



The Search  
For  
Tun Tavern



Temple University Archive  
Historical Marker date 1925  
“Appears outside Tun Tavern”

# THE SEARCH FOR TUN TAVERN

BY

MIKE MALSARY

**SAMPLE CHAPTER**  
**April 2011**

## **PROLOG**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. PHILADLEPHIA AROUND 1700**
- 3. THE TAVERN**
- 4. A TAVERN; A BEGINNING**
- 5. EARLIEST TUN TAVERN NOTICES**
- 6. EARLY RESISTANCE; SEEDS OF REVOLUTION**
- 7. THE COLONY AND HER SHIPS**
- 8. COLONIAL BUSINESS**
- 9. THE PHILADELPHIA ACADEMY**
- 10. THE SHIP ISABELLA**
- 11. THE FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS**
- 12. PHILADELPHIA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**
- 13. EARLIEST MARINE PRESENCE IN THE COLONIES**
- 14. THE MARINE COMMITTEE**
- 15. PHILADELPHIA SHIPBUILDING MID 1700**
- 16. WILLING AND MORRIS**
- 17. SAMUEL NICHOLAS**
- 18. THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS**
- 19. OVER AT TUN TAVERN**
- 20. RECRUITMENT**
- 21. AT SEA**
- 22. DIARY OF LT. WILLIAM JENNISON**
- 23. NICHOLAS: THE CHINA TRADE**
- 24. EPILOGUE**

## PROLOG

Before beginning this story, a true story, the reader might benefit from a view of the writer's perspective. I grew up in a small town in Georgia, which happens to have become, in 1764, one of the thirteen original colonies. The founder of Georgia, James Oglethorpe, was the only governor to be given full financial support by the British Parliament. He was a veteran of the great battle of Blenheim in 1704, a battle against Franco Bavarian armies at the town of Blenheim on the Danube. There after a man of prominence and Member of Parliament, Oglethorpe opened the Colony of Georgia by offering a new life to immigrants released from the dismal debtor's prisons of England. Because of Henry VIII philandering, all but Catholics were welcome; slavery and liquor were prohibited; the land was rent free to settlers and they could not participate in government. All Georgia children know about Oglethorpe. I have lived nearly all of the past fifty years in Pennsylvania.

My adolescent years in Georgia were during the late Nineteen Fifties and the small town, incorporated in 1840 to provide a link between the cotton fields and a rail line had by the 1950s become similar in size to Philadelphia of 1750. This little town's population during my teen years was exactly that of Philadelphia around 1750, around thirty five thousand citizens. In 1750 Philadelphia foot racing, an Indian sport, was fashionable among kids. In my town riding bikes around town with my buddies I could see the large white Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches with brick façades and huge white columns and a lingering legacy from Oglethorpe, the vintage stone building in the English style, the Anglican or Episcopal Church ensconced with thick green mats of ivy beneath the cool shade of tall white oaks. Though smaller in scale, any of these might equate to similar edifices in Philadelphia of 1750 like Christ Church or St. Peters, both being the seats of several generations of early Philadelphia families. And too in my town, there was the court house, like the churches built in antebellum style with huge columns. All the buildings were of brick. In my town there were, surprisingly, several brick or cobble stone, granite as I recall streets similar to some streets in Philadelphia but many streets and alleys in Philadelphia were dirt. Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia is similar in size to the Court House of my small town. In my town there was a jail. In olde Philadelphia there was a Provost Marshall and keeper of the jail.

