



Remembering Long Hair 6x9: Contextualizing Custer's Last Stand in Historical and Geographical Realities

Dr Paul James Moore PhD

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Those who ardently study George Custer face a difficult challenge. It seems an accepted orthodoxy especially in academic circles that the defeat at the Little Bighorn was essentially brought about by the Regimental Commander's arrogance and recklessness. Evolving methodologies for presenting American history have played a role in that hypothesis. frontier narratives generally provided only Euro-American perspectives of borderland confrontations. In the name of fairness, newer histories rightly focused upon Native American concerns as well, but unfortunately too often at the expense of Euro-American perspectives. To understand historical outcomes, the whole range of perspectives at play in historical encounters should be assessed impartially. Attempting to maintain that focus, this study comparatively assesses contending perspectives leading to the confrontation in 1876 and relies principally on participant perceptions to reconstruct Custer's last fight. Notably, it illustrates the battlefield terrain with maps and photo illustrations during each phase of the fated encounter. Utilizing a myriad of participant accounts, this monograph graphically illustrates movements and actions by participants during various phases of the battle by means of Color illustrative photographs and delineated maps of specific terrain areas on the battlefield using a balanced Cross-cultural historical perspective. Focused on battlefield topography as never before, it presents Custer's evolving strategy. Using participant accounts it illustrates movements and actions with Full Color illustrative photographs and delineated maps of the battle. One of the important contributions this monograph offers to the literature relates to Edgar Stewart's comment in his superb study of the battle: The "topography of the country in the vicinity of the hostile village had more to do with Custer's defeat than any other factor." Affirming that thesis, this writer uses a multi-disciplined approach to bring the topography of the battlefield into light as never before. Utilizing the myriad of participant accounts, it graphically illustrates movements and actions by means of illustrative photographs and delineated maps of specific terrain areas on the battlefield as determined by reports. The narrative begins by recalling the contextual setting of critical events that led to the now seeming mythic encounter. It cites important incidents related to the opening of the campaign that eventually placed the Seventh Cavalry with the Dakota Column as they moved across the northern plains to the Little Bighorn basin. Guided by common sense, using geographic and archaeological evidences and numerous illustrations, the narrative unravels the apparent puzzle of battle participant reports. It weaves a descriptive tapestry of movements, actions and phases relating to Native American participants and members of that unfortunate battalion. For the sake of erudition, chapters are divided into separate phases, though most were overlapping, and in some cases concurrent with others in time. It also includes three import appendices: Two of them deal with an important witness to the battle, Crow Scout Curley. The first focuses on his creditability: "Curley's Quandary" related to the battle; the second provides a Composite Narrative of his Little Bighorn Battle reports. The final appendix addresses the Regimental Commander's varying public image since 1876 to the present time: The Custer Dilemma.

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