurately as possible, for this is the beginning of all the straps you'll cut. Do not undercut or put a wavy line along the top, as accurate strap cutting will be almost impossible. Re-do the top cut again if you make a mistake. Save the leather you cut from the top: it is usually the best part of the side. Many times you can make a complete bridle from this premium leather.

Strap cutting strategy

Always cut the full length of the side, regardless of the length of strap needed

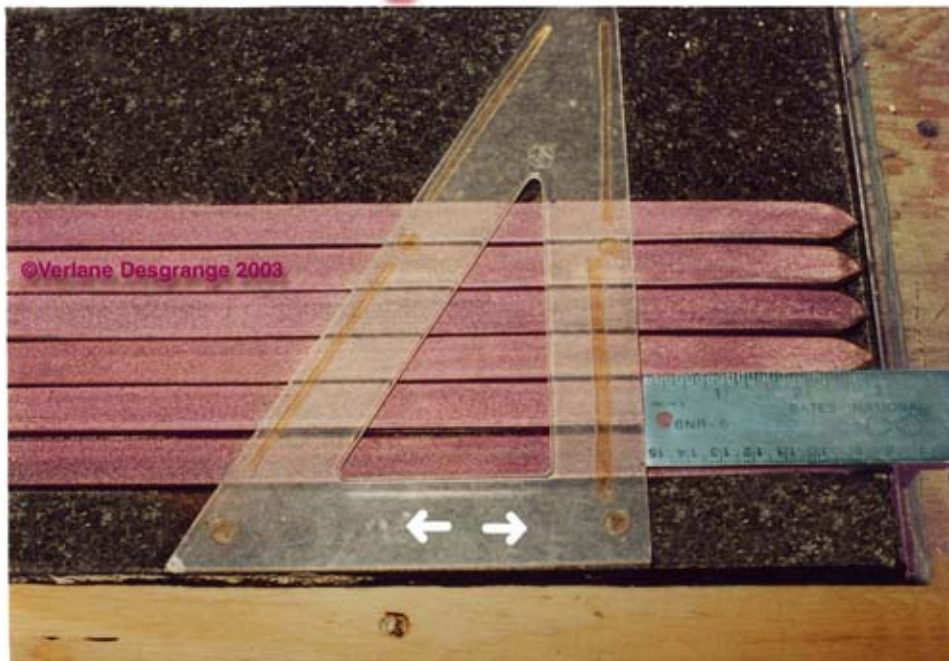


Two different possibilities:

1. For longer straps, cut billet ends in center of side, shown by billet tips and holes punched. Billets face each other.
2. For a series of shorter straps, set billet tips to center of side, except last strap which faces in opposite direction

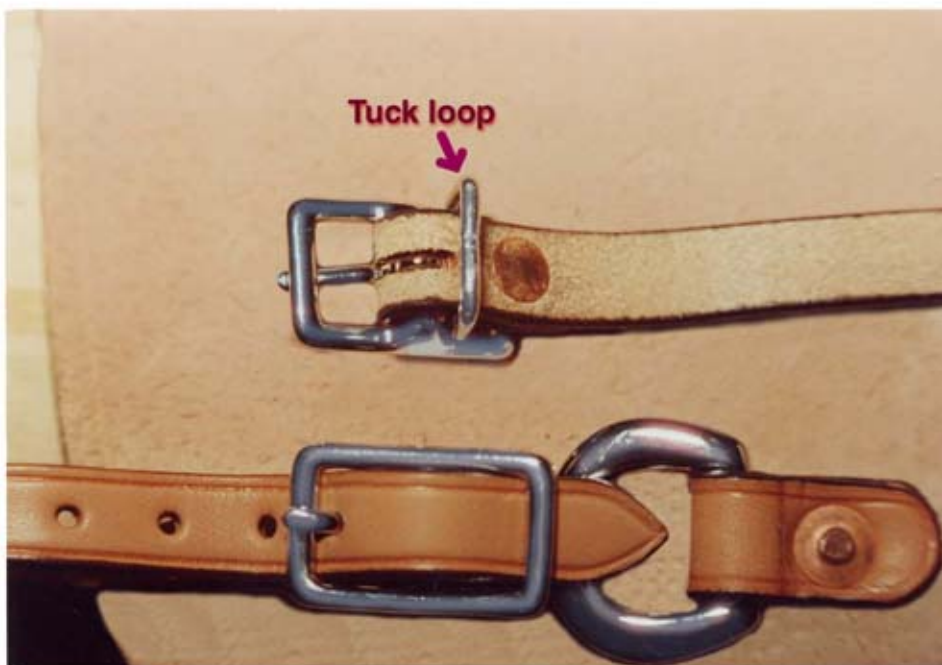
In both cases the billet tips are in the prime area of leather

