[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

[Posted January 7, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376895) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376895)

Trying to find any references to or shipping lists regarding bricks or blocks of tea shipped into the colonies. Not having any luck with this, and all my searches have turned up only un-verified references by more modern writers. I'm looking for actual primary references from the colonial period if they do, in fact, exist.

Thanx,

Bo

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* 
* 
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376926) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376926)

I would be interested in some dates on this as well... as down here the historic sites have gone from loose tea, to loose tea in caddies(mind you the caddy seemed to be the key thing at the time), to bricks...all stating earlier on it was shipped loose...problem being no one seems to know what earlier on entails...

[**Graydog**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5382-graydog/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 796 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:The Sea
* Interests:My interest is becoming a one percenter so I can laugh at the 99 percenters. HAHAHAHAHAHA, Wow, guess I made it. Yo Ho.

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376938) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376938)

Great question. While the Boston Tea Party is well out of period, if they had been using tea bricks it would be relevant to the question. Id suppose for actual documents one would need to see if the East India Company had Tea Packing Instructions? Anyway, here is some information, really doesnt prove the question one way or another.

According to this author the tea of the Boston Tea Party was shipped loose and not in bricks, however, it was tightly packed so it might be in a defacto brick like condition when the chest was open, bearing in mind some chests were over 400 pounds thats a big brick.

Heres a link that has an original document as to the losses at the Tea Party:

<http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2009/12/how-much-tea-was-destroyed-in-boston.html>

Relevant text:

*Contrary to what some people have claimed, the tea was not shipped in bricks. The leaves were loose in the chests, but they were very densely packed, allegedly pressed under workers feet as they were loaded in the wooden boxes. It probably took some effort for the ruffians to break up the compressed clumps of tea leaves with their bare hands.*

All of the above certainly does not answer the question; its just kind of fun somewhat relevant trivia.

**Edited January 8, 2010 by Graydog**

[**Littleneckhalfshell**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4-littleneckhalfshell/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 390 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Hudson Valley, NY
* Interests:Blacksmithing, hunting, fishing, stuff.......

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376940) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376940)

period sources are always best, but since no one has found any yet, I offer this information in support of loose tea.

<http://blog.mightyleaf.com/legacy-of-the-tea-brick/>

Apparently even in China, Brick tea was mainly common BEFORE the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

During the Ming Dynasty loose leaf tea brewing was the preferred method of brewing tea.

If even the Chinese were using loose tea post 1368, and since the use of brick tea often is a different method of brewing tea, I would think that loose tea would be the common form to be found for export.

But I will keep looking for more period sources.

[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376941) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376941)

Yes, i have several first-hand accounts of the event that have men going out next morning to break-up the tea with oars. I am in a debate over this on another forum, and so far have made no connections, other than a 1935 article that states Bohemia tea was indeed shipped in bricks, and investigators into the Boston event have determined most of the tea lost was Bohemia, and one original chest that is in the museum is definitely a Chinese chest. The problem will be in finding references as to how these bricks were formed, and that Dutch smugglers would not likely have kept open books on the import of smuggled tea. From the smuggling site I have added in the other thread, the methods of smuggling highly suggest brick form as how else could one man carry 18 pounds of tea in their slops or coats without being detected? Still need that 'smoking gun' though.

Check out the Boston Tea Party Historical Assoc. website too.

I found this article on the different types of bricks and its use as money that helps show that this method has been used for many years, in many different areas of Asia and for different reasons:

<http://www.charm.ru/coins/misc/teamoney.shtml>

Bo

**Edited January 8, 2010 by Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**

[**Littleneckhalfshell**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4-littleneckhalfshell/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 390 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Hudson Valley, NY
* Interests:Blacksmithing, hunting, fishing, stuff.......

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376943) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376943)

further in support of 'loose tea'

<http://www.strandtea.com/Paul-Rogers-Short-History-of-Tea.pdf>

1597 “The first English mention of tea appears in a translation of Dutch navigator Jan Hugo

van Lin-Schooten’s Travels. Van Lin-Schooten calls the beverage chaa.”

