



Like all avid Civil War readers, I keep my radar finely calibrated to identify intriguing new releases. *Decision at Tom's Brook: George Custer, Tom Rosser, and the Joy of the Fight* piqued my interest first because of the author's name, William J. Miller, whose body of work (eight or so publications to date) reliably signals what, in my experience, is known as a "sure bet."

What many know of Tom's Brook—the "Woodstock Races"—comes from brief treatments in general histories, or time line entries marking the victory that certified the superiority of Union cavalry. Fought six months to the day before the surrender at Appomattox, Tom's Brook is the story of a small fight populated by big personalities (Sheridan and Early play enduring roles). The saga begins at West Point, where cadets Custer and Rosser were kindred spirits, and continues long after the war, after Custer's death, when Rosser maintained a war of words with former enemies and comrades alike.

By keeping people—soldiers—at the heart of the narrative, a small incident of the war speaks to the whole. A first-rate scholar, and a battlefield trumper with a deep knowledge of the ground, Miller has assembled a solid history. Add to those credentials a rich editorial background, and years spent teaching composition and literature to Virginia college students, and you have an author who can ferret out a good story, and knows how to tell it.



David Woodbury has edited/co-edited numerous Civil War titles, and was a contributor to and cartographer for The Library of Congress CW Desk Reference. He was co-founder of the South Bay CWRT in San Jose, California, and coordinates battlefield tours for Woodbury Historical Tours. He works for Cengage Learning in San Francisco.