Strap Work



Slide triangle left or right on straight edge. One angle of the triangle must be 90° for this to work. A carpenter's square or T-square will give the same results.

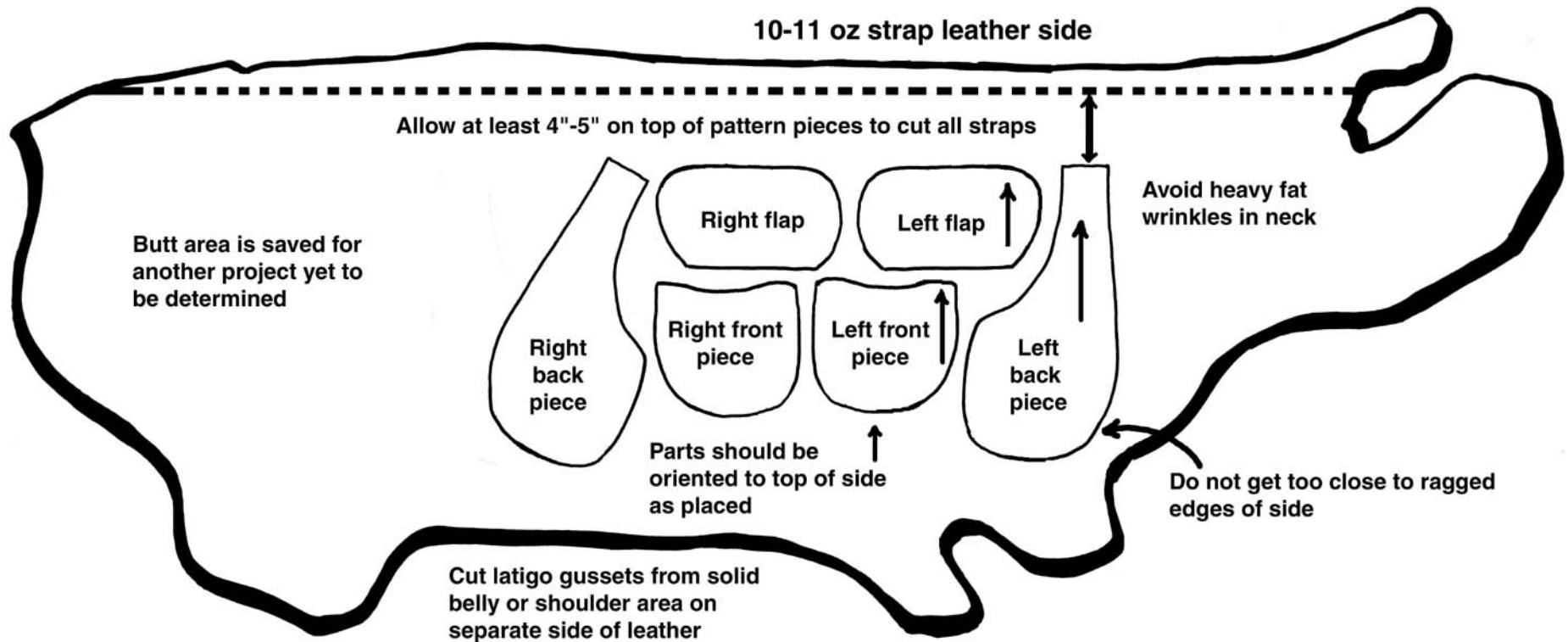
Make all six straps for bags simultaneously. Line up billet tips on straight edge and cut all straps to same length on chape end (tips are already cut). Then mark all buckle slots by sliding a right angle along bottom edge. Mark center lines for slots. Next flip straps over to F.S. to mark holes. Mark first hole as shown, about 3" from tips. Then mark all holes on each strap by sliding triangle along a bottom straight edge. This method makes for fast accurate work.



