

Betsy Ross – A Sensible Scenario

Christopher L. Murphy, BF

MSCNY ARTICLE No. 42

So much has been written and argued about Betsy Ross and the allegation she made America's first flag that I almost hesitate to jump into the fray.

Back in 1982, our Club published the UPI newspaper article seen here. Earlier, a Brother had disputed the "Ross claim," as it were, so another Brother provided the article.

The main problem is that there is no official documentation to support the order for the flag commissioned from Betsy Ross, and no record of payment (invoice) for her work. Of course, we really can't expect that such documentation would have been kept by the government. However, therein lays the problem because there are records that show Francis Hopkins (an artist and signer of the Declaration of Independence) as designing a "flag of the United States of America," a naval flag, and also state and treasury department seals. The inference here is that Hopkins both designed the flag and provided it.

Nevertheless, I do think that all of this can be rationalized. It is probable that Hopkins did the design work and gave it to George Washington, Robert Morris (another Declaration signer) and George Ross for approval. The three were alleged to be on a "committee" to create a flag. It needs to be noted that George Ross was a relative of Betsy Ross (uncle of her deceased husband). Hopkins likely showed 6-pointed stars on the flag, and that is what the three men apparently wanted. They obviously liked the design and simply decided to get a flag made. Naturally, George Ross would have mentioned



Betsy Ross: not a myth

Author: Betsy Did Sew Flag

PITTSBURGH (UPI) — Author Robert Morris says the story of Betsy Ross and the flag, a story "cherished" by schoolchildren for years, is being unjustly disputed.

Morris, 77, a retired yarn salesman and author of the new book, "The Truth About the Betsy Ross Story," admitted he first thought the legend to be "a myth."

Morris addressed the the North American Vexillological Association, a flag research group on Saturday, and said that five years of research for his book convinced him Ross really did fashion the first American flag.

Morris, who lives near Atlantic City, cited a manuscript of an address given by Ross' grandson, William Canby, to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on March 14, 1870, in which Canby said Ross told him she had sewn the first flag.

And, Morris said, in 1925, the Wetherill family — prominent in Philadelphia in the 1800s — opened a safe and found a folded, five-point paper star and a note from Ross saying she had recently showed George Washington how to make the star.

"George Washington had been there to talk about flags," said Morris.



his relative Betsy, a seamstress, who was in the neighborhood. The three simply decided to stroll over to Betsy's house to see what she could do. Betsy, for some reason, said that a 5-pointed star would look better, and by a known process cut one out of a piece of paper (she would have been familiar with all this sort of thing). The three men approved the new star, left, and Betsy made the flag. The men could have returned some time later and were shown the flag, as seen in the above painting and stamp. However, this meeting is not recorded, so was likely fabricated by the artist.

This all occurred in 1776, and I will guess that the "committee" was ad hoc because there are no official records of it being formed. In the following year, congress adopted a flag, which is believed to be this flag.

There can be no doubt that Washington wanted a flag, so he put the project on the "fast track." That George Ross had a seamstress relative nearby was very convenient, and one needs to put two and two together here.

From the Masonic perspective, we know George Washington was a Freemason, and there is strong evidence to support Robert Morris' membership. Furthermore, there are claims the George Ross was a Mason. Both are mentioned in Denslow's *10,000 Famous Freemasons*. (USA #1004)