

Betsy Ross

Betsy Ross was born in Philadelphia in 1752. She was a seamstress who shared an upholstery business in Philadelphia with her husband, John. When John was killed in an explosion in 1776, Betsy continued to run the business at the upholstery shop against the advice of her father.

Nearly 100 years later at a historical society meeting, Mrs. Ross's grandson, William J. Canby, first told what has become a famous story about his grandmother. He first remembered hearing the story when he was 11 and his grandmother was about 84 years old. He recollected that his grandmother told him that General George Washington asked her to make a flag for the country. General Washington suggested a design of 13 stars and 13 stripes. His stars had six points. Betsy made a beautiful five-pointed star by folding a piece of paper and making one snip. George was impressed. Five-pointed stars it would be! Betsy placed all 13 stars in a circle. The 13 stars and 13 stripes represented the 13 colonies existing at the time. The stars-and-stripes design was adopted by Congress on June 14, 1777.

For years and years, historians have searched government records and George Washington's writings in order to substantiate the information handed down within the Ross family. They have been unable to prove the legend. They have found, however, evidence to indicate that Betsy Ross did make flags for the Pennsylvania state ships.

Other descendants of Betsy Ross wrote the 1909 book, *The Evolution of the American Flag*. In the book, there is a picture of a painting showing Betsy Ross at a meeting of the committee of Congress. There are no records of this meeting. The artist, Charles H. Weisgerber, may have been speculating about what actually happened. The models he used were descendants of Betsy Ross. A flag with a circle of stars is shown in the painting. Photographs of that painting were later used in school textbooks, making any untruths difficult to dispel.

Many believe that there is no reason that Betsy, a Quaker, would have been making up stories about her life to tell her grandchildren. Quakers value modesty and truthfulness. More than one descendant remembers Betsy's stories, and the retellings are very consistent with each other.

During the war, there may not have been time to make clear records of every meeting that took place. However, one story tells of a fellow church member's visit to Betsy Ross's shop after her meeting with the Congressional committee. The visitor saw the star that Betsy had cut for them, and he asked to keep it. In 1925, his family safe was opened to reveal that same star. It is now on exhibit at the Free Quaker Meeting House in Philadelphia.

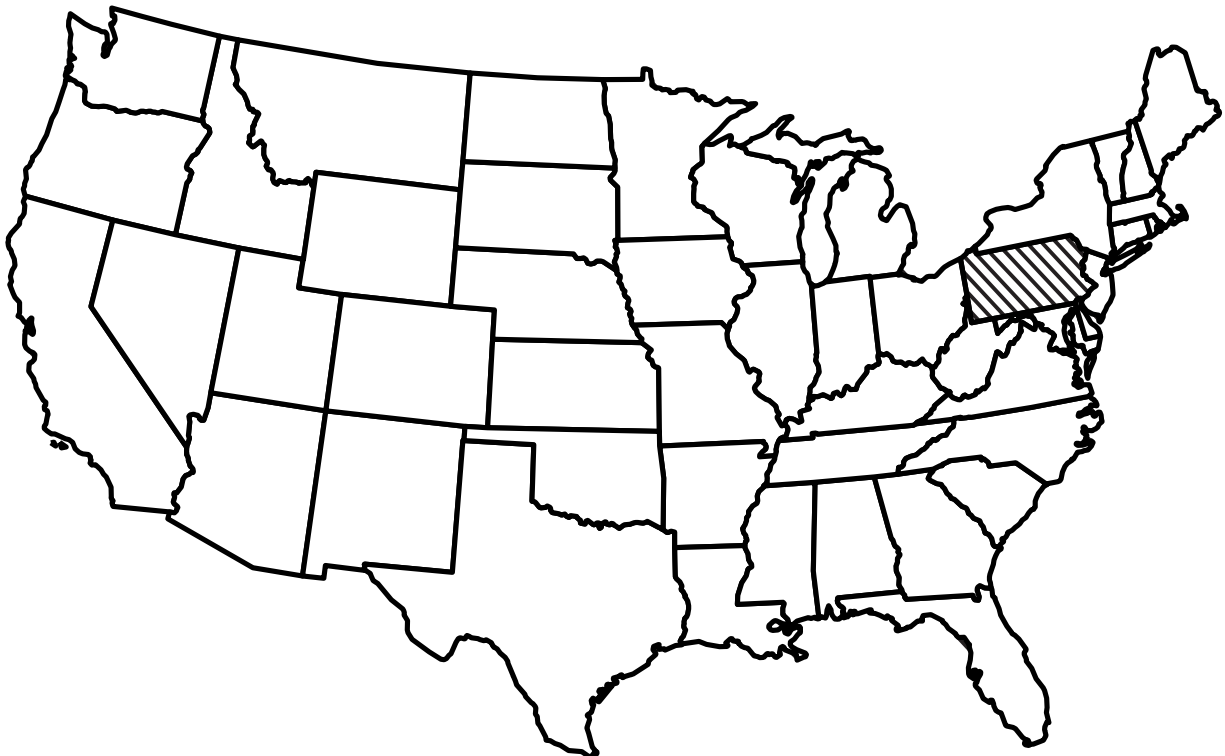
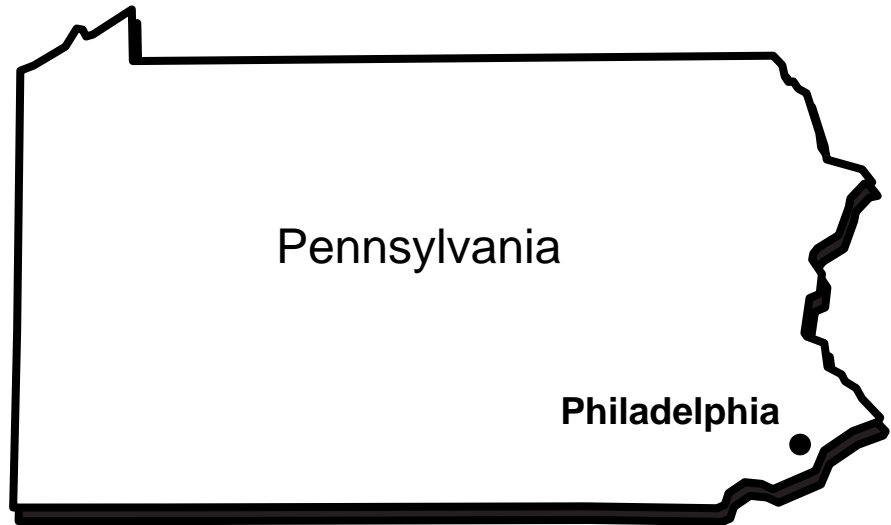
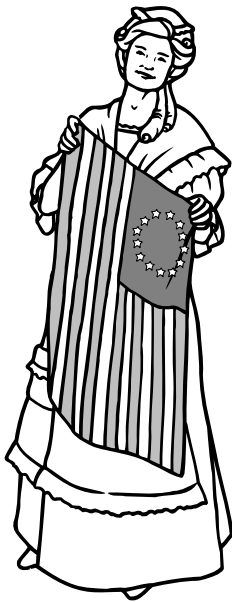
Whatever the truth may be, most people enjoy the story of Betsy Ross and the making of the flag. As a result, it has become part of our history.



