



# THE PUTNAM VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## OUR AMERICAN HISTORY

A PROGRAM SERIES - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

### George Armstrong Custer: Before the Little Bighorn

with Capt. Mark Ehlers, Assistant Professor of History

United States Military Academy at West Point

Saturday, October 10, 2015 at 10:00 am

Even today, 139 years after his death, the name of Custer brings immediate recognition. Everyone knows something about him – that he graduated last in his class at West Point, that he became one of the youngest Generals in the Union Army when promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, at the age of 23, during the Civil War, that his style of leadership and command was considered either brave and aggressive or reckless and foolhardy, that he became one of America's first "media personalities" and, of course, that he met his eventual demise at the hands of the Sioux and Cheyenne at the Little Bighorn.



But the study of American History, as well as popular culture, have stretched, altered, retold, reshaped and reimagined the true story of George Armstrong Custer. The changing myth of Custer would see him eventually portrayed as a movie villain, an analogy for corporate and government corruption, arrogance and incompetence. But for the one hundred years prior, he remained an American hero. Granted, he was not loved by everyone. But he was beloved by many, admired by thousands, and mourned, upon his passing, by a griefstricken nation.

Join The Putnam Valley Historical Society to learn more about the young man, and young Union Cavalry Officer, who first began to earn his lasting reputation for bravado! From his graduation from West Point and initial service as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Union Cavalry, to his brigade command at Gettysburg and presence at Confederate General Lee's surrender in 1865, this was clearly a young man with a brilliant future ahead of him.

### Capt. Mark Ehlers



An Assistant Professor of American History at the United States Military Academy at West Point, Capt. Mark Ehlers received his commission as an Armor Officer through ROTC at James Madison University in 2005. Upon graduation, he served as a light cavalry Scout Platoon Leader in the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment at Fort Riley, KS. He deployed to Baghdad in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2007-2008. Capt. Ehlers' historical interests include the American Civil War, Antebellum American Cultural History and

Modern and Early Modern Britain. His list of publications, reviews and guides includes topics ranging from Custer and the Civil War to Napoleonic Memory and Popular Culture.

**This program will be held at the Putnam Valley Grange Hall  
128 Mill Street ♦ Putnam Valley, NY 10579 at 10:00 am**