Many of those early Georgia debtors had done pretty well for themselves. Like Philadelphia; there were fine homes in the better section of town, moderate size Victorian, a later style, wooden clapboard homes many of which were often rented out. In one of these I spent the years of my childhood. Playing on the steps, I saw Mr. Milligan come to collect the rent from mother. And there was the working class part known as the 'mill town'. From these homes came workers to the giant knitting and textile mills that began to flourish in the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, after the Civil War. In the Fifties the poorest sections of town included shacks and shotgun houses. Among these was the Black district often referred to in the pejorative. The Jim Crow laws enacted in 1876 and much later in 1965 established *de jure* racial segregation, *de jur* being Latin for *concerning law*, as opposed to *de facto*, concerning *fact*. The renewed institution of slavery, that ancient frailty of humanity, had introduced to colonial

America, by 1780, about thirty-five thousand African slaves *a year* arriving in the fetid insufferable holds of British ships. <sup>i</sup> Spain, Portugal, the Dutch, France were all in the trade.

These class sections of my little town also equated nicely to Philadelphia of 1750, so that a young boy coming of age in either town, would see these distinct areas and recognize the classes that the sections represented, rich, working class poor, working middle class, Black, Irish, Swedish, Scotts, English, Quaker, and the shops, blacksmith shops and garages and saw mills and shops that housed the artisans, black smiths, welders, carpenters, mechanics and farmers, cordwaineres and brick makers. The silos and warehouses of my town off loaded grain, and sold flour, animal feed, corn meal, flour and fertilizer that spilled from hemp sacks out onto Broad Street filling the air with the special aroma farmers little boys on bicycles know.

Brigantines, Barks, Colliers or coal barges, Snows and Schooners and big merchantman Indiamen vessels did not come and go in my little town as they did in 1774 Philadelphia, but the big truck and rail freights rolled through north and south as did Greyhound busses. There was once a sparkling brand new Grayhound bus parked at Hill and Poplar Streets *down town* on public display; Grayhound's new modern double decker *Sceni-Cruiser*. Lines formed to tour the bus. Likewise the retrofits of the Ships Alfred and Providence in 1775 and construction of the giant frigate *U.S.S. United States* up on stocks in the Wharton & Humphreys ship yard that in 1795 sprung up in Southwark, a sparsely populated district south of Spruce Street. It was an area near a swamp that would become the Navy Yard. Philadelphia of 1750 had a frontier which began just beyond 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets to the West and beyond Race Street, a dirt street on which horse races were conducted. Whether sailing ship, freight train or Greyhound bus, they were seen by youngsters as a way out of town; portages to the great world beyond.

My town of the 1950s in addition to the many dirt streets, alley ways and shacks had dark dense pine forests in the outskirts the same as Philadelphia if 1750. In early Philadelphia there was a section known as "*Hell Town*". In my town there was section known as *Broad Street*, where the honky-tonks flourished. Often my dad would come home from his duty as a policeman with a comment about some event there. He would to stop in for coffee at the *Blue Goose* or the *Baltimore Café* and liked to drop by *Jimmy's (a tavern)* to hear the rumors and jokes amidst the smoke and heartbreaking wale of Hank Williams or Faron Young on the juke box; the walls papered with every variety of nude calendar. Philadelphia of 1750 had the *Blue Anchor Tavern* and the *George Inn* and *The Bunch of Grapes*, *the Turk's Head* which became the *Kouli Kahn*, where you could find a fight if you were looking for one. Too, Old Philadelphia had roving ballad singers, one a woman seldom sober, singing while playing her guitar. Clubs too flourished. My town had the *Kiwanis*, *Elks and Moose Clubs*, olde Philadelphia had the *Order of Free Masons*, *The Order of St. George* for the English, and the mighty *Hearts of Oaks* the ship builders, the *Society of Ancient Britons* (Welsh) and Franklin's *Leather Apron Club* for artisans.

