



Custer

Jeffry D. Wert

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George Armstrong Custer has been so heavily mythologized that the human being has been all but lost. Now, in the first complete biography in decades, Jeffry Wert reexamines the life of the famous soldier to give us Custer in all his colorful complexity.

Although remembered today as the loser at Little Big Horn, Custer was the victor of many cavalry engagements in the Civil War. He played an important role in several battles in the Virginia theater of the war, including the Shenandoah campaign. Renowned for his fearlessness in battle, he was always in front of his troops, leading the charge. His men were fiercely loyal to him, and he was highly regarded by Sheridan and Grant as well. Some historians think he may have been the finest cavalry officer in the Union Army.

But when he was assigned to the Indian wars on the Plains, life changed drastically for Custer. No longer was he in command of soldiers bound together by a cause they believed in. Discipline problems were rampant, and Custer's response to them earned him a court-martial. There were long lulls in the fighting, during which time Custer turned his attention elsewhere, often to his wife, Libbie Bacon Custer, to whom he was devoted. Their romance and marriage is a remarkable love story, told here in part through their personal correspondence. After Custer's death, Libbie would remain faithful to his memory until her own death nearly six decades later.

Jeffry Wert carefully examines the events around the defeat at Little Big Horn, drawing on recent archeological findings and the latest scholarship. His evenhanded account of the dramatic battle puts Custer's performance, and that of his subordinates, in proper perspective.

From beginning to end, this masterful biography peels off the layers of legend to reveal for us the real George Armstrong Custer.

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