Blofeld notes, “It was during the late Ming times that tea first reached Europe. Of those

Europeans wealthy enough to afford it some were enthusiastic, but a rumor spread that tea

weakened a person‟s vitality and was being exported to sap the energies of potential enemies of

China!”

1684 “England’s East India Company gains Chinese permission to build a trading station at

Canton after years of having to import Chinese silks, porcelain, and tea by way of Java.”

Ships from Europe arrived in the early 16th century. The Portugese arrived in 1514AD, obtaining

the trading concession in Macao. The Spanish came to the Phillipines later in the century and

Dutch in the early 17th century established positions in Formosa. So by this time it‟s pretty clear

that following the Sung custom, and with transport available, it was loose leaf tea that reached

Europe, and consequently America.

(The mention of "Blofeld" is from the book "Blofeld, John, The Chinese Art of Tea, 1985, Shambhala")

[**Graydog**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5382-graydog/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 796 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:The Sea
* Interests:My interest is becoming a one percenter so I can laugh at the 99 percenters. HAHAHAHAHAHA, Wow, guess I made it. Yo Ho.

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376944) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376944)

Post deleted owing to rambling driveling on my part.

**Edited January 8, 2010 by Graydog**

[**Littleneckhalfshell**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4-littleneckhalfshell/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 390 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Hudson Valley, NY
* Interests:Blacksmithing, hunting, fishing, stuff.......

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376945) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376945)

again in support of 'loose tea'

<http://www.international.ucla.edu/media/files/Fowler_Tea_Curriculum.pdf>

in part one, "China, Cradle of Tea Culture"

""Loose-leaf tea and teapots are what the first European traders encountered when they arrived in China in the sixteenth century.""

[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376952) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376952)

Let me make a point of clarification, I do not think that the hard bricks sold by historical sites and event vendors is what was shipped to the colonies. Brick form, however had to be used to measure the weights accurately. Think on this; the dimensions of the chests used to transpot tea, and the weights recorded makes it a common sense practice to have some form of block. There is another popular leafy substance that is smuggled into this country everyday- cannabis. Think about this, how are you going to get the tea out of the chest in one big chunk without a lot of waste? Several smaller blocks are the most practical way to pack and un-pack the tea with minimal waste. This could still be considered loose tea if you've ever seen or handled a brick of marijuana, I believe this had to be the method used for packing and shipping. I would also point out the fact that if you were in China drinking tea, why would it need to be packed for long distance shipping if you live where it is grown? I know that some tea was in fact shipped loose, but there were several different types, grades of quality, and they came from different parts of the world, and different methods were employed for the shipment overseas. The Dutch were and are very frugal, (I am married to one!), and they are going to get the most efficient use of the shipping space. I am not denying that tea was shipped loose, i just don't think it all was. Stil searching...

Bo

[**Graydog**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/5382-graydog/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 796 posts
* Gender:Polly Wanna Cracker
* Location:The Sea
* Interests:My interest is becoming a one percenter so I can laugh at the 99 percenters. HAHAHAHAHAHA, Wow, guess I made it. Yo Ho.

[Posted January 8, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=376955) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=376955)

I agree 100% with your logic. However, still have not found anything to support bricks in use for any kind of shipment to Western Europe and it appears that the area of China is where bricking is well known to have occured, at least at some point in some places. This is simple technology, I don't see any reason why anybody making tea could not brick their product. I just haven't found anything to say positively they did. Now, Chinese shipment to Russia is a different story, but that's camel caravans and Yak Dung as a binder in some cases. If the Russians transshipped in block form, I don't know and haven't found anything on that, yet.

So, before I go hunting for Russians, here's what I found on the Dutch:

In the book “Merchant in Asia: The Trade of the Dutch East India Company’during the Eighteen Century” (A google book)

There is picture on page 183 of a painting from 1800 that shows how the Chinese packed tea for export and it’s along the lines described previously. They put loose tea in a crate and stomped on it.