A boy in his teens in both Philadelphia of 1750 and of my town in the mid to late 1950s would also begin to see some of the personalities around town; town leaders and characters full of mischief and bad reputations. Also the judges, the mayor or city

manager or perhaps a notable lawyer, senator or representative to Congress, or the chief of police would be familiar authority figures. News would travel that our senator was in town. Ministers too, some fiery orators were prominent as were teachers and especially the sharp eyed school principal which in Philadelphia of 1750 was the Head Master. Kids would fool around the creeks and river edge playing with small hand made boats demolishing them in destructive adolescent impulse. Kids squatted in huddles repeating what their parents talked about, and then would run off to the next venue of mischief and discovery. At the time of the first and second Continental Congress's, 1774 and 1775, there was much to talk round about in Philadelphia. Orators and writers were the rock-stars of the day. But when General or Continental Congress delegates came to town, and the ever present classes known as the better sort, middling and lower sort and the vicious poor all mingled together immersed in political discussion within taverns and on the streets, bells from churches tolled, bystanders cheered the delegates and the youth alike would take note that something big was indeed about to happen.

Tories, those who did not in varying degrees support Independence and radicals, supporters of the Liberty Party and varying radical viewpoints, from violence to diplomacy, wishing to break from England and go it alone, would have been commonly identified, even marked by young lads scurrying about the city. Like those for and against segregation in my town, there was coexistence of the factions. But the undercurrent of ugly passion seeped up with the long reach of two hundred years. Ugly vitriol of racism hung palpably in the air. In 1740 Philadelphia 2,500<sup>ii</sup> blacks had become shackled into varying degrees of slavery and similar passions would as soon tar and feather the bleeding Tory tax man as a runaway slave. In 1835, Jacob Mordecai recalled as a boy seeing black men in neck irons as they worked in a brick maker shop near the wharf on north Water Street. James Albert wrote that around 1730 his owner taught him about Christianity and “..dressed me in his livery and was very good to me...”<sup>iii</sup> In two hundred years, civil rights had come only as far as the Jim Crow laws of the nineteen-fifties. Documentation of defiance and rebellion at the time of capture, at sea and during enslavement began as early as 1444 off Senegal with the Portuguese.

In the late Fifties the modern Civil Rights movement was in its infancy with clashes across the South hitting the headlines of the little town news paper; *All the news that fit to print*. The town citizens would read carefully written editorials and nod in agreement, or grunt in disagreement. But in the year 1750 my little town was but a rabbit path in the vast Cherokee Nation. It is from this perspective that I render the scene that culminated in the years 1774 to 1776 in Philadelphia. The events in-town Philadelphia and resulting far flung chronologies are for the most part the focus of this story. Not a native Philadelphian, I visit the city frequently, taking a picture, studying the keystone of a building or walking down Front Street past alley ways, mentally stripping away all that is modern, cropping all that gives clue to the present, leaving only images of that turbulent, hopeful, utopian destination for all who sought something better. Sticking close to what Jennifer Homans of the New York Review of Books calls “*clear narrative and analytic line*”<sup>iv</sup>, I will tell the story of my search for Tun Tavern, one of the earliest taverns in Philadelphia that became a symbol along with Samuel Nicholas, the first Captain of Marines in the very earliest history of the United States Marine Corps.

\*

\*

\*



**Letter-August 1685:**

“...John Wheeler from New England is building a good brick house by the Blue Anchor; and the two brick makers a double brick home and cellars; besides several others going on. Samuel Carpenter has built another Brick house by his. I am building another brick house by mine which is three large Stories high besides a large brick cellar under it of two bricks and a half thickness in the wall and the next story half underground. The cellar has an arched door for a vault to go under the Street to the river and so to bring in goods and deliver out.....Samuel Carpenter is our lime burner on his wharf...”

History of Philadelphia 1609-1884  
Letter from Robert Turner to **William Penn**



Block print from the archive of the  
Marine Corps Heritage Foundation Museum- vi

**INTRODUCTION**

After reading several current works on the American Revolution, I ran across a number of on-line web sites featuring articles about the Marine Corps Birthday of November 10, 1775. A 1933 Marine Corps Gazette article by Major L.E. Fagan II USMC is thorough. Major Fagan sets the standard for anyone researching the more finite subjects of Philadelphia around the time of the American Revolution. Fact by fact he researched a scant biography of Samuel Nicholas, the first captain of the new colonial Marines. The variety of on-line write ups on the Marine Corps Birthday or general information about Tun Tavern and Samuel Nicholas are good survey reads, but the Fagan article, using primary sources, is the first step toward an attempt to document these subjects.

