

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1989

Review of PuUing Leather: Being the Early Recollections of a Cowboy on the Wyoming Range, 1884-1889

Lynn M. Cawthra

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Cawthra, Lynn M., "Review of PuUing Leather: Being the Early Recollections of a Cowboy on the Wyoming Range, 1884-1889" (1989). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 468.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/468>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Pulling Leather: Being the Early Recollections of a Cowboy on the Wyoming Range, 1884-1889. By Reuben B. Mullins. Edited and with an introduction by Jan Roush and Lawrence Clayton. Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1988. Photographs, map, appendices, index. xxii + 219 pp. \$10.95.

In the early 1930s, dentist-physician Reuben Mullins decided to chronicle his youthful experiences as a cowpuncher on the Wyoming range. He was unable to secure a publisher for this work, however, and after his death in 1935, the manuscript was filed away for more than fifty years. Scholars Jan Roush and Lawrence Clayton discovered Mullins's narrative in 1986 and recognized its importance as a historical document. Their editorial support and Mullins's own articulate and entertaining style have assured *Pulling Leather* a place alongside such standard accounts of cowboy life as Adams's *Log of a Cowboy* and Siringo's *A Texas Cowboy*.

Mullins's story begins in 1884 with his decision to go West. He travels to Cheyenne, Wyoming, where, after a brief stint on the Sybille Ditch project, he seeks employment in the cattle business. Hired as a blacksmith by Swan Land and Cattle Company, he finds his blacksmithing abilities a valuable asset to his career. During the next five years, Mullins works for four different outfits, gradually gaining respect as a competent cowpuncher and ranch representative.

The tales he tells of cowboy life are particularly interesting because they are written from the perspective of nearly fifty years. Mullins has thought deeply about his experiences, and his observations and conclusions supply an enriching counterpoint to his history. For example, his entire narrative is pervaded by a conscious awareness of the ways in which film and fiction have glamorized the cowboy, and he is especially fond of emphasizing the disparity between a real cowpuncher's life and Hollywood's version of the same by his wryly ambiguous use of the word "romance."

Mullins's account is both literate and per-

ceptive, a fact his editors have wisely recognized by allowing him to speak for himself with minimal intrusion. When necessary, notes explaining Mullins's slang and allusions are furnished at the end of each chapter. The authenticity and accuracy of his recollections are attested to in appended correspondence, and a brief biography is also provided.

LYNN M. CAWTHRA
Center for Great Plains Studies
University of Nebraska-Lincoln