

# TEA SYMBOLS



W A T E R H O U S E S Y M B O L I S M N E W S L E T T E R # 6 8

## SPECIAL SYMBOLS

- Tea conveys exoticism and brew of life
- Dragonfly conveys new beginnings and good fortune
- Tea leaf conveys good health
- The dragon conveys adversary, evil, the unconscious, a plague and sickness

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## SYMBOLS OF TEA

As many of you know, I am a huge tea drinker. When I found out that February is tea month, I only feel it is natural to do a newsletter on the symbols of tea.

Tea is heavily connected to the Orient and conveys exoticism. It is also connected with amorous intrigue and scandal. It is a major part of British life and conveys the brew of life.

Tea is very important in the history of the United States. For example, there is a new Boston Tea Party Ship Museum opening this summer.

The Boston Tea Party was led by the Sons of Liberty and their leader was Samuel Adams and this was before he brewed his own beer. People in this group were from all parts of colonial life including artisans, craftsmen, trades-

men and apprentices. Famous founding fathers who were part of this group included John Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere. The group held their first meeting December 16, 1773 at the Old South Meeting House and over 5,000 people attended. The purpose of the meeting was to decide how to stage the Boston Tea Party.

The simple reason for the Boston Tea Party protest is because of "taxation without representation".

The colonists felt that they were paying for costs incurred during the French and Indian War. Tea for the colonists was a huge comfort and they drank over 1.2 million pounds of tea a year. The British saw a lucrative business deal and decided

to tax. The colonists were not going to be part of this taxation. So the colonists staged the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 1773 between the hours of 7:00 and 10:00 pm and literally threw tea crates over the side of 3 ships laden with tea. They destroyed over 345 chests of tea and in today's economy was worth about \$1,700,000.



The Boston Tea Party-Destruction of the tea in Boston Harbor, 1773  
New York Public Library

## Another tea rebellion

Even though the tea rebellion most people think about was in Boston, the south got into the act as well.

In Edenton, North Carolina, Penelope Baker gathered her 50 women friends and they made a statement by not

drinking any tea until the tax levy was lifted. Baker actually sent a petition signed by the women to King George stating "she would not drink any more tea, nor wear any more British cloth." By signing the petition, they were committing an act of treason against the British government.



Marker Commemorating the 1774 event

# READING TEA LEAVES

Have you had your tea leaves read lately? If so, you know that there are many symbols related to your reading.

The practice of tea leaf reading goes back to the 17th Century and started in Japan. It quickly was picked up by the Dutch, Scottish, Irish and English even to the point where English potters designed special sets for this purpose.

Some of the symbols related to reading tea leaves

include:

Acorn conveys continued health and improved health.

Anchor is a lucky symbol and conveys success in business or love.

Heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and star) conveys good luck, great happiness and success.

Owl indicates sickness or poverty. It is also warning against starting a new venture.



The beginning process of having your tea leaves read

# J a p a n e s e t e t s u b i n t e a p o t

Strange how a teapot can represent the comforts of solitude and the pleasures of company.

Unknown

At the same time tea leaf reading became popular so did decorating the Tetsubin teapot with symbols. Some types of symbols on these cast iron teapots include:

Dragonfly conveys new beginnings and good fortune.

Horse conveys leadership, intelligence and loyalty.

Rooster conveys high energy and is full of warrior's spirits.

Tea leaf conveys good health. The holes in the leaf indicate that the leaf is organic, no pesticide, bugs like to eat the leaf.

Chrysanthemum conveys autumn harvest. They are rich & beautiful and filled with hope.

Dragon conveys power, strength, and good fortune.

Tiger is the king of the wild animals and conveys courage and bravery.



# J A P A N E S E T E A C E R M O N Y

The Japanese Tea Ceremony dates to the 9th century and there are many symbols related to it:

A circle because participants usually join the ceremony in a circle fashion. It conveys the perfect shape and is endless and is connected to eternity.

Fan which they bring to the ceremony and conveys protection from the sun and coolness.

