



***Decision at Tom's Brook:
George Custer,
Tom Rosser, and
the Joy of the Fight***

By William J. Miller

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George Custer and Tom Rosser

commanded opposing forces in a cavalry clash in the lower Shenandoah Valley on October 9, 1864. Custer enjoyed numerical superiority approaching 3-to-1. Rosser galloped headlong into disaster, and his troopers slowed down only after retreating pell-mell up the Valley. The fight resonated for decades in the press. No thorough examination of the battle had reached print until William Miller's new work.

The canvas on which the October 9 battle unfolded had a savage, smoky backdrop. Federals had been burning the Valley, and a few weeks before, Custer's men had hanged five prisoners and a boy. The locals who made up most of Rosser's troops were bent on revenge, but instead faced humiliating defeat. Their feckless scamper to the rear came to be known as "The Woodstock Races," after the village where the rout eased.

One useful appendix examines the confusing nomenclature applied to Tom's Brook landmark. Another reports on strengths and losses, including a casualty list, which contributes to analysis of many of the claims by participants. Excellent maps and illustrations augment the text.

Everything about *Decision at Tom's Brook* is admirable: definitive research, skillful weighing of evidence and graceful prose. It is a book of the very first order.

—Robert K. Krick