There are several seminal, encyclopedic works which should be keystones in reading related to this subject and period. *A Naval Encyclopedia* of 1881, the first major reference work on Naval matters<sup>vii</sup>, *The Marines*, a 1998 volume edited by Edward Howard Simmons (*Major General Ret.*) of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation<sup>viii</sup> and the 1975 volume *Marines In The Revolution* by Charles R. Smith, History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, Government Printing Office.<sup>ix</sup> More recently, Ian W. Toll's fine 2006 work *Six Frigates*,<sup>x</sup> in a broad but detailed perspective knits all of the complexities together although there is little about the early Marine Corps.

Broadening the scope to add social and economic factors should include several modern works on the Revolution; Bodle's *The Valley Forge Winter*,<sup>xi</sup> Lockhart's biography *General Frederick Von Steubin*<sup>xii</sup> and Raphael's *Founders*,<sup>xiii</sup> all take the *New History* perspective on unfolding events between 1670 and 1800. Steven Rosswurm's *Arms, Country & Class*<sup>xiv</sup> provides the essential schematic of individual citizens, inter-related politics, economics and the class struggle in the more finite Philadelphia revolution within the *pre-revolution* period 1750 and onward. James Nelson's *George Washington's Secret Navy*<sup>xv</sup> introduces another dimension, thoroughly detailed naval record research with colliding chronologies.

Major Edwin N. McClellan 1881-1971, entered the Marines as a Second Lieutenant in 1907. His lifetime bridged the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. As commanding officer of the Marine Corps Historical Section between 1925 and 1927 and again between 1930 and 1933, Major McClellan wrote numerous works about Marine Corps History. Writing within the span of his remarkable career Lt.Colonel McClellan's lasting legacy to the Marine Corps would be over one hundred published works. During his retirement ceremony held at the Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1968, Commandant, General Leonard Chapman stated that Lt.Colonel McClellan's opus work, *The History of the Marine Corps in World War*, "is still the essential starting point for any meaningful research into our past." In a most austere economic environment, the Great Depression, McClellan published in mimeograph form, thirty one chapters of well researched Marine Corps History. Writing during interrupted tours that read as mile markers to American History: Sea duty 1908, 1916, 1917; 1919; AEF France, Annapolis, Mounted Detachment Peking, Shanghai, Cavite-Philippine Islands, Nicaragua, Marine Corps Barracks Philadelphia Navy Yard, Quantico, Norfolk, and at Pearl Harbor in 1925. In the chronologies that follow I have incorporated segments of this fine work both as a primary standard, a *guide-on* and the authority on the earliest part of Marine Corps History.<sup>xvi</sup>

If one still has not developed his or her “sea legs” on the subject, turn up the surround sound and watch *Master and Commander; The Far Side of the World*, a film based on a work by Patrick O’Brian. Collectively, all of these works will enhance a feel and understanding of period in preparation for a meaningful study.

