

Lesson Plan

We Had a Riot

This is an adaptation by William Kellogg of a lesson plan prepared by Betty-Ann Sutton. The adaptation is included as a sample lesson plan in the *New Hampshire History Curriculum, Book I* (1997).

What Students Learn

Students should be able to understand how one group reacted to government directives and how the government dealt with them.

Students should be able to describe how one non-governmental group acted to create New Hampshire History.

Procedures

Question: How have people in New Hampshire history made or changed the rules and laws that they had to obey?

- Maintain a bulletin board time line of national and regional events covered in this era (pre-Revolution) to include: Sugar Act, April 1764; Stamp Act, March 1765; Repeal of Stamp Act, March 1766; Townshend Acts, June 1767; British Troops land in Boston, Oct. 1768; Boston Massacre, March 1770; Repeal of Townshend Acts, 1770; Pine Tree Riot, April 1772; Boston Tea Party, Dec. 1774; Raid on fort William and Mary, 1774; fighting at Lexington and Concord, April 1775; Declaration of Independence, July 1776. Have students write brief descriptions of each event to put on the board.
- Read article on “Colonial Masting” from Perspectives ‘76 (see Resource list.) Have students read orally in cooperative groups. Then do closed-book note taking and have each student write a short summary of the article, OR have the cooperative groups list the order for cutting and hauling the mast trees and the events that affected the operation of masting. Then develop a master list of the steps and events. Have each student select an item from the list to illustrate on poster paper. Finally, create a linear bulletin board using the posters or insert them on the bulletin board described above.

Question: What non-governmental groups have helped form New Hampshire history?

- Read the summary article on the Pine Tree Riot (attached). Have each student select the role of a person involved in the Pine Tree Riot (see attached list of 21 people mentioned in the article). Have each student write a letter to Gov. John Wentworth describing and explaining one character’s participation in and opinion about the riot. The letters can be read aloud in front of the class. In art class have students draw portraits of their characters using reference books to help them make accurate clothing and hairstyles.

- (Optional) Develop a role-play based on the summary article on the Pine Tree Riot. Use the court meeting in Portsmouth with Blodget and the trial before the four judges for the role-play.
- Hold a class discussion on how one can change or affect laws with which they disagree. Include analysis of the techniques used by the Pine Tree Rioters. Discuss how they might have achieved their goals without violence. Emphasize that this was action by a nongovernmental group. You will probably want to compare the Pine Tree Riot to other actions at the time of the Revolution and/or with more recent events such as the Civil Rights Movement or local events where citizens petitioned or acted independently to change rules or laws.

Lesson Materials

Background Sheet — “The Pine Tree Riot — Weare, N.H., April 1772”

Bibliography

- Appelbaum, Diana. *Giants in the Land*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993. A picture book about Colonial masting. An excellent resource.
- Begor, Kathy-Lyn. *New Hampshire Through the Years*. Littleton Enterprises, 1986. *Cobblestone Magazine*. September 1983. Patriotic Tales of the American Revolution.
- Grant, Louise. *The Fort and the Flag*. Regional Center for Educational Training, 1977. Fictionalized account of the raid on Fort William and Mary.
- King, David C. *America’s Story: Forming a New Nation*. Sundance Publishers. 1993. Contains short, grade level articles with study questions.
- Randall, Peter. *New Hampshire: Years of Revolution 1774-1783*. Article on the raid on Fort William and Mary by Anne and Charles Eastman.
- Shackburg, Richard. *Yankee Doodle*. Half Moon Book, 1965. Words and music about the song.
- Sutton, Betty-Ann. *A Summary of the Pine Tree Riot*. Written for Fourth Graders. Attached. From Weare, New Hampshire’s Town History.
- Weber, Laurence. “Colonial Masting,” *Perspectives ‘76*. Hanover: Regional Center for Educational Training, 1976. (Available at the Museum of New Hampshire History store.)

Assessment Tools and Techniques

Within the procedures described above are items for assessment. They include discussion, writing and artistic presentations. Each teacher can vary the assessment depending on the approach taken within the class and the ability of the students. In designing any assessment be certain to keep in mind the instructional objectives stated above (see “What Students Learn”). For any written evaluations create rubrics to use in discussing the writing with individual students. Develop rubrics for the evaluation of any group work.

