

Celebrate Independence Day with a history lesson!

DID YOU KNOW that tea and eastern white pine have something in common? Read on for a fun Independence Day story!

Overtaxing of the colonists was perhaps the primary reason America entered the Revolutionary War with England, but it wasn't the only cause: the tall, straight, and beautiful eastern white pine was first mentioned by a sea captain in 1605 during an exploration of the Maine coast. The colonists soon discovered that the lumber from eastern white pines is light, strong, easy to cut, and versatile. It quickly became a favorite of the new world, and was used to con-



THE KING'S BROAD ARROW—a tang and two barbs forming the rough shape of an arrow—was used by the Royal Navy to mark the best trees for masts.

struct homes, businesses, furniture, and bridges.

But England wanted these trees and this lumber for their own: as ship building grew, the eastern white pine became a favorite choice to create masts for ocean-going ships. By 1623, early sawmills in Maine and New Hampshire were cranking out pine masts for the Royal Navy; within 20 years following the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock, masting had become a primary industry across New England.

Why did England want these trees from America? Because their own forests had been depleted in the Middle Ages (firewood) and their resources for timber had run dry. The King was desperate for a resource to build the ships he needed to continue his world dominance, so he turned to America.

A King-appointed crew was tasked with searching all forests within 10 miles of the sea and inland waterways for as many suitable trees as possible. Each tree claimed by the crown was marked with the King's Broad Arrow—a series of three hatchet slashes in the rough shape of an arrow: a signal to the early settlers that those trees were only to be used by the Royal Navy.

As you might expect, this did not go over well with the colonists, so they decided to ignore the markings, harvest the trees they needed for growth and survival, and even falsified the King's Broad Arrow mark on smaller, lesser trees.



ONE OF THE FIRST flags attributed to the Revolution featured an eastern white pine in the upper left corner.

This led to multiple assaults on agents of the King, mini-battles—dubbed The White Pine War and The Pine Tree Riot—to preserve the forest resources the early Americans so desperately needed, and undoubtedly helped spark the flame that became the Revolutionary War.

History tells us that the eastern white pine was a strong symbol for the colonists, as evident on the first revolutionary flag allegedly flown at the Battle of Bunker Hill: the cloth featured and eastern white pine emblazoned in one corner. The species was also the introductory catalyst for acts of rebellion against the overtaxing British.

If you're feeling adventurous, it's rumored that throughout the great state of Maine, trees still exist that bear the original King's Broad Arrow mark. Please send us a picture if you ever find one—we'd love to see it.

For more information on the history of eastern white pine and its many uses past and present, please visit www.nelma.org.