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# Wooden Leg: A Warrior Who Fought Custer



## WOODEN LEG

A WARRIOR WHO FOUGHT CUSTER  
INTERPRETED BY  
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## Synopsis

All around, the Indians began jumping up, running forward, dodging down, jumping up again, down again, all the time going toward the soldiers. The story of Custer's last battle is rarely told from the Native American perspective, despite the fact that there were no white survivors. Stories about the Battle of Little Bighorn are therefore often more myth than truth. In 1922, Thomas B. Marquis decided to uncover the true story of Custer's Last Stand by speaking to someone who had actually fought against him. For hour after hour Marquis spoke to Wooden Leg and pieced together the narrative of the battle. Yet, Marquis' studies cover much more than the final demise of Custer. Through his interviews with Wooden Leg, who was a young man at the time of Little Bighorn, he was able to uncover fascinating details about the everyday life of Cheyenne Indians and their practices. Their hunting practices, their conflicts with the Crows, how they were given names, their religion, their marriage customs, and other details of their way of life are all covered. As the relations between American soldiers and Native Americans grew more tense Wooden Leg and his Cheyenne people were drawn into conflict. Wooden Leg provides a fascinating account of how the Native American tribes were drawn together in a loose alliance to repel the oppression to which they had been subjected. Though the Native Americans won the battle, they certainly did not win the war. Wooden Leg's account of the years after Little Bighorn demonstrates how many Native Americans struggled with life on the reservations and how they longed to be on the plains once again. Wooden Leg's memoirs interpreted by Thomas B. Marquis give a fascinating insight into Native American life in the late-nineteenth century. "A deeply interesting story." • The New York Times After entering a reservation Wooden Leg worked as a scout, messenger and sentry. He was part of the 1913 delegation sent to Washington to speak about the Cheyenne tribe. Later he became a judge on the reservation and died in 1940.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

The true story of the Custer battle told by a Cheyenne who participated. And a vivid account of Plains Indian life. According to this, much in our history books is not accurate. If you enjoy American History, this is a must read.

I almost stopped reading this book in the beginning, thinking it was influenced by the translator. However, I kept going and eventually began to understand the unique perspective that Wooden Leg had as an uncelebrated figure....just a normal guy telling about everyday things. The time period he talks about is during the end of the free Cheyenne and Sioux era, the Battle of Little Bighorn and the eventual surrender of the Cheyenne tribes. I never realized before how the Cheyenne turned against the Sioux as scouts. That part was very sad.

Basically this is Wooden Leg's autobiography. He's an interesting character and shares what daily life was like in the Cheyenne culture. Overall I enjoyed the story. There are grammar and spelling errors. I hate finding those in published works and it really knocks down the reading enjoyment.

A well written narrative of the lives of the Cheyenne Indians and the battle with General Custer. The actual battle does not occupy too much of the book and was of no more significance at the time to the Native American tribes who were involved in the battle than any other skirmish with the soldiers of the US government. The story is told without hatred or bitterness. Even more interesting is the description of the trials of everyday life among these people. This includes such things as dealing with the harshness of the elements and the actions of warring tribes. Life was anything but peaceful for the Northern Cheyennes but, at the same time, their respect and love of nature demonstrates the inner peace they found. This book is an eye opener to the reader who is curious about the lives and

trials of the Native American especially at a time when the "white man's " borders were encroaching on the lands they called home.

This is not a literary work, but a man's story, in his own words. Even though Wooden Leg told the story using sign language, his natural syntax filters through, making the story real. Reading the words, one can almost hear his voice. I found myself liking and admiring Wooden Leg as I learned how he thought, fought and lived in a time of great upheaval for his people. His story of the battle at Little Bighorn captures the dust, confusion, chaos and the "fog of war" very well. Worth a read.

The memories of an old man of the Cheyenne tribe. Recorded by the reservation Doctor, who was fluent in the plains sign language, it has the ring of truth. From the exposition of tribal life to the details of the Custer fight, it reads like what it is: the detailed memories of an intelligent survivor of exciting times. Details of the Custer fight track S. L. A. Marshal closer than Ambrose, but that is a positive. The outline and details of tribal governance are believable and enlightening. Truly a valuable book and one of referential value.

What a great narrative from a Native American who was there. Not only the battle but his life before and after. This is a treasure not to be missed. This was the best description of the battle and events surrounding it that I have read. Highly recommended for students of the Custer Battle and the defeat of the Native American tribes that had no where else to go.

A tale that seems to match the evidence historians have gathered from the battlefield. I was surprised the Indians could not understand why a soldier would chose to kill himself rather than be captured. Unless the story teller chose to be misleading from continued fear of punishment.

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