There is a picture of a painting from 1700 that shows a “Merry Nell, a doxy with a tea pot” with a container holding the tea prior to brewing. The container has a round lid much smaller than the diameter of the container. This means the items to come through the hole had to be smaller than the opening and yet when inside the container to have enough volume to fill the box. This leads to a conclusion that the tea in the box is either loose, or by necessity have to be busted up fragments of block tea in order to fit the opening. But, busted up blocks of tea just doesn’t seem right when one looks at the container.

On page 187 it speaks of manufacturing of tea in China specifically for European export. Within that process after the tea is made ready for sale it is immediately placed in an airtight container. There is no discussion of forming blocks or putting blocks of tea into containers.

On page 188 it discusses internal transportation of tea leaves that wind up being exported (rather than grown exclusively for that purpose) and once again there is no mention of blocking but there is mention of packing. There is also mention that some chests could be found to be fraudulently packed with sawdust mixed in with the tea leaves.

Still not conclusive proof that Bricks were not used in the Colonies in the America’s.

Just conjecture on my part, but if they knew how much the container weighed empty then they could deduce tthe amount of product in the container when weighed full. If that works better to explain the saw dust fraud (since the container is unopened) is just more conjecture on my part. (This is an edit- I forgot to include that also according to the book the Dutch provided the airtight seals via lead sheeting, that they supplied to the Chinese, ergo they'd know the weight.)

**Edited January 8, 2010 by Graydog**

[**Quartermaster James**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4887-quartermaster-james/)

* LUNATIC
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,662 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Sailing the Islets of Langerhans
* Interests:Interests cannot be left blank, so the machine says.

[Posted January 9, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377023) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377023)

Excellent thread (both this and that of a certain Mr. Brad Shaw elsewhere ). Surprisingly hard to get decent documentation pertinent to the question.

I've nothing of substance yet to further the conversation. Bo's analogy is interesting, and tea was taxed by weight, but was it sold wholesale by weight?

Also still searching...

[**Quartermaster James**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4887-quartermaster-james/)

* LUNATIC
* 
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* Member
* 1,662 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Sailing the Islets of Langerhans
* Interests:Interests cannot be left blank, so the machine says.

[Posted January 9, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377027) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377027)

This article contains an interesting document: <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2009/12/how-much-tea-was-destroyed-in-boston.html>

Note also this paragraph, albeit uncited:

*Contrary to what some people have claimed, the tea was not shipped in bricks. The leaves were loose in the chests, but they were very densely packed, allegedly pressed under workers’ feet as they were loaded in the wooden boxes. It probably took some effort for the “ruffians” to break up the compressed clumps of tea leaves with their bare hands*.

I'm thinking bales, Bo. 

Still searching...

[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

[Posted January 9, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377057) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377057)

Yes it is, and I have to concede that LEGAL shipments of tea were in the larger bales or rather stuffed into chests based on all the evidence gathered so far. The SMUGGLED tea however still points to the smaller bricks. I would love to see those customs documents, but so far have not had any success accessing any. From the evidence gathered so far, along with all logic says that smugglers are doing what smugglers do, hiding smaller packages to outsmart the customs agents. nothing has changed in that respect over time. The more vigilant the customs agents become, the more creative smugglers get. More smuggled tea was sold than legal tea but records are not going to be found for the black-market I'm afraid. Unfortunately, this is only best guess without the documentation. I go back to classes on Monday, so looks like I'm at a dead end, as this is an all graduate level semester schedule for me, and two of my classes are POLISCI (I'm going to be a US Senator for one, the other I'll be doing SCOTUS and Appelate court judgements on First Amend., one Rennaissance/Exploration, and one on the cirriculum standards for teaching the social studies. I've got a full plate. Maybe I'll pick this up later in the summer after the semster ends. Have fun all, see ya after school. 

Bo

[**Quartermaster James**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/4887-quartermaster-james/)

* LUNATIC
* 
* 
* Member
* 1,662 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Sailing the Islets of Langerhans
* Interests:Interests cannot be left blank, so the machine says.

[Posted January 9, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377060) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377060)

Maybe I need to redirect my efforts.

The contraband tea, after all, was not from English companies, no?

If my understanding is correct, it was bought from the Dutch.

Best wishes for the school year Bo!

