

Betsy Ross and the American Flag'

THE first American Flag, the "Stars and Stripes" was made by "Betsy Ross" about a month before the Declaration of Independence. It was made after a pattern sketch agreed on and submitted to her by George Washington, Robert Morris and George Ross (an uncle of her husband). It was not officially endorsed by Congress until June 14th, 1777. (This anniversary is now observed as *Flag-day*.) At her house, still standing, 239 Arch Street, Philadelphia, she continued to manufacture flags for over fifty years. Clarissa Wilson continued her mother's business (upholstery and flag making), after the latter's retirement, until 1857. During all this time they continued to make flags for the Government, until, a few years before Clarissa Wilson's retirement, she, from conscientious motives, ceased to furnish flags for military and naval purposes.

Elizabeth Griscom (Ross, Ashburn, Claypoole), born January 1st, 1752, died January 30th, 1836, was the eighth of the seventeen children of Samuel and Rebecca Griscom. Her mother was Rebecca James, sister of Abel James, of the firm of James and Drinker. She learned the upholstery business, and in November, 1773, was married to John Ross, son of an Episcopal clergyman, and because of this marriage was disowned from the Society of Friends (Records of Northern District Monthly Meeting, Friends' Library, 142 N. 16th Street, Philadelphia).

She married second, Joseph Ashburn, who died in a military prison in England in 1782, and in 1783, Elizabeth Ashburn was married to John Claypoole, and they became members of the Society of Free Quakers, soon after its establishment, and were both buried in its burial ground on South Fifth Street, Phila-

¹ See Wetherill's *Free Quakers*, p. 20; *The True Story of the American Flag*, by John H. Fow, 1908; *The Evolution of the American Flag*, by Canby and Balderston, 1909; etc.

delphia (in 1857 removed to a lot in Mount Moriah Cemetery).

The four daughters of John and Elizabeth Claypoole were plain Friends wearing the distinctive Quaker dress. They were Clarissa Sidney Wilson (1785-1864), Susan Satterthwaite (1786-1875), Rachel Fletcher (1789-1873), and Jane Canby (1792-1873).

Betsy Ross's wedding dress, a treasured heirloom, was recently burned in the fire that destroyed the residence of Morris Jones, at West Grove, Pennsylvania. Her Bible and spectacles are owned by Anne Balderston, of Colora, Maryland, and her Quaker descendants still show how Betsy by one clip of her scissors cut the "five pointed star."

On December 19th, 1898, the American Flag House and Betsy Ross Memorial Association was incorporated under the laws of Pennsylvania. The list of charter members contains the names of many eminent Americans. The purchase money for the house was raised by a ten cent subscription.

"The Birth of Our Nation's Flag" is a painting by Charles H. Weisgerber.² It represents Betsy displaying the *finished* flag (an artistic liberty) to Washington, Morris and Ross. The portrait of Betsy is based on a composite one of her daughters' and particulars furnished by them.

ELLA K. BARNARD.

West Grove, Pa.

² Reproduced in *A Portraiture of the People called Quakers*, by Horace Mather Lippincott, 1915.

Extracts from a book sent on loan by J. Ernest Grubb, entitled "A Summary of the Proceedings of Severall halfe years Meetings held in Dublin . . . or a Breviate . . . of General Minutes." Belonging to Youghal Meeting, 6mo. 1913.

9 mo. 1677. Taylors to have a Meeting among themselves for Regulating disorders in their Trade . . .

3 mo. 1701. Testimony of Truth to be kept up by Shoemakers whoe are to meet apart sometimes to examine how they keep it up in their trade with respect to the fashionable & superfluous part of it . . .