Without a tuck loop, the billet attachment strap will not stay situated on the saddlebags. Use stainless steel, as this area will be right next to the horse's sides where there is a high concentration of sweat, dirt, and salt: things that destroy plated metals.

For straps that buckle to flank cinch, a simple center bar buckle with a stainless steel tuck loop affixed with a single copper rivet is quite sufficient. Attach tuck loop to backside of strap as shown so that strap can pass through loop when attached to D-ring. Be sure to lap buckle chape around to G.S., thus preventing a lump where strap passes through loop. Rivet burr should also face to topside. Attached strap is shown in lower part of picture.

Suggested layout for US Cavalry Saddlebags

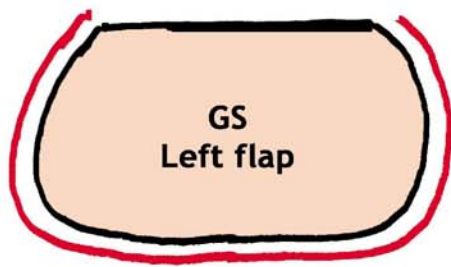


Always lay pattern pieces so that any part of that pattern which is not doubled & stitched (D & S) points to the top of the side where the better quality grain is. Thus the bottom edge of the flaps are facing upward. The flat end of the flaps will be stitched to the back piece, thus not requiring the best leather. However, the rounded edge is the most noticeable part of the bag, so it must be some of the best leather. Ditto for the tops of the back pieces. The front panel must always be good leather. The bottom of the back piece can be into the belly, as it will not be as noticeable as the others. Make sure you cut a left and a right of all three parts. The parts are not symmetrical and the pattern pieces must be flipped over to get a left and right. Make sure the grain pattern matches on everything by avoiding deep fat wrinkles in the neck and shoulder if present.

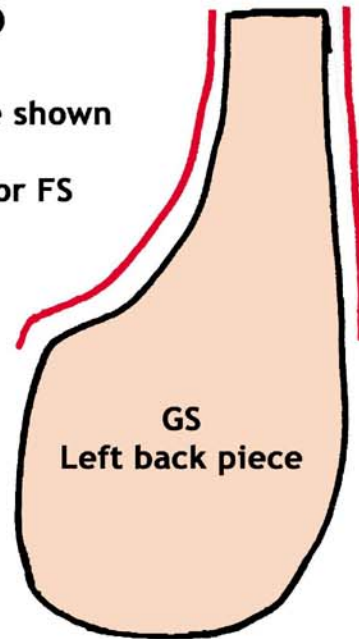
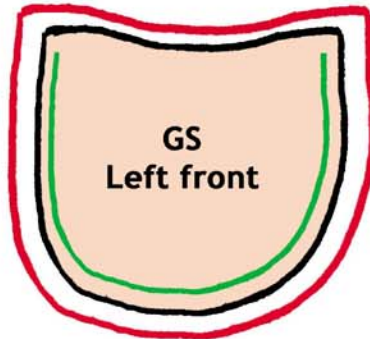
Selective edging, skiving, and stitch grooving