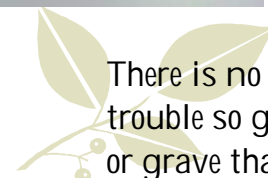
Another symbol related to the tea ceremony is the tea bowl and conveys connection to the earth and cleansing because it holds the tea. Many tea ceremonies emphasize the type of bowl as well



## GREEN TEA

The history of Green tea is very rich indeed. There several types of China green tea. One is lung ching (or long-ing) which is grown in Zhejiang and its name means "well of the dragon", from a legend telling of a "prince of waters" concealed in a well whose help had been implored to wet a drought-stricken earth. Another one is lo chun which is known as the "jade spiral of spring" and is grown in the Jiangsu heights. It owns its name to the twisted shapes of its leaves. In the

past, it was also called "tea for shaking with fright" after peasants who would steal it, hide their booty in their clothes, then gave off a bad odor while sweating. The third type is Huangshan mao feng and is grown in the mountains of Huangshan.



There is no trouble so great or grave that cannot be much diminished by a cup of tea.

Bernard-Paul Heroux

## BLACK TEA IN ENGLAND

Let's go back and visit the importance of tea in England and its incredible way of life.

The colonies, the English East India Company, and the great tea adventurers such as Thomas Lipton and Thomas Twinning are among the numerous symbols surrounding this ancestral "spirit of tea."

The British have always chosen smaller leaves, stronger teas that balance out well with a taste of milk.

English tea is usually with black blends of Assam (breakfast tea), Ceylon (breakfast tea), Darjeeling, Kenya, and Yunnan (always afternoon teas).

The English are known for their afternoon tea ceremony which includes besides tea, muffins, scones, clotted cream, and strawberry jam, small, thinly sliced cucumber sandwiches, cakes and pastries.

What is your favorite type of tea?



A strong cup of black tea for a cold winter morning

## OOLONG TEA

Oolong or "blue-green" teas are semi-fermented and are unusual because they have twisted leaves. A couple great descriptive phrases about Oolong include "curly like mist climbing a ravine" or "folds in Tartar horsemen's boots". It is also called dragon tea because, supposedly, the leaves take the positions of dragons in the teapot.

The dragon conveys adversary, evil, the unconscious, a plague

or sickness, the enemy of truth, the Devil, sin, idolatry, ignorance, pestilence, the bad element in nature, fertility, wisdom, prophecy, nature, chaos, the instincts, darkness, impurity and heresy.

The origin of Oolong Tea is from continental China and Taiwan. The two most famous harvests "oolong fancy" or "black dragon", spotted with white dots, and *ding dong*, originally from the mountain bearing its name.



Rolled Oolong Tea Leaves

**What are your ideas  
for future newsletters?**



**WATERHOUSE  
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The mission of Waterhouse Symbolism is to research and document symbols locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.



**NOTES FROM THE EDITOR**

We have been very fortunate on Cape Cod as far as weather. We have only had one major snowstorm which was ten inches. You can feel things starting to shift into the next season which will be spring. My next newsletter will be the transition from winter into spring. If you have any ideas of symbols I can use, let me know. The idea is based on an exhibition at the Cahoon Museum called "Reawakening: Emerging from Winter into Spring".

**G R A V E M O N U M E N T F R O M M I D W A Y , G A**

My friends Cathy and Steve Vogel sent me this gravestone monument from Midway, Georgia.

It shows a cross and a P. X is being substituted for a cross so you have Chi-Rho or "sigla": the letters "X" and "P," representing the first letters of the title "Christos," were eventually put together to form this symbol for Christ ("Chi" is pronounced "Kie"). It is this form of the Cross that Constantine saw in his vision along with the Greek words, TOUTO NIKA, which are rendered in Latin as "In hoc signo vinces" and which mean "in this sign thou shalt conquer". This is the first time I have actually seen the X substituted for a cross.

According to the Historic Midway website, the village is rich in history— "English Puritans founded the Midway Society on August 28, 1754 in a log meeting house on Midway Neck. The Midway Society was a strongly religious Congregationalist group. These Puritans migrated to St. John's Parish, Georgia from Dorchester, South Carolina (near Charleston) in 1752 and established a new Dorchester and another nearby settlement what was later to become the Midway community. In 1752 the Council of Georgia granted the settlers 31,950 acres primarily because colonial officials wanted a large number of settlers there to protect them from the Creek Indians. The original settlers were primarily rice planters and developed a strong agricultural economy". For further info, go to: <http://historicmidway.com/pages/history.html>

[history.html](http://historicmidway.com/pages/history.html).