[**LadyBarbossa**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/408-ladybarbossa/)

* Wealth Redistributor & Mischief Making
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 4,641 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:The Land Between Two Rivers, aka Iowa
* Interests:18th c Piracy to American Revolution, Victorian Thespians, Equitation, tigers, Friesians, cooking, playing my viola & music in general. Researcher of Major General Baron Johann de Kalb. LOVES the Phantom of the Opera (who's also Brethren)! Transformers, Stargate, Star Trek, Star Wars, NCIS, Bones, The X Files

[Posted January 12, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377212) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377212)

Hmm... interesting question, Bo. Always have heard about the blocks of tea, both black and green. But, ye raise a valid point.

Just looked at a "sold list" image copy for a ship's ledger but made NO mention of selling tea. Sold sugar, wine, rum, tread, knives and all sorts of other items but no tea.

Gonna look at another one - a cargo manifest - to see if it says anything.

~Lady B

[**PoD**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10743-pod/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 696 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Warrington UK
* Interests:Pirates, graphic novels, computer art, Listening to music, Going to gigs, Beer and Wine drinking, historical research, Period weaponry and Leatherwork

[Posted January 13, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377245) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377245)

This site <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/galle/avondster/finds.html> claims that Tea was actually shipped in storage jars. Some of these Jars were recovered from the wreck of the Avondster that sank in 1659 on its way to India.

**Storage jars** are always found on ships of this period. They were used as containers for sugar, salt, tea, salted fish, candied fruit, butter, oil, wine, spirits, opium, and even holy water and mud from the Ganges. More prosaically, they were used to store drinking water. Jars like that on the far right are known as **martabans** (in Dutch, *martavan*), after Martaban in Burma where they were originally made; the word came to be used for similar jars from all over Asia.

[**LadyBrower**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10561-ladybrower/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 582 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:Walden, NY
* Interests:Sewing, Crochet, Knitting, Reading, Cooking, Baking, Yoga, Kickboxing, Bellydance, Guitar Hero, Rockband

[Posted January 13, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=377246) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=377246)

oooh. Interesting. Should this be true, bricks would be difficult. Loose tea "packed" into these jars would allow for more efficient use of space.

[**Grymm**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10793-grymm/)

* First Mate
* 
* 
* Member
* 281 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Chilterns UK
* Interests:Stuff

[Posted February 10, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=379509) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=379509)

 On 1/7/2010 at 10:26 PM, Capt. Bo of the WTF co. said:

Trying to find any references to or shipping lists regarding bricks or blocks of tea shipped into the colonies. Not having any luck with this, and all my searches have turned up only un-verified references by more modern writers. I'm looking for actual primary references from the colonial period if they do, in fact, exist.

Thanx,

Bo

This subject turns up alot on various 18thC forums that I read and still after many years no-one can find any evidence that they are used in Europe or the Americas

Do a search on this site <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/18cWoman/> for "brick tea" and "tea bricks" and like you they have found there is no primary sources for their use pre mid 19thC

Same on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SavoryFare2/> a site frequented by some very dedicated food researchers.

Here should be a link to the numerous discussions on tea bricks on the 18thC food site

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SavoryFare2/msearch?query=%22brick+tea%22&submit=Search&charset=windows-1252>

and

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SavoryFare2/msearch?query=%22tea+brick%22&submit=Search&charset=utf-8>

and the 18thC woman site

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/18cWoman/msearch?query=%22brick+tea%22&submit=Search&charset=windows-1252>

and

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/18cWoman/msearch?query=%22tea+brick%22&submit=Search&charset=utf-8>

The other damning thing is the lack of equipt for dealing with a tea brick and lack of instructions in recipt/household books. Now I know that it could be dealt with using a mortar and pestle but something as expensive as tea usually aquires 'tools' and instructions in books.

Look at tea, coffee and chocolate processing equipt that turns up with these beverages when they hit Europe in the early/mid 17thC, roasters, grinders, matate, molinillo, special cups & pots and storage equipt but nothing for processing tea bricks.

I have a theory, and it is just my idea, that if they are being imported that they are shop window display pieces and not for consumption.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SavoryFare2/message/5209> is very interesting....well to a sad sack like me anyway.

