

Betsy Ross

1752-1836



Considered essential to the American Revolution, Betsy Ross is credited with sewing the first United States flag. A symbol of patriotism, Ross is often celebrated as the woman who helped George Washington finish the design. Although there is no historical evidence that she created this flag, her story has made her a national icon.

Betsy Ross was born as Elizabeth Griscom on January 1, 1752. Ross became an apprentice for the popular upholsterer, John Webster. Ross learned how to make and repair many items, including curtains, tablecloths, bedcovers, and rugs. She became a very skilled seamstress and upholsterer.

Shortly after her first husband's death, Ross claimed she was recruited for a very important job. According to a speech her grandson gave to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania years after her death, George Washington, Robert Morris, and George Ross, visited Ross' upholstery shop in the summer of 1776. Washington and the two other members of the Continental Congress brought a rough sketch of a flag with thirteen red and white stripes and thirteen six-pointed stars. Ross suggested that the six-pointed stars be changed to five-pointed stars because they were easier to make. Allegedly, she showed them how to make the new stars by folding a piece of paper into triangles and with a "single snip of the scissors" she made a perfect star. The men agreed to change the design. Ross is said to have made the first American flag shortly after that meeting.

She died peacefully in her sleep on January 30, 1836, a few weeks after her 84th birthday.