



6-15-2003

Rawhidiers

Gerald R. Wheeler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

 Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wheeler, Gerald R. (2003) "Rawhidiers," *Westview*: Vol. 22 : Iss. 2 , Article 20.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol22/iss2/20>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



Rawhidiers

by Gerald R. Wheeler

Her skin the color of her stained buckskin
dress & cracked more than her boots.
Her sharp blue eyes squinted upward
at my notepad from a mesquite rocker
on front porch at a trading post. Her hair
a mixture of her Scotch-Irish blonde
Tennessee mountain roots & pine bark,
the 90-year-old woman volunteered,
“I’m a descendant of rawhidiers who came
to Silver City in 1880’s & widow
of the last blacksmith in town.”
I didn’t believe her until calloused hands
dipped the tip of a Bowie knife blade
into snuff jar, placed a bit on her tongue,
formed a billiard ball in her cheek,
chewed, then spat tobacco juice at a knothole
10-feet away, hitting it dead center. She said,
“My mother was born in a *Shuttler* wagon
on banks of Rio Grande. Took first bath
in the Gila on her honeymoon, owned 1 dress,
no shoes. Cooked beef & beans on a tripod, ate
off rawhide dishes. Drank coffee darker than soot,
fought prospectors & Apaches. Never slept
under a roof. Traded pelts, leather buckets
& tools for Indian blankets & mescal whiskey.
Kin knew every cattle brand in Territory
but never bought a steer or was found guilty
of rustling in a Texas court. By age 10,
a rawhider could rope a javelina, trap a lion
& ‘cause nails were scarce, mend a broken
wagon wheel with whangs of dried hide
& build a corral strong as the wall of China
with leather throngs.” She paused, swirled
history, eyed plank floor, drilled a gnat
buzzing my new Rockports. My pencil froze.
I said, “Thank ya ma’am. How much you askin’
for that rifle scabbard & old horseshoe?”