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* 
* 
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

[Posted April 12, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398475) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398475)

BRICK TEA/TEA BRICKS

Brick tea and tea bricks were not available in western Europe or in the colonies. Many have argued that it was here, but none have come up with any primary source documentation to place it here. "Tea bricks were sold direct to Tibet and Russia and invented before modern packaging. The brick is composed of all of the plant, stalk and all." (Emily Hahn, The Cooking of China, 1968)

<http://www.deborahspantry.com/beverages.htm>

She goes on to say, in her catalog, that brick tea was NOT wanted here in the Colonies (at least) as it was held together with dung for the paste and was the left overs, scraped up off the floor.

[**Dread Pyrate Greyhound**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11490-dread-pyrate-greyhound/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 451 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Ohio
* Interests:Golden Age of Pyracy, Age of Sailing ships (spacifically 1600-1730) Vintage pirate Legos, weaponry in usage during the Age of Pyrates, Fuedal Japan

[Posted April 12, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398478) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398478)

*I vaguely remember reading or hearing about tea bricks at one point, but I don't recall all the details, I'll have to ask my uncle, He's a big history/ any-topic-under-the-sun buff*

[**jendobyns**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11262-jendobyns/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 562 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:Baltimore
* Interests:too numerous to mention, really. Period foodways, baroque dance, material culture, etc., etc.

[Posted April 12, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398483) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398483)

I'll just weigh in to reinforce both what Grymm and Capt. Sterling are saying here. A few years ago Deb Peterson (see Sterling's link) held a symposium on period coffee, tea and chocolate, and the up-shot was, based on serious research by people passionate about the subject, that tea bricks don't show up until way too late for any of us here to be using them. When I can get to it, I'll look at my symposium notes and see if I can't find the name of the presenters and bibliography.

We've beaten that horse (and others) way beyond resurrection in the later 18C forums, trying to find evidence for tea bricks. If we haven't found it yet, and we've had years to cover it, and many, many people asking the same questions we get here, it probably didn't exist yet in the western world, except perhaps as a curiosity. The only way that is likely to be overturned is to find first person evidence in a diary, inventory or picture, which documents not only it's existence, but consumption.

Oh, and I'd like to point out that both the 18C Woman and SavoryFare2 lists do not have complete archives from their beginning, as both have undergone changes over time and some of the older discussions have been lost (SavoryFare2 was once SavoryFare). If anyone has a clue as to how to access that information, please share!

Jen Dobyns

[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

[Posted April 12, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398490) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398490)

Just to clarify once again, as I did in one of the above posts, I know that the bricks for sale in the gift shops today are not what would have been shipped. However, due to the nature of shipping/smuggling, making a profit, and making use of all the room to best utilize cargo space, and due to the eyewitness accounts at the Boston Tea Party (going out next morning to break up the floating tea with oars), I still have some doubts that all the tea was so loose as to not be bound into bales just from being packed tight in the trunks and chests. Also, given the smuggler information I came across, and knowing a bit bout transporting leafy substances in hidden spaces, some form of tightly wrapped packages were necessary to transport quantities enough to make it profitable. Not the pressed bricks we see today certainly, but it would not have been good business to ship twenty pounds of tea leaves in a trunk that could be stuffed with eighty pounds. I found another reference to the tea at Boston reffered to as "bullets" due to its shape, but I lost it! if I weren't so busy finishing up schoolwork I'd go looking for it again. Anyone else hear of this term applied to tea?

Bo

[**Capt. Sterling**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2648-capt-sterling/)

* Sticky Fingers Sterling Needs a New Hat
* 
* 
* Member
* 10,302 posts
* Gender:Pyrate Hunter
* Location:here
* Interests:Killing pirates, haven't met one yet worth keeping alive....