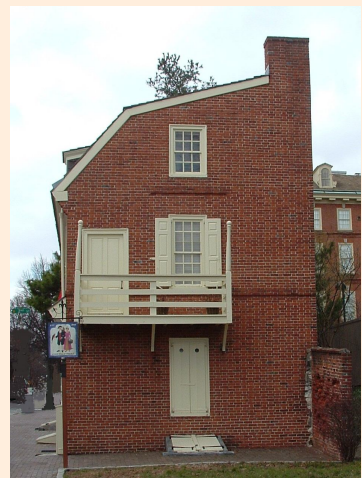


Detail-Valley Forge building

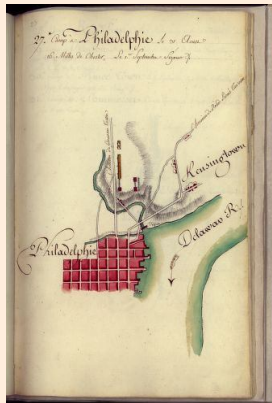
\* \* \*

The question regarding the First Commandant of the Marine Corps was first put to me while standing in formation for inspection at Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot on a cold South Carolina morning in late February 1963. An eighteen year old recruit at inspection arms presenting my M-14 to the officer for inspection, I would guess my answer was, “*The first commandant of the Marine Corps was Captain Samuel E. Nicholas Sir!*” I had only peach fuzz whiskers. In zealous preparation for inspection I had pressed too hard with the razor, shaving dermis from parts of my face. Patched up as best I could, I answered the question about Samuel Nicholas. Then the officer gazing at my bleeding face asked, “*What are the three types of wounds recruit.*” “*Sir, Puncture, Abrasion and Laceration Sir!*” He persisted. “*And what type do you have this morning?*” “*Abrasion Sir.*” Then mercifully the officer turned smartly and moved on. Today, nearly fifty years later with new research tools it would be interesting to calk the seams with details about Captain Nicholas and his town that may have been forgotten or better, were never known.

There is a distinct difference between *what one knows* and *what is known* about a particular subject. The first task always is to merge those two perspectives to the closest proximity before any attempt to write a contribution to such a hallowed subject. Tun Tavern, one of many taverns in Philadelphia from early to mid 1700s was the center of unique social networks that precipitated the selection of Captain Samuel Nicholas as the first officer among many in the Continental Marines and later the first quasi Commandant and muster master of United States Marine Corps.



## PHILADELPHIA CIRCA 1700



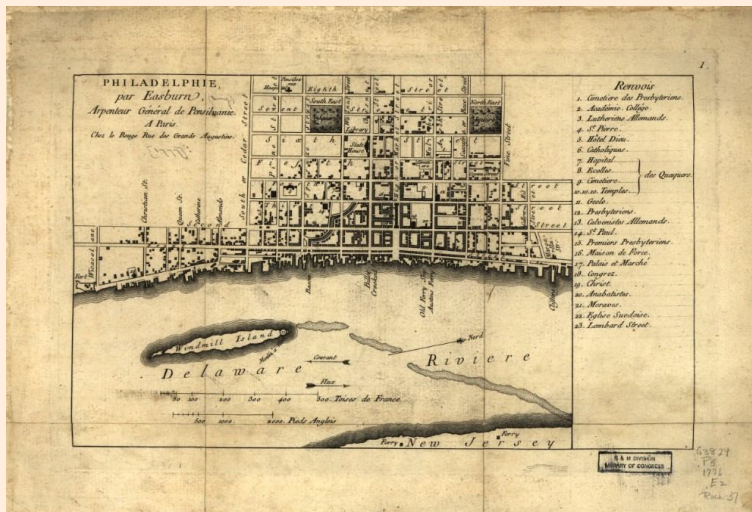
Early Rochambeau Tactic Map  
 “Amérique campagne” 1775 LOC

Man Full of Trouble Tavern- the **only**  
 surviving pre revolution tavern,  
 still stands on Second and Spruce.

The setting of the stage in a Philadelphia of 1776 requires a look at modern Philadelphia, through an imaginary 1700 lens.

The landscape has become so radically altered that all of the stimuli of the present leaves our imagination struggling to see *what was it really like?* At water’s edge, looking west at some remaining early architecture it is impossible to know exactly the location of the original river bank. Thanks to early maps and preservation efforts over the years, there are still many of

Library of Congress, Rochambeau Maps Collection



those original buildings and streets to help research this story. A present day walk through the historic area along the river can excite the spirit of this story. Except for a few (quite a few as it turns out) precious remnants, the distant past has vanished, especially along the Delaware River. The current *Independence National Park* bordered by 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, Delancy Street to the north, Pine Street to the south and a series of

concrete piers, Penn’s Landing and the Independence Seaport Museum at the river, roughly embody the confines of this story and of early Philadelphia.