Color Key

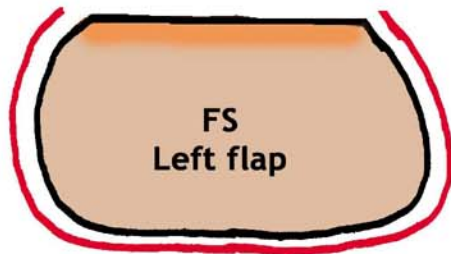
- Edge with edge tool ONLY where shown
- Stitch groove, can be either GS or FS
- Skive on FS only



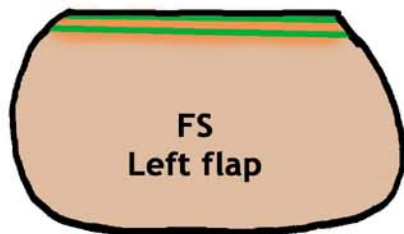
Polish the perimeter of the flap



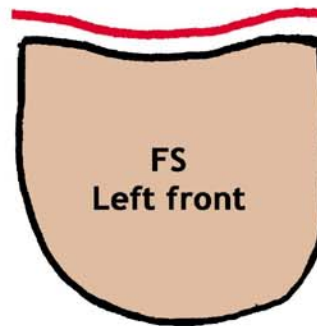
Edges that are not edged will get another piece of leather placed on that side, such as a gusset. When two layers of leather are placed together, the edge must be a "unit". Even though there are multiple layers of leather stacked together, the edge must appear as one. Otherwise, you'll get a pillow effect or a corduroy edge with ridges. The idea is to have an edge that appears to be the same piece of leather.



