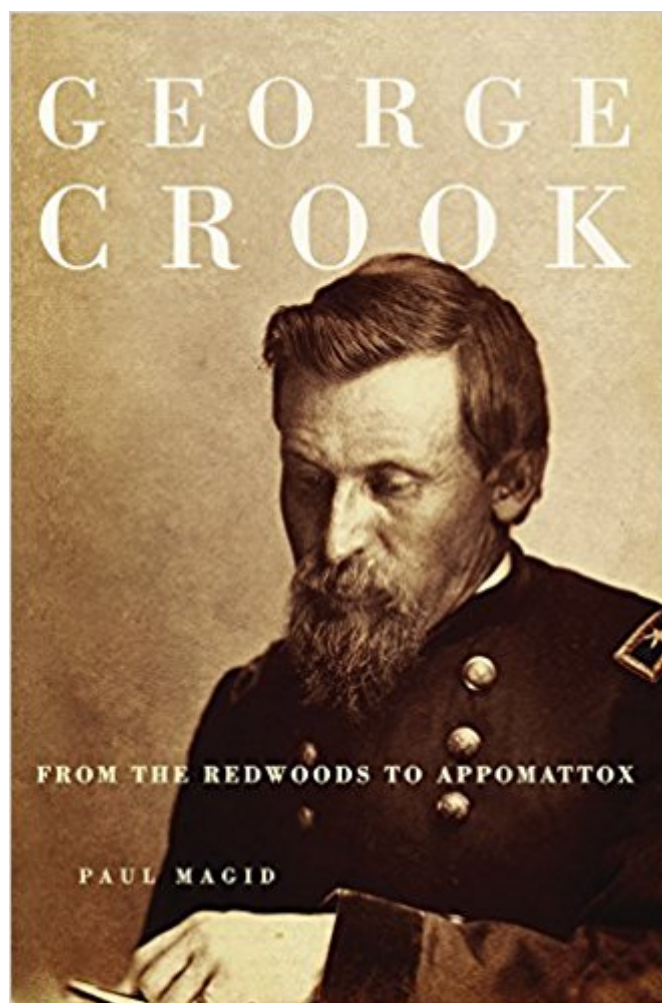


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George Crook: From The Redwoods To Appomattox



Synopsis

Renowned for his prominent role in the Apache and Sioux wars, General George Crook (1828â90) was considered by William Tecumseh Sherman to be his greatest Indian-fighting general. Although Crook was feared by Indian opponents on the battlefield, in defeat the tribes found him a true friend and advocate who earned their trust and friendship when he spoke out in their defense against political corruption and greed. Paul Magidâs detailed and engaging narrative focuses on Crookâs early years through the end of the Civil War. Magid begins with Crookâs boyhood on the Ohio frontier and his education at West Point, then recounts his nine yearsâ military service in California during the height of the Gold Rush. It was in the Far West that Crook acquired the experience and skills essential to his success as an Indian fighter. This is primarily an account of Crookâs dramatic and sometimes controversial role in the Civil War, in which he was involved on three fronts, in West Virginia, Tennessee, and Virginia. Crook saw action during the battle of Antietam and played important roles in two major offensives in the Shenandoah Valley and in the Chattanooga and Appomattox campaigns. His courage, leadership, and tactical skills won him the respect and admiration of his commanding officers, including Generals Grant and Sheridan. He soon rose to the rank of major general and received four brevet promotions for bravery and meritorious service. Along the way, he led both infantry and cavalry, pioneered innovations in guerrilla warfare, conducted raids deep into enemy territory, and endured a kidnapping by Confederate partisans. George Crook offers insight into the influences that later would make this general both a nemesis of the Indian tribes and their ardent advocate, and it illuminates the personality of this most enigmatic and eccentric of army officers.

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Customer Reviews

I was extremely disappointed in this author's approach to his subject. While I think many of the comments in other reviews are true: strong narrative, well-researched, etc, there are also definitive weaknesses. Throughout this entire volume I felt the author was on a search for moral failing in General Crook. I thought his criticisms of Crook's character not sufficiently supported. Some of his conclusions on Crook's state of mind are based on one or two sentence remarks from the General in the written record that could be interpreted two or more ways. The author seems convinced that the most damning interpretation is the correct one, and only grudgingly rescinds his judgement when the evidence goes against him. As a general account of Crook's military career, the book is adequate, even above average. But I lost confidence in the author's fairness with all the things that he seems to read into correspondence of both Crook and his military colleagues. I thought his evaluation of Crook's performance at Antietam distorted and unappreciative of the context of that battle. His apparent prejudice so irritated me that I found myself going to other historians in their accounts of the Civil War campaigns to corroborate Magid's account of the action. He wants to assign the adjective hyperbolic to one of Crook's subordinate's praise of the General's sagacity whereas when I read the subordinate's account it seemed to me simply admiration and adulation. Magid will see ambition embedded in the general's own writings, decisions and actions and then share a story that clearly demonstrates Crook's indifference to praise, or his deference toward subordinates who are more deserving of praise.

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