A close examination of several early maps, the Rochambeau Map 1776 , several 1800 versions, and a modern version can begin draw Philadelphia life of 1700 to scale. As John Adams noted upon his arrival in late 1774, it was a town of about thirty thousand. “*Twice the size of Boston.*”<sup>xvii</sup> The city was, in sociological terms, distinctly divided by class. Since the early Swedes, settling along Christian Street and Swanson, and Welsh arriving in the 1600s, and before, there were now second and third generation citizens, American born. In early and mid 1700 the presence of British born among American born



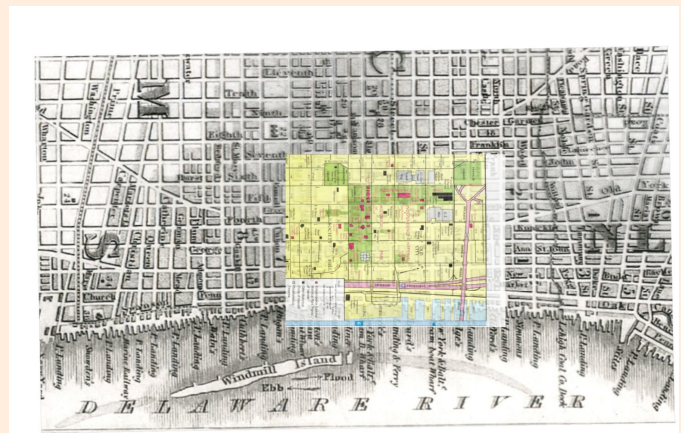
was likely indistinguishable, leaving a 1774 city of vicious poor, lower and middling sort Philadelphians, which John Adams described as “*poor English*”.<sup>xviii</sup> London in comparison was about one hundred and fifty thousand. The average life span in America at the time would produce three generations in one hundred years.<sup>xix</sup> Distinct English accents likely prevailed for several generations. \

W. Breton, engraving c1778– View to Water Street from river. Alley cut through. PHS archive

In very early Philadelphia, Water Street was the very first street running the full length of the river and docks. Dock Street was a bridge over a creek, Dock Creek, which became a rather large and navigable waste drainage ditch into the Delaware River, a sewer. It even included a drawbridge. Note that the streets in early maps continue west to about 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> Streets. Russell Weigley indicates “*But hardly anyone lived west of 4<sup>th</sup> Street in 1702.*”<sup>xx</sup> Front and Broad today, similarly go the full lengths. Water Street (formally King Street) is not identifiable on the Rochambeau map but is noted on the map of 1800. Tun Alley is not indicated on any early map. One early map gives good detail on the practice of cutting *through lots*, subdividing and building for maximum rents or work space along the river. The *cut-throughs*, were alleys that eventually occurred the full length of Water Street. Independence Hall, then called the State House, was and is between fifth and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets, then near the woods.



Alley detail, about 1790



Current Park Map overlay on Philadelphia of mid-late 1840s

A map detail of early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century Philadelphia clearly shows the emergence of numerous alley ways of about twenty feet in width perpendicular to the river edge. The alleys begin, on an 1800 map at roughly, Christian and Swanson Street to the south and Sassafras and Water Street to the north where lots were cut by *First Purchasers*<sup>xxi</sup>. The narrow alleys maximized building rent and quick appreciation of real estate as the city grew. The early dock area is within the confines of the present Independence National

