



## Why do we have a green pine tree on the DCLSA burgee?

By Charles Buffington

This account is derived from a fascinating recent book: ***The Age of Wood***, by Roland Enos:

Way back before the Revolutionary War, England found itself in dire need of large trees for masts for their Navy's ships. No masts, no ships, no world domination.

Ah ha! Said the King, let's go to America where our colonists have wonderful, tall, straight white pines in the New England forests that would make perfect masts.

The colonists, however, were in a huff about the King taking their best timber for masts and resisted. In a move that would ultimately prove unwise, the King decided not to buy up areas of forest from the colonists where they could manage their own timber, but implemented what became known as the King's Broad Arrow Policy. All white pines greater than 24 inches in diameter were marked with three strokes of a hatchet in the shape of an upward pointing arrow and deemed property of the Crown.

This was a wildly unpopular policy with the colonists who continued to cut down the huge trees and mill them into boards 23" wide or less to hide the incriminating evidence. Twenty inch wide pine floor boards in houses became highly fashionable as a mark of an independent spirit.

The King lacked the resources to enforce his policy but decided to make an example of Ebenezer Mudgett of Weare, NH who had continued to fell and mill the "King's trees". However, before the King's agents could arrest Mudgett, a band of sympathizers, their faces blackened, cornered the agents in the Pine Tree Tavern. They administered one lash with a switch for every tree being contested, cut off the ears of the King's men's horses, and forced the agents to ride out of town between rows or jeering townspeople.

News of the event spread around New England and became the inspiration for the more-famous Boston Tea Party. The Pine Tree Flag became a symbol of colonial resistance. George Washington's Secretary, Col. Joseph Reed, designed a burgee with a green pine tree that was flown atop the masts of colonial warships.

The start of the Revolutionary War deprived the British of their source of good masts and they were forced to use smaller trees from the Baltic, a situation which slowed their ships down considerably. To make matters worse, the colonists sold their big trees to the French who had opportunistically sided with the rebels. The French mast superiority led to a number of naval British defeats and eventually America prevailed in its war of Independence.

So now you know. Roland Ennos is a fabulous writer with many memorable stories about the role wood has played in the history of the earth. Wikipedia has additional details.... [Here's a link.](#)

10/2021