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## Local author uncovers American Revolution secrets

By: **MELISSA HAYES** (Mon, Nov/17/2008)

MOUNT LAUREL — You won't find many of the stories in John Nagy's book about the American Revolution in standard history books.

They include the time the Philadelphia General Militia was sent home during the war, but the soldiers refused to leave camp and return to Philadelphia unless they had canteens full of whiskey for the journey.

This example is one of 115 mutinies detailed in Nagy's book, "Rebellion in the Ranks: Mutinies of the American Revolution," which hit bookstores last year.

The book, which mainly focuses on the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Line mutinies, won the American Revolution Round Table of Philadelphia's Thomas Fleming Book Award for the best book on the American Revolution Era published in 2007.

Nagy has been researching spies during the American Revolution since 1992, when he read Carl Van Doren's book, "Secret History of the American Revolution."

That book focuses on the treason of Benedict Arnold, a general for the American Continental Army who switched sides to the British. It also explores other instances in which members of the Continental Army were persuaded to join the Loyalists.

Nagy, 62, said he started collecting antique documents 30 years ago. He went to the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, where many of the historic documents Van Doren based his book on are stored. Once Nagy started looking over the documents, he said he realized there was a lot more to the story.

"I read Van Doren's book and saw the documents and realized he missed a tremendous amount of information," said Nagy, a Mount Laurel resident. "Here I was, finding stuff that no one had ever written about and I was finding out about a completely different American Revolution than was told."

It took the would-be author several years to sell his idea, which evolved from spies to mutinies. Finally, Nagy sold his idea to Westholme, an independent history book publisher based in Yardley, Bucks County.

"Nobody had ever done a book covering just the subject of mutinies during the entire war," Nagy said. "We decided to do it."

Now that he has published one book, Nagy said he has several more in the works. His next book, which should be published by October, will be on American Revolutionary spy technology.

When Nagy began his research, he said there were maybe 50 known spies who went behind enemy lines to gather intelligence. Sixteen years of research later, he has a list of 500 whom he plans to write about.

"It's going to be a flood of information coming out over the next few years," he said, while not giving away details of his future books. "Some of the people are not going to be happy about some of the spies coming out."

Nagy, now an antique document expert who consults for the William L. Clements Library, will be signing copies of his book at The Bookery in Mill Race Village in Mount Holly Dec. 13 at 11 a.m. during the Battle of Iron Works Hill Reenactment.

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