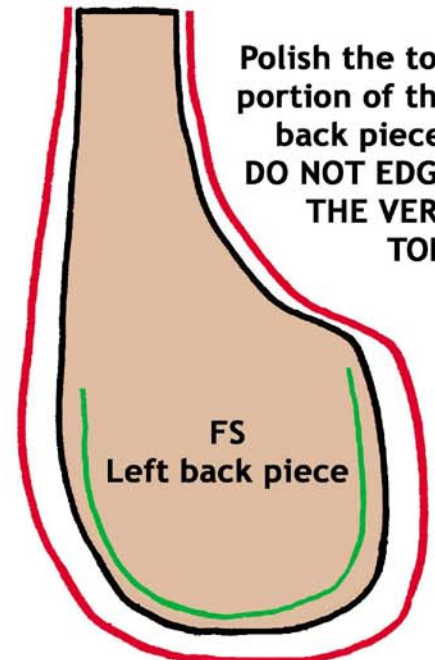
Skive before stitch grooving



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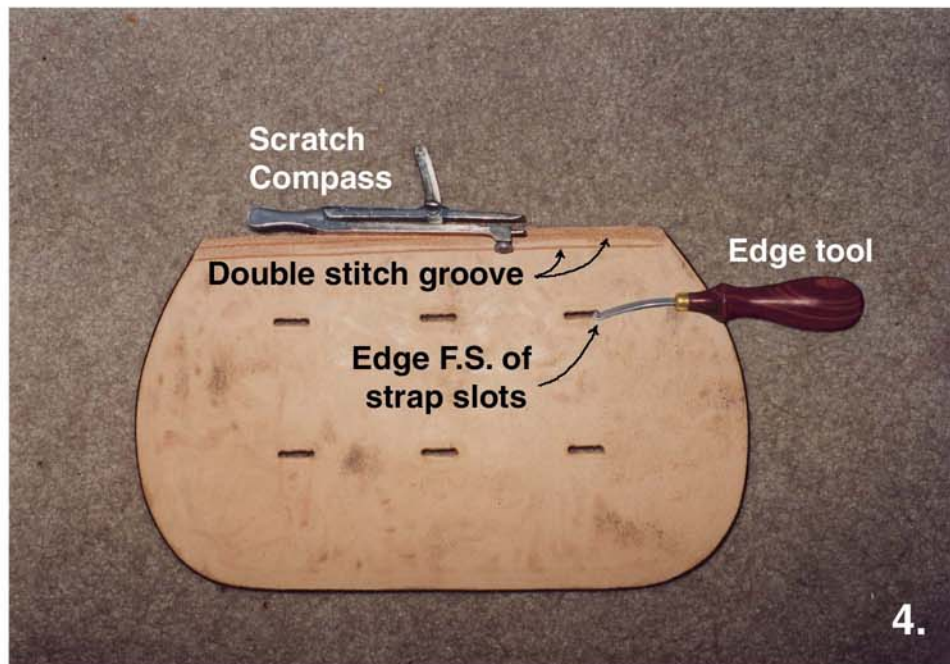
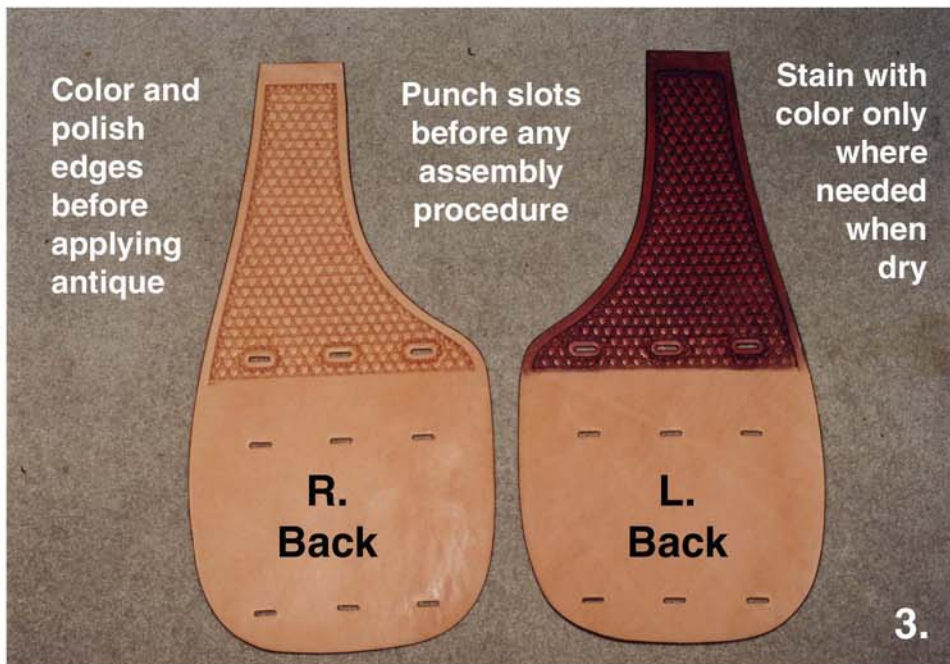
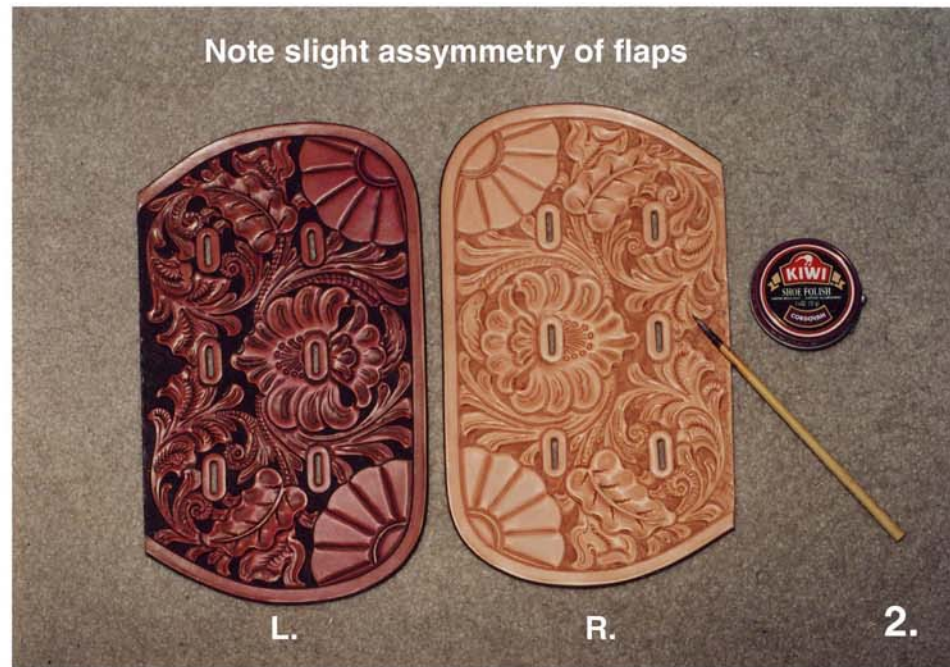