[Posted April 13, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398519) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398519)

no bullets, although that shape reminds me of the modern day flowering teas, which are bullet shaped being hand-tied... Now prior to the introduction of brick tea to all the historical sites down here (VA), they used to teach the public that tea was shipped loose and then you went to purchase it with your tea caddy. This was filled up and you returned home, (or yer servant what have you)....

my question though have you actually found reference to tea being baled? The idea of shipping such a staple in a fabric bale and then stowed in a leaky ship, only brings to my mind damaged cargo... chests still seem to be most mentioned with the loose leaf... which, granted may be difficult to haul around in your slops, unless you had hidden pockets installed, but shipping in bales? sounds like a giant tea bag....we have already seen here in the past, that different items were often shipped together, one being "fragile" and the other being more of a "soft pack" which would be used to protect the fragile items, because it "surrounded" the fragile item and filled in the smaller, tighter spaces... to me loose tea being packed as tightly as possible but still loose would be able to fill them hard to reach spots...so packing it loosely as we have seen so far, really does make more sense than the bricks...

Would love to see some references to tea in bales instead of hard containers...

[**jendobyns**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11262-jendobyns/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 562 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:Baltimore
* Interests:too numerous to mention, really. Period foodways, baroque dance, material culture, etc., etc.

[Posted April 13, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=398522) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=398522)

 On 4/12/2011 at 7:52 PM, Capt. Bo of the WTF co. said:

Just to clarify once again, as I did in one of the above posts, I know that the bricks for sale in the gift shops today are not what would have been shipped. However, due to the nature of shipping/smuggling, making a profit, and making use of all the room to best utilize cargo space, and due to the eyewitness accounts at the Boston Tea Party (going out next morning to break up the floating tea with oars), I still have some doubts that all the tea was so loose as to not be bound into bales just from being packed tight in the trunks and chests. Also, given the smuggler information I came across, and knowing a bit bout transporting leafy substances in hidden spaces, some form of tightly wrapped packages were necessary to transport quantities enough to make it profitable. Not the pressed bricks we see today certainly, but it would not have been good business to ship twenty pounds of tea leaves in a trunk that could be stuffed with eighty pounds. I found another reference to the tea at Boston reffered to as "bullets" due to its shape, but I lost it! if I weren't so busy finishing up schoolwork I'd go looking for it again. Anyone else hear of this term applied to tea?

Bo

There is a picture that was posted, somewhere, of what is (presumed to be?) a man pressing (presumed) tea into a crate (which may or may not be lined with fabric). I do not recall the date, or where I have seen it. This one, very insubstantial, source, might be what you have in mind. Try asking someone on the SavoryFare2 list, they probably know.

Really, you should check out those links and the archives within those links that Grymm and Sterling posted. There have been discussion on this already, the most recent one being over the possibility of pu-erh tea, iirc.

As for the lost documentation, it wouldn't hurt to ask the folks on those other lists if they have seen something like that and could they direct you to it, please? Chances are someone knows exactly what you're talking about.

Happy hunting,

Jen Dobyns

[**PoD**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10743-pod/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 696 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Warrington UK
* Interests:Pirates, graphic novels, computer art, Listening to music, Going to gigs, Beer and Wine drinking, historical research, Period weaponry and Leatherwork

[Posted August 26, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=402487) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=402487)

Just came across an interesting letter from a UK Tea company theorising on what Tea Bartholemew Roberts would have been drinking:

[http://www.bartholomewroberts.com/](http://www.bartholomewroberts.com/Cap)

image link near the bottom of the page

**Edited August 26, 2011 by PoD**

[**jendobyns**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11262-jendobyns/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 562 posts
* Gender:Female
* Location:Baltimore
* Interests:too numerous to mention, really. Period foodways, baroque dance, material culture, etc., etc.

[Posted August 26, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=findComment&comment=402488) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16360-tea-bricksblocks/&do=reportComment&comment=402488)

 On 8/26/2011 at 8:34 PM, PoD said:

Just came across an interesting letter from a UK Tea company theorising on what Tea Bartholemew Roberts would have been drinking:

[http://www.bartholomewroberts.com/](http://www.bartholomewroberts.com/Cap)

image link near the bottom of the page

Yep, bohea and hyson would be right for the period. I do wonder at lumping the hyson and gunpowder together, as I understand them to be separate types of green tea. You can get all 3 from Debprah Peterson.