



Introducing the Appeal To Heaven Flag

The Tree Flag (or “An Appeal to Heaven” flag) was one of the flags used during the American Revolution. The flag, featuring a pine tree with the motto “An Appeal to Heaven,” was used originally by a squadron of six cruisers commissioned under George Washington’s authority as commander in chief of the Continental Army in October 1775. Our General decided to take it upon himself to commission six Privately owned schooners and start his own navy. It was to be called “Washington’s Secret Navy” and all boats were to have “An Appeal to Heaven” flags upon them. Also known as the “Washington’s cruiser flag”, it was white flag with an evergreen tree in the middle and the words “An Appeal to Heaven” stitched across.

In April 1776, the state of Massachusetts adopted this flag for its own navy and was used by Massachusetts’ state navy vessels in addition to privateers sailing from Massachusetts. The Massachusetts General Court established the flag of the state navy on July 26, 1776, stating “that the Colors be a white Flag, with a green Pine Tree, and the Inscription, “An Appeal to Heaven.”

The phrase “Appeal to Heaven” is used multiple times by John Locke in his work, “Two Treatises of Government.” The phrase connotes that after all other alternatives of seeking justice have been exhausted, only an “appeal to heaven” remains.

The white pine found in New England, specifically the eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), was highly desirable for constructing masts in shipbuilding. Due to lack of supply of suitable lumber on their island, England reserved 24 inch (61 cm) diameter trees under the Mast Preservation Clause in the Massachusetts Charter in 1691.

AN APPEAL TO HEAVEN



The statutes required colonists prior to harvesting trees from their property to have a King’s Surveyor mark the larger diameter trees and then purchase a royal license to harvest the trees not marked with the broad arrow. The colonists resented the restrictions on the timber used for their needs and livelihoods. Prohibitions were disregarded and they practiced “Swamp Law”, where the pines were harvested according to their needs regardless of statutes.

The pine tree was used on the flag that the Colonists flew at the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775. The historically accepted flag has a red field with the green pine tree in the upper left corner as depicted in John Trumbull’s painting, “The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker’s Hill”, June 17, 1775.

In our own “Declaration of Independence,” our most prized possession, America’s “Appeal to Heaven” is publicly declared. Thomas Jefferson who wrote the declaration was, for a long time, highly influenced by John Locke’s work and if you read The Declaration of Independence (especially the last paragraph) you can see it is by all means the true definition of An Appeal to Heaven in its format.