Polish the top edge of the front piece



Polish the top portion of the back piece. DO NOT EDGE THE VERY TOP.

Gussets not shown on this page. They will be trimmed and edged after being sewn down.



Optional: roll ends of gusset

Rolled edge from flesh side (F.S.). Edge is skived to feather edge so that when cemented and stitched it lays very flat. ALWAYS SKIVE ON F.S. to maintain appearance of G.S. (grain side).

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Stitch with #69 machine thread about 10 stitches per inch

5.

Copper rivet is set just loose enough to allow cinch strap buckle chapes to swivel for minor adjustments. Rivet buckles down before stitching preparation.



6.

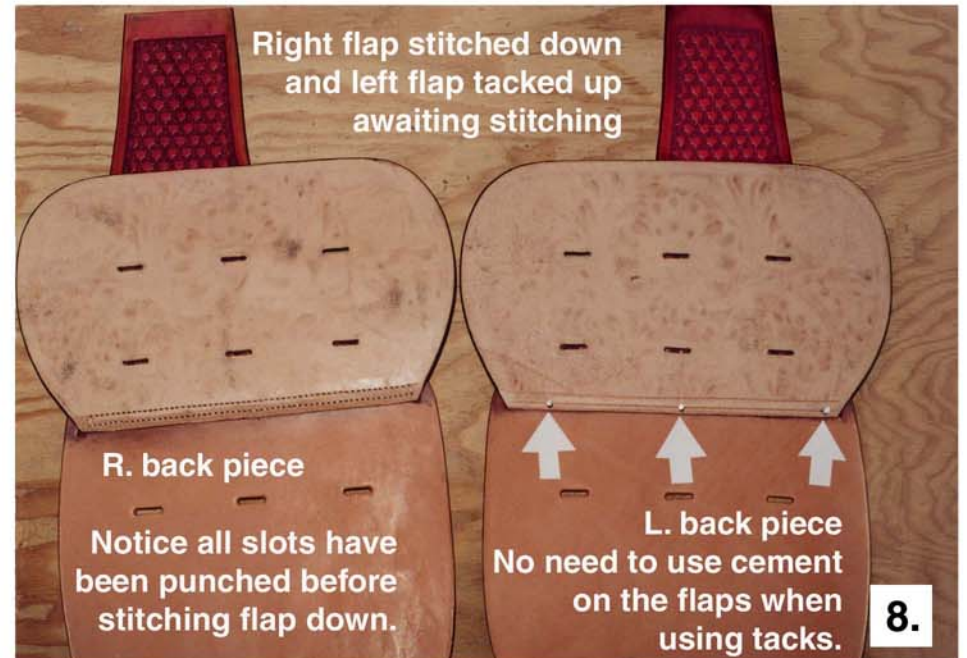
Tack dampened gusset down with #3 hand shoe tacks in addition to cementing. Arrows show some of the tacks.



Use tacks as well as cement, for damp latigo has a tendency to not stick by cement alone.

7.

