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New England Masts and the King's Broad Arrow (Maritime monographs & reports)

S.F. Manning

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New England Masts and the King's Broad Arrow (Maritime monographs & reports) S.F. Manning *New England Masts and the King's Broad Arrow*, by Samuel F. Manning, is a small, softcover book that brings to focus the early settlement of coastal New England and the forgotten mast trade upon which the American lumbering and shipping enterprises were built.

Timber was New England's best cash crop at the beginning of colonial settlement. But not just any timber. The kind of timber instantly saleable across the Atlantic were the tallest trees in the white pine forest for ships' masts. Mast timber then, like petroleum today, was protected and fought over by European belligerants to keep ships of war in fighting condition. It was worth any price. How post-Cromwell England commandeered the stands of New England mast pines and sought to harvest them under the repressive acts of the so-called Broad Arrow Policy is a fascinating story.

But the heart of this book is its illustrations, which depict the actual surveying of mast trees, felling them by hand, moving the big sticks to tidal estuaries by means of oxen, hand-hewing the logs to the merchantable sixteen sides, and the loading of hewn mast baulks into ships. The story and drawings were compiled with the cooperation and approval of the British National Maritime Museum. Included are sixten log-handling scenes commissioned by the Maine Public Broadcasting Company for its documentary film Home to the Sea.

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