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you did the first time. And you can also add a little of the first bark to the new stuff, plus the old liquid. Then after a week or so take it out, do the same process: rub the stone over the flesh side, more*11 come off. And the third time you put it in the tan bark you can give it all you want. In winter you could chip the bark off with an axe, in pieces • but then you have to use hot water and you boil your bark and that's called hot tanning. When the liquid would cool off you could put in a sheepskin or anything like that, but it would be a hard process for tanning a cowhide • you would need so much. But bark that you took off a tree this year, if you cured it right, put it in the sun and dried all the sap out of it • it would be good if you kept it dry for twenty years. Ann MacDonald said the best way to determine a tan is finished is to cut in about 1/2" at an edge to see if the color of the tan has worked through to the center of the skin. This cut should be made at the neck, where the skin is thickest. Peter Kerr told us: "Sometimes we'd leave a little bone as we called it in the center that wasn't tanned at all, that was just green. Some of us tanned it right through, but if you left a little bone the leather seemed to be tighter, more waterproof." Donald Garrett MacDonald added this: After soaking in the lime solution, the skin would be soaked in a kind of soup made of chicken manure • this would stop the action of the lime. Then the skin would be put in a running brook for a while, and the hair was easily pulled out. Also, he would let the skin sit in the first batch until the water cleared completely • then he'd know to change the batch. Neil Campbell of Marion Bridge remembered his grandfather at this work, and he said for the first solution the hemlock bark was not permitted to touch the hide • rather, the bark was strained and what the hide went into was a sort of tea. Batch by batch was progressively stronger, until the last solution was almost black. He felt the bark itself would be apt to burn the hide in spots. Once out of the last tan the hide should be stretched or put over a pole to drip- and before it is completely dry an oil should be rubbed into it. (Wally: "While the dampness is going out the oil is going in.") Cod liver oil is used, but the real favorite seems to be neat'sfoot oil. It's excellent but expensive • unless you make your own. John Tom Urquhart said you simply take the shinbones of cattle, break them up and boil in a quantity of water. The oil comes to the surface and can be skimmed off and bottled. The oil helps keep the leather manageable and eases the work of breaking • which is hard work. Every fibre must be broken to give soft leather. Ann MacDonald has devised the tool shown in the picture • a beater made from the wheel of a mowing machine. She also shows a method of breaking a hide over the edge of a firm table. For a heavy hide two people could work together, pulling it back and forth over a beam. Ann finishes off the rugs with the sandii' wheel. For doing only a few hides she says you can use a sanding block and number 100 sandpaper. Q>pt Breton's M>g*zine/IT