

A new theory about Napoleon's hand

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William Ansley — 09 Dec 2000, 00:23

While I hesitate to bring up this old chestnut again, I am still fascinated by Weer's remark about Napoleon's hand on page 2 of

Peace. He remarks that he knew why Napoleon kept one hand thrust into his waistcoat, but whenever he told someone the reason, "the innocent remark invariably offended."

When we discussed this before, no one could think of a suitable "innocent remark" that described any of the possible reasons that Napoleon might have had his hand in his waistcoat that would invariably offend. Perhaps the remark itself wasn't what offended but the fact that Weer presented it as the one true explanation of why Napoleon had his hand in his waistcoat. I think if there was ever any generally agreed upon explanation of why Napoleon had his hand in his waistcoat, then some memory of it would have survived to the present day.

So Weer is presenting an definite answer to a question asked by people who think it is a question no one knows the answer to. Another thing that might make Weer's way of answering the question offend is that he just doesn't seem to have had good "people skills."

I don't doubt Weer himself believed that his explanation of the Napoleon's hand conundrum was the correct one.

William Ansley