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*Fighting Means Killing: Civil War Soldiers and the Nature of  
Combat* by Jonathan M. Steplyk (review)

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a better understanding of the town's nature and population than its better-known identity as the site of the shootout at the O.K. Corral.

Tales about outlaws, robberies, stagecoach travel, and the development of railroad and stagecoach routes are also included. One harrowing journey involved Price Behan (father of Tombstone's Johnny Behan) and Buckey O'Neill (Yavapai County sheriff) taking charge of an out-of-control stagecoach from its drunk driver and driving it across a flooded river in pitch black darkness while four passengers, two of whom were nuns, leaned outward against one side of the coach to balance it against the flood.

An extensive appendix provides additional sources for readers who wish to learn more about the individuals and events of the book.

Marshall Trimble is a well-known Arizona history author, educator, and performer. *Arizona Oddities* is an excellent addition to his other publications. Although it is not a large book, Trimble comprehensively describes events and pioneers during Arizona's territorial and early statehood years. Readers who wish to learn more about the unique nature of Arizona's geography and history will enjoy reading *Arizona Oddities*.

JANOLYN G. LO VECCHIO is an independent historian who writes about Arizona women's history. She is a past state president of Arizona Business and Professional Women and was a member of the Arizona Women's Heritage Trail coordinating council.

*Fighting Means Killing: Civil War Soldiers and the Nature of Combat.* By Jonathan M. Steplyk. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018. Pp. xi, 294. \$29.95 cloth)

Although the subject of Civil War combat has received a significant amount of previous scholarly attention, with notable works by some of the top names in the field, it has been some time since the topic received a fresh examination. *Fighting Means Killing: Civil War Soldiers and the Nature of Combat* by Jonathan M. Steplyk makes an important contribution to the body of Civil War combat scholarship by delving into areas of this subject others formerly briefly touched upon or have not covered at all. At the heart of the book Steplyk seeks to explain how Americans, seemingly with few qualms, killed other Americans. He contends that although many men had at least some reservations about pointing a weapon and shooting at a person, and thus intending to kill a fellow human being, most soldiers accepted the anticipated results of that

action as part of warfare. The vast majority of Civil War soldiers believed, as the book's title indicates, and as Confederate cavalry general Nathan Bedford Forrest reportedly claimed, "War means fighting, and fighting means killing."

Steplyk explains that there were other contributing factors used by soldiers as justification for killing, including their pre-war political ideology. Sectional partisan allegiances influenced combatants' acceptance of the justness of their respective causes, and thus the need to kill their enemies in battle. Antebellum notions of manhood and masculinity, too, prompted the vast majority of these citizen-soldiers to come fairly well prepared to kill in combat situations. As one might imagine, soldiers' descriptions of their emotions in combat were as diverse as the men doing the fighting. Some soldiers claimed "seeing the elephant" produced different levels of excitement, anger, and a sense of revenge, all of which increased their willingness to part from civilian notions of killing and accept the military mindset of the necessity of slaying their foes. Individual soldiers sometimes perhaps felt unsettled, particularly early in their martial careers, but might become more acclimated and deliberate after being in a few engagements. However, sometimes the opposite was true.

In the book's seven chapters, Steplyk covers a diverse set of individual and often interrelated combat topics. As an excellent starting point, Steplyk first examines what influences soldiers brought with them when they mustered in as citizen-soldiers. Political, religious, social, and geographical factors all contributed toward how fighting men envisioned their responsibilities as soldier-killers. The second chapter looks at soldiers' reactions to combat. While some men cowered when the time came, or aimed in such a manner as to not hit human targets, the vast majority did their duty, despite often receiving inadequate training. Factors such as the physical distance between combatants, the lay of the land, confidence in commanders, and even the amount of gun smoke could determine soldiers' level of willingness to kill, and thus effectiveness in a battle. The remaining five chapters all discuss intriguing topics such as the language soldiers used to describe combat and killing, killing in hand-to-hand combat situations, sharpshooters and killing, the extremes of killing, and racial-atrocity killings.

As one might imagine, describing combat proved to be a challenge for many soldiers. Fighting men not comfortable with using the term "kill," or perhaps attempting to temper their conversation to loved ones at home, often developed their own terms to describe their battle actions. Phrases like "very badly cut up," "fearful execution," and "deliberate aim" for both group and individual actions found their way into

soldiers' letters, diaries, and memoirs (pp. 86, 82, 83). Hand-to-hand fights were quite rare during the Civil War, but when they did occur, most soldiers found the experience much more disconcerting and difficult than fighting at a distance. Killing at extreme distances fell to the lot of the sharpshooter. Steplyk contends that Civil War sharpshooters received both admiration and contempt for their extended killing skills. However, most soldiers and civilians came to accept the sharpshooter's role as just another deadly, yet practical, factor of warfare. Killing did not always stay within the neat confines of the battlefield. Unfortunately, war has the tendency to callous men. On occasion soldiers engaged in killing beyond the period's accepted rules. Killing sometimes occurred after a capture or against non-combatant civilians. However, Steplyk, too, points to times when soldiers demonstrated acts of mercy in combat situations. Many of the atrocity killings that occurred were between black and white troops during or immediately following battles. Too often official policies and cries of "no quarter" resulted in both black and white soldiers carrying out that call's action to murderous effect.

Steplyk incorporates a wide variety of sources, both contemporary as well as postwar accounts, some familiar and others fresh, as sound evidence for his conclusions. He also consistently provides numerous examples to make his various points. Organized in a logical manner, and written in an engaging style, Steplyk's *Fighting Means Killing* is a work that fills a void in Civil War studies seeking to inform us about the various ways Civil War soldiers came to grips with combat and, ultimately, killing. This book is an important read for all types of Civil War students. Whether one is focused on the field's military, social, economic, or political history, an amateur enthusiast or professional scholar, it is imperative to understand how the men in the field, asked to do the dirty work of warfare, both thought about and experienced that demanding task.

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