Right flap stitched down and left flap tacked up awaiting stitching



R. back piece

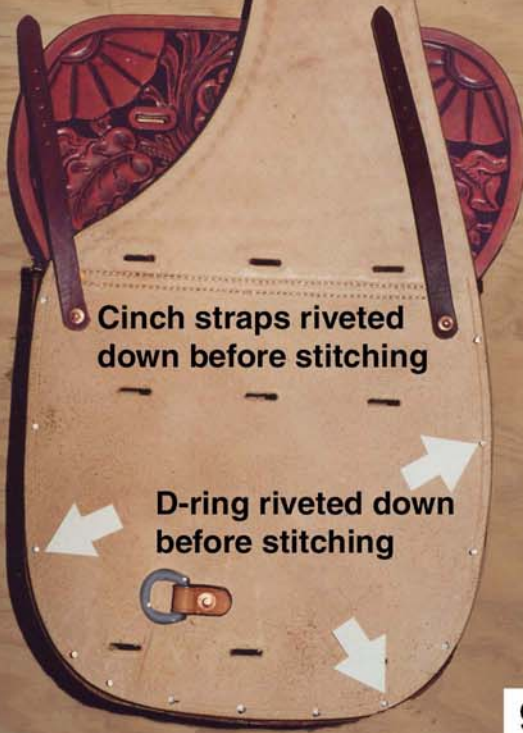
Notice all slots have been punched before stitching flap down.

L. back piece

No need to use cement on the flaps when using tacks.

8.

Front section tacked to back piece/flap unit awaiting stitching. Arrows show some tack locations.



9.

Half of bag set assembled. Straps may be added after bags are laced together.



10.

Arrows show how cinch straps function. This is optional but keeps contents securely in bag at all times.



11.

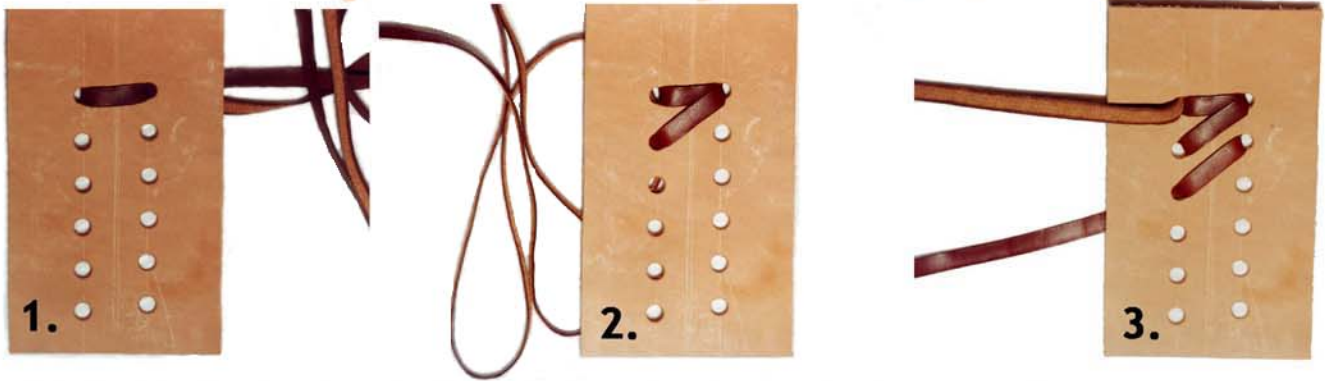
Finished bags

(Left side shown)

