

providing a foundation for future studies of a trade that devastated and nearly destroyed a culture for the sake of a dollar.

DONALD R. BENNIE, HAMILTON, ONTARIO
don_bennie@hotmail.com

Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*.
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Much can be learned about the American people and their mores, including prodigious alcohol consumption, by paying close attention to drinking houses. Sharon Salinger, an American historian best known for excellent work on indentured servants, has now examined the important, fascinating, and understudied colonial tavern. Like recent local studies by David Conroy on Massachusetts and Peter Thompson on Philadelphia, Salinger's synthesis covering all the colonies adds to the alcohol history literature in many ways.

One of this book's best features is to show how colonial American drinking practices were grounded in European habits. Both England and the Netherlands, which Salinger explores to understand New York, were hard-drinking societies with strong government regulation of alcohol, including licensing. Accordingly, all the colonies licensed taverns to enable travelers to lodge, eat, and drink. However, drinking houses mainly served local customers who were necessary for profits. While potential publicans eagerly sought licenses, and officials raised substantial revenues from permits, sensible people worried that an oversupply of taverns loosened government control, tempted licensees to sell alcohol illegally to slaves, Indians, or drunks, and promoted gambling halls and bawdy houses. Officials occasionally cut back the number of licenses, but the result was a drop in revenue and the rise of unlicensed premises, which angered licensees.

Gender and class are important in this story, and Salinger does an excellent job discussing the role of women in tavern life and in tavern keeping. Abundant evidence is offered that respectable women tended to avoid taverns. Liquor permits enabled poor people, especially women, to earn a living rather than go on poor relief, although women were more likely to be given licenses to sell alcohol out of doors than to maintain public houses. While widows of licensed publicans routinely were able to transfer their husbands' permits, authorities apparently distrusted inexperienced women to run clean houses. The issue of class is more complicated. Some taverns were cross-class; others were single-class. Although authorities granted licenses to persons from all classes, travelers sometimes cursed being forced to stay in a degraded tavern. Gambling and prostitution were often tolerated in licensed houses, but interracial drinking and fencing stolen property could bring prosecution and license revocation. There was a widespread fear that slave revolts would be hatched in taverns. Black and Indian drinking drew special attention from authorities. Taverns that threatened the social order and the power of the white male elite hierarchy were likely to be closed or driven underground.

This is excellent history, as far as it goes, but there are limitations. Chapters on the seventeenth century suffer from that period's poor sources, and the decision to include all the colonies leads to uneven coverage. Finally, the sources are overwhelmingly official records that have a tendency to obscure the ambience of tavern life. Nevertheless, much is useful here. Most insightful are the later chapters that discuss both the types of people who held tavern licenses and the meaning of gender and class. It is instructive to learn that the number of taverns per capita did not change much in the seaports throughout the colonial period, that who got or did not get a license often appears to have been arbitrary, and that rural areas always had fewer taverns per capita than did towns. Taverns were a key institution in colonial

America. The book contains seven excellent maps of Philadelphia, Boston, and Charleston, South Carolina, which show taverns in all neighborhoods, although they were concentrated near the wharves and often served hard-drinking seamen.

W. J. RORABUAGH, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
rorabaug@u.washington.edu