



Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and George Armstrong Custer

Michael A. Elliott

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On a hot summer day in 1876, George Armstrong Custer led the Seventh Cavalry to the most famous defeat in U.S. military history. Outnumbered and exhausted, the Seventh Cavalry lost more than half of its 400 men, and every soldier under Custer's direct command was killed.

It's easy to understand why this tremendous defeat shocked the American public at the time. But with *Custerology*, Michael A. Elliott tackles the far more complicated question of why the battle still haunts the American imagination today. Weaving vivid historical accounts of Custer at Little Bighorn with contemporary commemorations that range from battle reenactments to the unfinished Crazy Horse memorial, Elliott reveals a Custer and a West whose legacies are still vigorously contested. He takes readers to each of the important places of Custer's life, from his Civil War home in Michigan to the site of his famous demise, and introduces us to Native American activists, Park Service rangers, and devoted history buffs along the way. Elliott shows how Custer and the Indian Wars continue to be both a powerful symbol of America's bloody past and a crucial key to understanding the nation's multicultural present.

"[Elliott] is an approachable guide as he takes readers to battlefields where Custer fought American Indians . . . to the Michigan town of Monroe that Custer called home after he moved there at age 10 . . . to the Black Hills of South Dakota where Custer led an expedition that gave birth to a gold rush."—Steve Weinberg, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

"By 'Custerology,' Elliott means the historical interpretation and commemoration of Custer and the Indian Wars in which he fought not only by those who honor Custer but by those who celebrate the Native American resistance that defeated him. The purpose of this book is to show how Custer and the Little Bighorn can be and have been commemorated for such contradictory purposes."—*Library Journal*

"Michael Elliott's *Custerology* is vivid, trenchant, engrossing, and important. The American soldier George Armstrong Custer has been the subject of very nearly incessant debate for almost a century and a half, and the debate is multicultural, multinational, and multimedia. Mr. Elliott's book provides by far the best overview, and no one interested in the long-haired soldier whom the Indians called Son of the Morning Star can afford to miss it."—Larry McMurtry

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