Background: The Pine Tree Riot, Weare, N.H. (April 1772)

Summary by Betty-Ann Sutton from History of the Town of Weare, New Hampshire

There's a white pine tree in the town of Somersworth, New Hampshire that is 128 feet tall. That's as tall as an eight-story building. The trunk of this white pine is six and one-half feet across at the base. It's the tallest white pine in New Hampshire and one of the very few white pines left in our state that would be considered large enough to be used as a mast for one of the wooden sailing ships built for the Royal Navy of King George III in the 1700's.

In the early 1700's more and more people were leaving England and Europe and coming to the American Colonies. The towns along the coast of New Hampshire were developing into trading centers for the supplies that the colonists needed to buy from England. The colonists also had materials to sell to the ships that were sailing back to England.

One of our most abundant resources was trees. By the late 1600's, England had few forests left that could provide suitable trees for the giant masts, support timbers, and lumber for their growing Royal Navy and merchant ships. Tall, straight white pines were needed for "single-stick" masts. A single stick mast was hewn from one tree, rather than fastening two or more trees together with wooden pegs. A singlestick mast was by far the superior mast. It could hold full sail in the heaviest gales.

The colonists soon started moving away from the farms and towns along the coast. In the mid-1700s, Governor Benning Wentworth granted huge parcels of land to many of his friends and granted charters for incorporation to newly developing towns west of the Merrimack River. Families made the dangerous trip from the coastal towns to the forests. They cleared the land for farms and built roads for travel.

No matter who owned or cleared the land, the white pines on the land belonged to the King of England. In 1772 the British Parliament and King George III made a law protecting "any white pine tree of the growth of twelve inches in diameter." There was already a law protecting the larger white pine trees. All of these laws meant that the settlers couldn't cut any white pines unless they had the Deputy Surveyor come to mark

the trees with the broad arrow, saving them for masts. Then the settlers had to pay a tidy sum of money to get a royal license to cut the rest of the white pines from their own land.

The governor appointed Deputy Surveyors of the King's Woods who, along with their crew, had the authority to mark any and all suitable white pines with the broad arrow mark of the king. The Deputy Surveyor also had the authority to check the sawmills run by the settlers. If he found any white pine logs or lumber that had been cut without a royal license, he could mark each piece with a broad arrow. The sheriff could then seize the logs and lumber and the owner of the sawmill had to pay a huge fine or go to jail.

While Benning Wentworth was governor of New Hampshire, he did little to enforce the pine tree laws. He rarely sent the Deputy Surveyor to the new towns, like Dunbarton, Weare, and Henniker, which were so far away from Portsmouth. And the governor saw little reason to deny the settlers their trees as long as there were enough masts being hauled to Portsmouth for the Royal Navy.

Benning's nephew, John Wentworth, became governor in 1766. John Wentworth soon saw how much money was being lost by not enforcing the license fees and fines for the pine tree laws in the new towns, so he instructed the Deputy Surveyors to attend to their duties.

In the winter of 1771-72, John Sherburn, a Deputy Surveyor of the King's Woods, visited the sawmills in the towns of the Piscataquog Valley. Sherburn found just what he hoped he would discover - white pine logs that measured 15 to 36 inches in diameter at six different mills in Goffstown and Weare. He claimed them as "The King's White Pine Trees" and chopped the mark of the broad arrow in every log. The owners of the mills were warned not to touch the logs and to appear before the Court of Vice Admiralty in Portsmouth on February 7, 1772 to pay their fines.

The sawmill owners hired Samuel Blodget, Esquire, a lawyer from Goffstown to represent them at court in Portsmouth. Blodget didn't represent them very well. He forgot his loyalty to them when the governor offered him a job as a Surveyor of the King's Woods. But Blodget did arrange for the sawmill owners to pay their fines and to get their logs back.

The mill owners from Goffstown paid their fines at once and had their logs returned to them. But the sawmill owners from Weare did not. They decided to be “obstinate and notorious” even though Blodget had sent them letters warning them against it.

On April 13, Benjamin Whiting, the Sheriff of the County, and his deputy, John Quigly, rode to South Weare. They came with a warrant for the arrest of sawmill owner Ebenezer Mudgett. Mudgett was the leader of the Weare mill owners. The sheriff thought that if he arrested Mudgett, the other mill owners would give in and pay their fines.

It was nearly dark when Sheriff Whiting and Deputy Quigly found Ebenezer Mudgett. Mudgett agreed to meet the sheriff at Aaron Quimby’s inn in the morning and pay his fine. News of the sheriff’s arrival spread quickly through Weare. That night scores of men gathered at Mudgett’s house to work out a plan for paying the sheriff in a way that he wouldn’t soon forget.

