



# STEAMPUNK SOLDIERS

## THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

PHILIP SMITH & JOSEPH A. McCULLOUGH






# THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

OSPREY  ADVENTURES



**STEAMPUNK**  
  
**SOLDIERS**  
**THE AMERICAN**  
**FRONTIER**

**PHILIP SMITH &  
JOSEPH A. McCULLOUGH**

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2014, Osprey Publishing stunned the military history community with the release of *Steampunk Soldiers: Uniforms & Weapons from the Age of Steam*. This wide-reaching collection of military artwork by Miles Vancroft challenged many of the commonly held assumptions about warfare in the Victorian era, and, in many cases, provided the only contemporary visual evidence for specific weapons created during that time. The book went on to win the coveted Windrow Award for Military History, the Fraser Prize, and a special 'Service to Military History' citation from the European Society of Nineteenth-Century Warfare.

Unsurprisingly, in the months after release, Osprey received numerous letters, emails, and phone calls from people claiming to have found similar collections. This included no fewer than 37 people purporting to own other lost works by Miles Vancroft. While most of these claims were quickly dismissed as the works of tricksters, attention-seekers, and even a couple of low-grade forgers, it still left several cases that demanded further attention. We made several trips to remote parts of Britain, and even one to the Continent to examine artwork collections. Although we saw some beautiful collections, most were obviously not created by Miles Vancroft. Only in one case were we ever in doubt. This was a small collection of military figure drawings uncovered in Cornwall. The artwork style was similar, but there was no text accompanying the pieces. Artwork experts were brought in and, after several weeks, we concluded that, unfortunately, the works were not created by Vancroft. So, after months of furious activity, nothing more had been discovered, and there the matter rested.

A few months later, the Osprey office received a phone call from Reginald Foster Highgate, the great-great nephew of the famous newspaper publisher. Instead of making the wild pronouncements we were by then used to hearing, Mr Highgate suggested that he might be in possession of another collection of works by Miles Vancroft. Soon after, Mr Highgate emailed a few photos of the works in question, and two things were immediately noticeable. First, the paintings looked very similar in style to Vancroft's known works, and second, and more crucially, they were accompanied by written notes in a very familiar handwriting. This discovery was especially exciting as, unlike the paintings, Vancroft's handwriting did not appear in the book, and had never been made public.

Eagerly, we made plans to visit Mr Highgate in California, in the hopes that the collection was indeed a legitimate find. Landing in Los

## AUTHORS

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**Philip Smith** is a lifelong history enthusiast, and has carried his interest through an undergraduate degree at Lincoln College, Oxford, and into his career as an editor, where he specializes in military history and tabletop wargaming. Born in Derby, he now lives and works in Oxford.

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His continued ramblings can be read at:  
<http://therenaissancetroll.blogspot.co.uk/>

## ILLUSTRATOR

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**Mark Stacey** was born in Manchester in 1964 and has been a freelance illustrator since 1987. He has a lifelong interest in all periods of history, particularly military history, and has specialized in this area throughout his career. He now lives and works in Cornwall.