Park bordered by Race Street to the North and Spruce Street to the South; both streets intersecting with King (later Water Street). By 1698, as the 17th Century closed, about nine alleys had been cut from Front to Second Street. Dozens of other alleys marked by the city surveyors soon followed, making Philadelphia of early 1700 the largest and most congested city in Colonial America.<sup>xxii</sup> Walking down Front Street today, the remnants of these alleys are still plentiful. Elfreth's Alley, on the north end, is a delight to view. As revolutionary Philadelphia comes into focus these magnificent artifacts and characters come to life. One clear statement relating to the neighborhood and location of Tun Alley includes two important names, Wilcox and Morris. India wharf covered from Chestnut to Walnut streets:

- “India wharf occupied the width from the south side of Tun Alley to the second alley below; it was the harbor for the East Indiamen. Robert Morris , of Revolutionary memory, had his store house there. It was occupied by Peter Whitesides in 1789 and John Wilcox in 1795. The India stores were large, and the wharf was one hundred and seventy-five feet front...This wharf was for many years a most famous one for the reception, loading and unloading of ships engaged in the China and East India trade....”

Sharff and Wescot

History of Philadelphia 1609-1884

END OF SAMPLE CHAPTER- SEE ALSO THE INTERACTIVE TOUR MAP OF PHILADELPHIA CIRCA 1750, WALK THE STREETS AND ENTER THE BUILDINGS, DROP BY THE NAVY YARD AND THE OLD THEATER.

<http://www.taowriter5000.com/IMVarleTOTIM.html>      MTM

---

<sup>i</sup> Thomas, Hugh, *The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870*, Simon & Schuster, 1997, p.12

<sup>ii</sup> J.H. Powell “Bring Out Your Dead” University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945; reprint Time Life Books, 1965

<sup>iii</sup> Autobiography of a People, Herb Boyd editor, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself* , Doubleday, New York, 2000

<sup>iv</sup> Homans, Jennifer, Book Critique, *The Poet and the Czar.....*,New York Times Book Review, Feb. 27, 2011

<sup>v</sup> History of Philadelphia 1609-1884, Scharf, Thomas. Wescott. T. , I.H Everts & Co., Philadelphia, 1884

<sup>vi</sup> Tun Tavern, block print, archive, Marine Corps Heritage Foundation Museum, Dumfries, Virginia

<sup>vii</sup> A Naval Encyclopedia, L.R. Hamersly & Company, Philadelphia, 1881 p.447-available from Google digitized books collection. <http://books.google.com/>

<sup>viii</sup> *The Marines*, Editor, Edward H. Simmons-and others, Barnes & Nobel Books, New York 1998

<sup>ix</sup> Smith, Charles R., *Marines In The Revolution: A history of the Continental marines in the American Revolution 1775-1783*

<sup>x</sup> Toll, Ian W., *Six Frigates*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2006

<sup>xi</sup> Bodle, Wayne, *Valley Forge Winter-Civilians and Soldiers in War*, The Pennsylvania State University

---

Press, University Park , 2002

<sup>xii</sup> Lockhart, Paul Douglas, *The Drill Master of Valley Forge; Baron de Steuben and the making of the American Army*, Smithsonian Books, New York, 2008

<sup>xiii</sup> Raphael, Ray, *Founders: The People Who Brought You A Nation*, New Press, New York, 2009

<sup>xiv</sup> Russwurm, Steven, *Arms, Country and Class*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1987

<sup>xv</sup> Nelson, James L. *George Washington's Secret Navy*, McGraw Hill, New York, 2008

<sup>xvi</sup> [http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Whos\\_Who/McClellan\\_EN.htm](http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Whos_Who/McClellan_EN.htm)

<sup>xviii</sup> Shepherd, Jack, *The Adams Chronicles Four Generations of Greatness*, Little Brown and Company, Boston 1975

<sup>xix</sup> *George Washington a Biography*, Freeman, Douglas Southall, Vol.1, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1951

<sup>xx</sup> Weigley, Russell F., *Philadelphia-A 300 –Year History*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1982

<sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid*, Weigley, Russell F.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid*, Weigley, Russell F.,