

# "THE BRAVERY OF OUR BUGLER IS MUCH SPOKEN OF..."

## The Story of a Forgotten American Hero

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

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"IF IT'S Injun war history you're wanting, then you'd better talk to Tom Gatchell," they told me in Buffalo, Wyo. "He knows more about such things than anyone else around here."

So I went to see T. J. Gatchell, druggist, historian and industrious collector of Wyoming lore. He led me to the rear of his store, where the walls of his little office are covered with relics of the days when the troopers of Carrington and Custer and Crook strove mightily with the painted warriors of Red Cloud and Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull.

These mementoes had been brought here from half a dozen battlefields in the country watered by the Yellowstone river and its tributaries, the Powder, the Tongue, the Big Horn and the Rosebud. There were knives and hatchets and spear-heads; bows and arrows, beaded belts and a war bonnet of eagle feathers; carbines and pistols and bayonets; cartridge boxes, canteens, buckles, buttons and other ornaments from soldier uniforms.

In the midst of them hung what was once a copper cavalry bugle. Its mouthpiece was broken off and it was dented and twisted and flattened out of all semblance of its original shape.

"That?" replied Mr. Gatchell, "O, that was picked up on Massacre Hill—you know, the place where Fetterman and his crew were wiped out back in '66. I reckon the bugler dropped it during that melee and it was trampled on by the cavalry horses. Anyway, that's just the shape it was in when a young fellow from Buffalo found it 40-odd years ago and gave it to me."

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A year or so later I was leafing idly through a bound volume of Horace Greeley's New York Semi-Weekly Tribune. On page one of the issue for April 2, 1867, an item, headed simply "The Indians," caught my eye. It read:

The St. Louis Republican's special correspondent at St. Joseph gives the following account of the Fort Phil Kearney Massacre, derived from the Commissioners sent to investigate the matter, from the Sioux Indians:

The Sioux drew our men out of the fort, and killed them all. Our men fought like tigers, and would not have been overcome so easily if they had not kept so close together. The combatants were so mixed up that the In-

in 1869. He served on the Committees on the District of Columbia, Private Land Claims, Manufactures, and Printing.

### THE INDIANS.

The St. Louis Republican's special correspondent at Phil. Kearney massacre, derived from the Commission. St. Joseph gives the following account of the Fort ers sent to investigate the matter, from the Sioux Indians:

The Sioux drew our men out of the fort, and killed them all. Our men fought like tigers, and would not have been overcome so easily if they had not kept so close together. The combatants were so mixed up that the Indians killed several of their own party with their arrows. The bravery of our bugler is much spoken of, he having killed several Indians by beating them over the head with his bugle. They say that there were only 16 Sioux and four Cheyennes killed on the field, but after they encamped 94 warriors died from their wounds, and of 300 others wounded, half of them were expected to die. One "big" Sioux chief was among the killed. They mention a man on a white horse who cut off an Indian's head with a single stroke of his saber, and say that when reinforcements left the fort for the battle-ground they (the Indians) retired, having had enough fighting. There were 2,000 Indians engaged in the fight, and the strength of the concentrated tribes is reported at 2,800 lodges, which are now moving toward Yellow Stone and Missouri Rivers.

The expedition to the Indian country, under the command of Major-Gen. Hancock, left Leavenworth

So we know now who this brave bugler was—Adolph Metzger. It is obviously a German name and one which seems a bit out of place among such "Paddies" as Cuddy and Clancey and Fitzgerald, Maguire and McCarty and Ryan, all so typical of the kind of men who were the hard-riding, hard-fighting troopers of the Old Army days.

But what was his station in life before he put on Uncle Sam's uniform of blue and was sent out to the Wyoming frontier to die on the windswept summit which is known today as "Massacre Hill"? The office of the adjutant-general in Washington gives a partial answer to that question, thus:

The records of this office show that one Adolph Metzger first enlisted May 29, 1855, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a period of five years at which time he stated that he was 21 years of age. He last enlisted July 12, 1864, at near Light House Landing, Virginia; was assigned to Troop C, 2d. Regiment United States Cavalry; and was killed in action with the Indians near Peno Creek (about 7 miles from Fort Phil Kearney, Dakota Territory) December 21, 1866, while serving as a Bugler. His birthplace is recorded as Germany. No additional information has been found regarding his personal history.

And here the record ends—except for this:

Undoubtedly he was the bugler who sounded "Boots and Saddles!" when the message, "Indi-

of death drawing closer and closer around them.

We can see them now as they threw themselves down behind the boulders which formed an irregular circle at the end of the bleak, snow-covered ridge, resolved to sell their lives dearly. We can hear the whooping braves as they came surging up the slope and see them rushing forward . . . right in among the rocks, where a handful of blue-coated men, their white faces streaked with blood and blackened with powder stains, struggled to their feet to meet the onslaught.

There was a brief moment of hand-to-hand fighting, of crashing blows dealt with gun-barrels clenched in the hands of fear-maddened men who flailed about them desperately to ward off the slashing knives and smashing war-clubs. It was a dreadful mix-up there in the dust and smoke and flying snow—the kind of fight to which the Sioux give the vividly descriptive name of "stirring gravy."

The fight there couldn't have lasted long. But in that last dreadful moment of slaughter, in the midst of that swirl of struggling, swearing, screaming men, there was one who went berserk. It was Bugler Adolph Metzger who lashed out madly, blindly, with the only weapon he had left, and he laid more than one of the painted enemy low with his strange bludgeon before they,