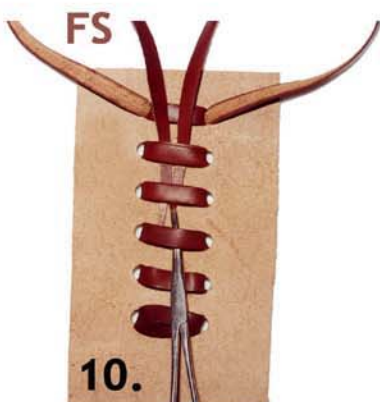
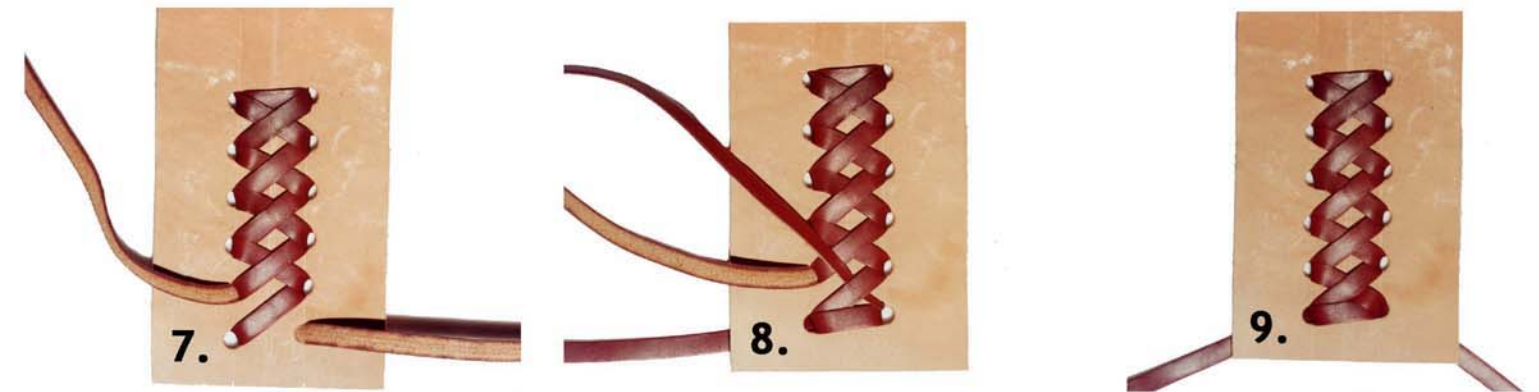
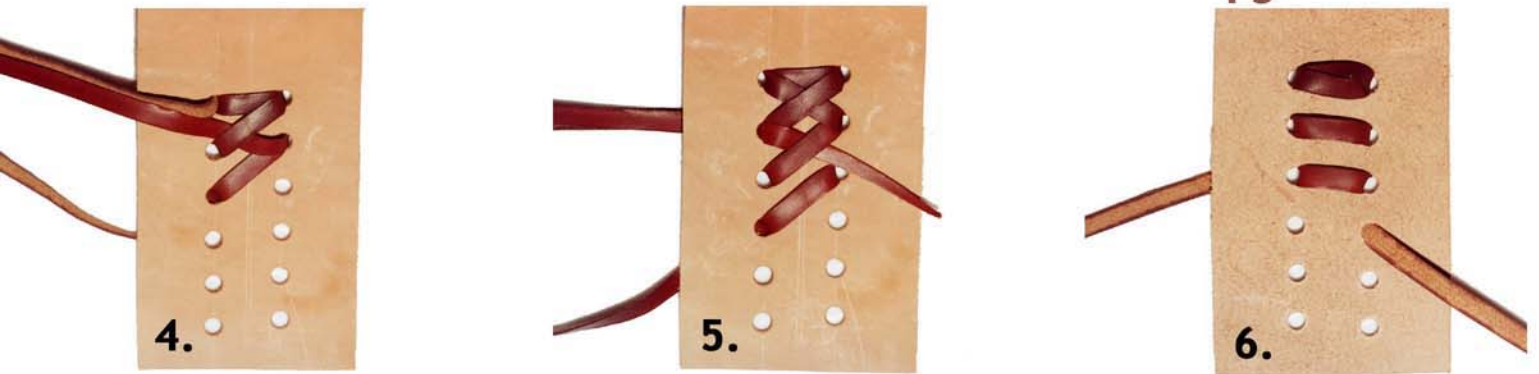


12.

Simple X style lacing



All work shown from GS (grain side) unless noted



Pull lace through with curved nose hemostats and trim with French edger laid on angle to bevel the ends. Tension lace while being trimmed.

Finished US Cavalry bags



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Authentically sized
1904 US Cavalry
saddlebags for a
variety of uses.

These bags
retain the
flavor of the
originals but
with added
features that
the originals
should have had!