Mudgett rode to Quimby’s Inn at dawn and burst in on the sheriff, who was still in bed. Then more than twenty townsmen, with their faces blackened for disguise, rushed into the sheriff’s room and began to beat him with tree branch switches. Sheriff Whiting tried to grab his guns so he could defend himself, but he was thoroughly outnumbered. Men grabbed him by his arms and legs, hoisted him up, face to the floor, while others continued to switch him mercilessly. Whiting later reported that he thought the men would surely kill him. Deputy Quigly was also pulled from his room and received the same treatment from another group of townsmen.

The sheriff and deputy’s horses were brought around to the inn door. The soot-blackened townsmen cropped off the horses’ ears and sheared off their manes and tails - ruining the value of the animals. The two men were forced to mount and were shouted and slapped down the road toward Goffstown.

At this point the sheriff was not about to admit defeat. He went to Colonel John Goffe and Colonel Edward Goldstone Lutwyche and arranged for them to bring a posse of soldiers to Weare to arrest Mudgett and the other rioters. By the time the posse arrived, the rioters were long gone. They had disappeared into the woods without a trace.

But Sheriff Whiting didn't give up on the whole matter. Later in the spring he was able to capture one of the rioters, so the rest of the men agreed to pay the bail money and appear in court to accept their punishment.

In September, eight men from Weare were brought before His Majesty's Superior Court. They were Timothy Worthley, Jonathan Worthley, Caleb Atwood, William Dustin, Abraham Johnson, Jotham Tuttle, William Quimby, and Ebenezer Mudgett. They were charged with being rioters and disturbers of the peace and with "making an assault upon the body of Benjamin Whiting, Esq., Sheriff, and that they beat, wounded and evilly intreated him and other injuries did so that his life was despaired of." They were also charged with going "against the peace of our Lord the King, his crown and dignity."

Four judges heard the case in the Superior Court in Amherst. They were Theodore Atkinson, Meshech Weare, Leverett Hubbard and William Parker. The rioters were very humble and submitted themselves to the grace of the court and king. They were lucky. The judges fined each of the men 20 shillings and ordered them to pay the cost of the court hearing.

It was certainly a light punishment for the crimes they had committed. The small fine ordered by the judges showed that they understood why the men from Weare attacked the sheriff and deputy. The judges, like many other citizens of New Hampshire, thought the pine tree laws were oppressive and unfair. The pine tree laws were just another way of making the colonists pay taxes to the British king.

The Pine Tree Riot, the raid on Fort William and Mary in Newcastle, the threats to the Tax Stamp Master in Portsmouth, and many other acts of rebellion grew from the anger that the citizens of New Hampshire felt over these laws. They all helped to bring New Hampshire into the Revolutionary War against Great Britain.

Participants in the Pine Tree Riot

1. Jonathan Clement - sawmill owner
2. John Sherburn - Deputy Surveyor of the King's Woods
3. Samuel Blodget, Esquire – lawyer for the sawmill owners, then Surveyor of the King's Woods
4. Benjamin Whiting, Esquire – Sheriff of the County
5. John Quigley, Esquire - Deputy Sheriff
6. Aaron Quimby - owner of the Pine Tree Inn
7. Ebenezer Mudgett - resident of Weare, rioter
8. Timothy Worthley - resident of Weare, rioter
9. Caleb Atwood - resident of Weare, rioter
10. William Dustin - resident of Weare, rioter
11. Abraham Johnson - resident of Weare, rioter
12. John Sherburn - Deputy Surveyor of the King's Woods
13. Jotham Tuttle - resident of Weare, rioter
14. William Quimby - resident of Weare, rioter
15. Colonel John Goffe - head of regiment that marched to Weare
16. Colonel Edward Goldstone Lutwyche - head of regiment
17. Matthew Patten - local judge or justice
18. Honorable Theodore Atkinson - Chief Justice
19. Honorable Meshech Weare - Justice
20. Honorable Leverett Hubbard - Justice
21. Honorable William Parker - Justice

Curriculum Information

Information relating to the *New Hampshire History Curriculum* refers to the K-12 resource in two volumes developed by the New Hampshire Historical Society in partnership with Public Service of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies. The K-6 volume is available on-line through the school programs section of the Society's Web site (<http://www.nhhistory.org>).

Grade Level

Elementary School and Middle School

New Hampshire Social Studies Standards

Civics 1, 2, 4; Geography 2, 4, 5; US/NH History 1, 5

New Hampshire History Curriculum Focus Topics

Politics

New Hampshire History Curriculum Eras

1763–1820: Revolution and the New Nation