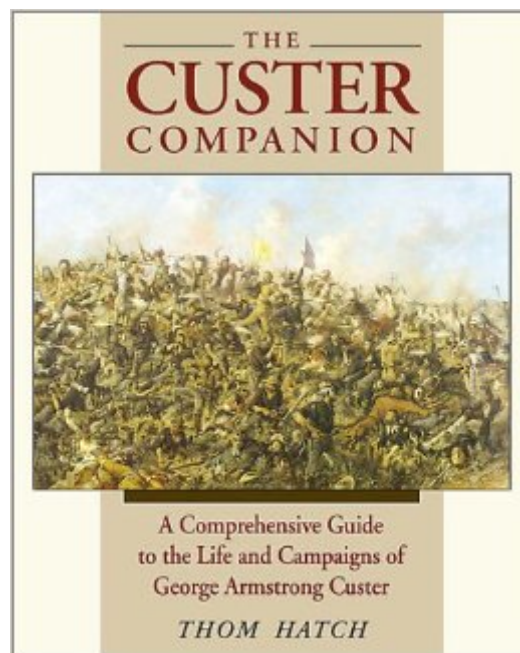


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The Custer Companion: A Comprehensive Guide To The Life Of George Armstrong Custer And The Plains Indian Wars



Synopsis

Historian Thom Hatch's exhaustive compendium of information of, and relating to, Custer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Along with William A. Graham's "Custer Myth" and Paul A. Hutton's "Custer Reader", this book belongs on the shelf of any serious student of Custer's life and career. I do not often feel compelled to comment on books I've read, but this is one of those rare gems that comes along unexpectedly, just when you think that everything that can be said has been said. My library includes nearly every book ever written about Custer and I would rank Hatch's book with the best of them. Some of those books contain useful and fascinating information but are barely readable, but Thom Hatch manages to make his both fascinating and readable, and that is a laudable accomplishment for any historian. I also disagree with those who say this would not make a good introductory work; I think that on the contrary, it would make an excellent place to start. It covers the entirety of his life and career and leaves few facets unexplored or unremarked, from birth to pre-military teaching jobs to West Point, the Civil War and beyond. One of its strongest assets is the "for further reading" list appended to each section, listing the various works out there which can better inform the reader about the subject at hand. But this is more than an empty list of authors and titles; Hatch comments on the various books, judging them not only by what he has to say about them but what others have said as well. For instance, of Gregory J.W. Unwin's classic "Custer Victorious" he says "minor drawbacks

to this exciting and well-written work is that some have claimed that it is too pro-Custer, with too much cheerleading, and that it - as the title suggests - concentrates on the battles when Custer was a general and fails to adequately chronicle his first two years of service and associated aspects of his career.

This is a well detailed overview of the life of General Custer from his roots to the aftermath of the LBH. The book is interlaced with a 100 or more biographies of all the key people associated with from family, soldiers, scouts, and politicians to Native Americans. The bios are outstanding and they fill in some holes even for the seasoned Custerphile. One example is the bio on Dr. Coates, the surgeon who served with Custer in Kansas and. Coates was a key witness on Custer's behalf in reference to the charge that he denied medical treatment for deserters. The bio covers Coates' short army career before and after the incident including his post army life. Another is Colonel Sturgis, the actual Colonel and actual commander of the 7th, who typically was on assignment or administrative duties deferring field command to Custer. In addition, when referencing a particular individual or place or battle, Hatch provides a detailed bibliography on the person or topic. When I read of the controversy regarding Custer's 1867 court-martial, the listed references led me to Lawrence Frost's detailed book on the subject. In addition to the bios sprinkled throughout the book are quotes by the General himself, which are highlighted outside the regular text, which adds depth to what Custer was feeling at that point in his history. It's also quite clear that he and Libby had one of the closest relationships in history. Although there may be more detailed works on the various prime subjects of Custer's life, this book captures it very well and closes ranks on information with people that intersected Custer's life from Reno, Benteen, Tom Custer, Belknap, Crazy Horse, Two Moons, Keough, Calhoun, Weir, Godfrey, Sitting Bull, Gall, Crazy Horse, Curley and on.

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