

Betsy Ross and the Flag
By Matt Benward

Elizabeth Griscom was the eighth of 17 children born to Samuel and Rebecca Griscom on January 1, 1752. Betsy was born and educated as a Quaker and was "read out" by them when she eloped with John Ross in November 1773. Since Quaker frowned on inter-denominational marriages "read out" was mean to cut off emotionally and financially from her family and other Quakers.

In 1775 the couple started an upholstery business to which she and John were apprenticed to when they were both younger. Today we think of upholstery as making sofas and such, but in that time this profession also did all sorts of sewing including flag making. Such she was "read out" of the Quaker community Sundays would find her at the Christ church in Philadelphia. Some Sundays would find George Washington, the new Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Army, sitting in an adjacent pew.

John, a member of the Pennsylvania militia, was killed in 1776 in an explosion while on guard duty. After becoming a widow, she return to the Quakers in way. Since Quaker are pacifists they are forbidden to be soldiers. The American Revolution led to a split in the Quaker community. When the Free Quakers or Fighting Quakers, those who supported the war, joined together Betsy joined them.

Betsy continued the operations of the shop and in May or early June 1776 she had her fateful meeting with the committee of three: George Washington, George Ross, and Robert Morris. They asked her to make a flag to represent the new country on the verge of declaring independence.

Betsy suggested a design and Washington made a rough pencil sketch on the basis of her suggestion. She then made the new flag in her back parlor. Also she

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Welcome to the Nashville Stamp Show 2001. Our theme for the show is our flag created by Betsy Ross 225 year ago. This year we have seventeen stamp dealers from all over the country. They have varied stocks of stamps from the US and the rest of the the world. Please stop by for a visit and have a look at their stamps. The dealers are always ready to help and answer any of your questions. The stamp club maintain tables at the enterance to help our fellow stamp collectors with any questions, problems, or just top by and chat. Also, stop and look at the exhibits. But first and foremost have a lot of fun at the stamp show!

Matt Benward, President NPS

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was too have suggested the five pointed stars rather than the six pointed star Washington wanted. Although there is no written record to support this story, there is evidence that she made many flags for Pennsylvania State Navy in the form of receipts.

On June 15, 1777 she was again married to a military officer, Captain Joseph Ashburn. As with her first husband the military made her a widow again when his ship was captured by the British Navy. Captain Ashburn died on March 3, 1782, in the Old Mill Prison, Plymouth, England. John Claypoole, an old friend of them both, brought the news of her husbands death.

There friendship quickly grew and on May 8, 1783 Betsy and John Claypoole were married. Together, they continued to run the upholstery shop. Returning to her Quakers, Betsy and her husband joined the Society of Free Quakers. Before he died in 1817, he and Ross had five daughters.

After her third husband's death, Ross lived the remainder of her life with one of her daughters and continued to work in the shop until 1827, when she turned it over to her daughter. Upon her death on January 30, 1836, she was buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery, Philadelphia. The house where she purportedly made the flag was marked as a historical landmark in 1887.

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