Betsy Ross

Map Study

Betsy Ross lived and worked in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Putting Together *Betsy Ross*

Materials

For each student you will need:

- four sheets of white paper
- one 9" x 12" sheet of red construction paper
- one template for stars
- text strips
- dark blue crayon or marker
- 13 stars (Use star stickers or cuts from a star hole punch.)
- scissors and glue

Preparation for the *Betsy Ross Layered Book*

1. Three of the four white pages used in this book may need to be precut for students. The pages should measure as follows: 4½" x 11", 5¾" x 11", and 7" x 11". The last page should be trimmed ¼" from the top to measure 8¼" x 11".

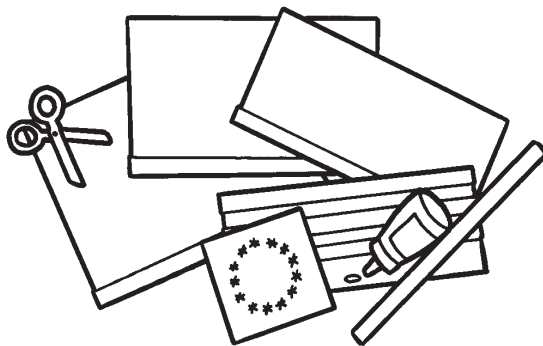
Options: Give students four 8½" x 11" pieces of copy paper and have them measure and cut the pieces of paper themselves. Or create templates by marking a dashed line on each piece of white paper for each of the four measurements. Make copies of these sheets and have children cut each sheet on the dashed line. A third option would be to precut the sheets of paper and hand them out, ready-to-use.

2. Trim the red paper to 9" x 11". To create the red stripes for the flag, cut the trimmed sheet into seven equal strips, each measuring 5⁄8" x 11".

Assembly Directions for the *Betsy Ross Layered Book*

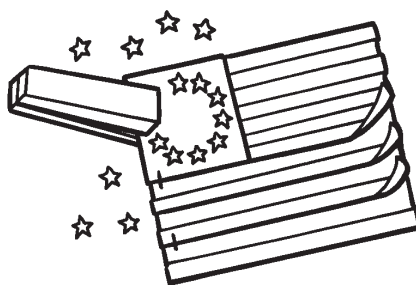
Top Page

1. Glue a red stripe to the top of the 4½" x 11" sheet; glue a second stripe at the bottom of the sheet. Evenly space two more stripes in between them.
2. Color the template blue or use a 4½" x 5" piece of blue construction paper.
3. Place the stars on the template as shown.



Pages 2–4

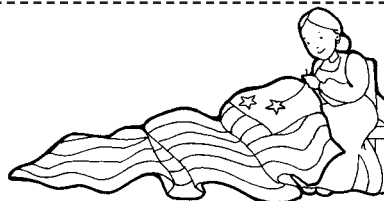
1. Glue one red stripe to the bottom of each page.
2. Layer the book with the largest page on the bottom and the smallest page on top.
3. Make sure that the tops and left sides of the pages are lined up evenly. Red and white stripes should be visible all the way down the flag. Double-check for 13 stripes.
4. Staple down the left side of the flag.
5. Place the text strips on the pages so they do not show when the book is closed. Add the picture of Betsy Ross to page 4.



Betsy Ross

Text for the *Betsy Ross Layered Book*

Betsy Ross was a seamstress.



2

General George Washington asked her to make a flag for our new country.



3

She made a red, white, and blue flag. It had 13 stars and 13 stripes which stood for the 13 colonies.

4

Template for Flag Stars

Page 4

