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Review of The Custer Reader

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The Custer Reader. Ed. Paul Andrew Hutton. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992. Maps, preface, photographic essay, bibliographic essay, sources, index. xiv + 583 pp. \$40.00 cloth.

In the nearly 120 years since Custer died at the Little Big Horn, about the only thing that historians can agree upon about him is that he was flamboyant. Thus far, the literature about him has either been favorable or very anti-Custer in nature. Paul Andrew Hutton has assembled a collection of some of the more classic articles on Custer. Some of these are more favorable accounts, and some are less flattering articles about Custer's career as a soldier.

Hutton's anthology is a long-overdue primer on Custer. Custer buffs and historians will find the book useful and enjoyable to read. Hutton divides the book into four sections and features new essays by leading Custer scholars. The essays by Gregory Urwin (in the Civil War Years section), Brian Dippie (in the Indian Wars section), Robert Utley (in the Little Big Horn section) and Eric von Schmidt (in the Custer Myth section) are worth the price of the book in themselves. Hutton also presents extensive notes and references as a guide to further reading about the phases of Custer's career. *The Custer Reader* should stand as a major source reference book for a long time.

What is missing from the book, however, are articles and references to the more anti-Custer works. Dippie, for example, takes Custer's account of the Battle of the Washita on faith. Custer's claim of killing 103 warriors there is countered by Grierson's interview with survivors, who counted 13 men, 16 women, and 9 children killed. Also missing are the articles, letters, and memoirs of men under his various commands that place Custer in a far more disparaging light. It is my belief that the real Custer exists somewhere between the one presented by Hutton and the anti-Custer sources. Nonetheless, *The Custer Reader* is an excellent

starting point for those who wish to learn more about one of America's most colorful and enigmatic figures.

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