

## *Gloria Dei History Article*

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### **Gloria Dei women help design Old Glory**

By Bob Josuweit

We've all grown up with the story that Betsy Ross designed the first flag of the United States. Betsy's grandson, William Canby, told his account of how General George Washington, George Ross and Robert Morris of the Continental Congress, had met with Betsy Ross in 1776, with a request to produce the first stars and stripes flag based on a prepared drawing they gave her. It was reported that she recommended some minor changes be made to the proposed flag design, such as making the six-pointed stars, suggested in the prepared drawing, five-pointed stars. There is little documentation to prove this claim. In fact her family never claimed that she designed the first American flag. There is no doubt that she produced flags for the newly formed government.

The *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, listed the genealogical record of Goran Kyn, one of the first Swedes to settle on the Delaware. It says "Miss Sarah Austin, a great-great-grand-daughter of Kyn, with other women of the Gloria Dei church at Philadelphia, made the first flag under the direction of the marine committee after pattern adopted by Congress June 14, 1777. It was presented by the women to John Paul Jones, who hoisted it on his ship, the Ranger. This flag was rendered historic because it was the flag that received the first salute granted the Star-Spangled Banner in Europe. It was flown in the first action between, the Ranger and the Drake, which later became the Serapis of the Bon Homme Richard."

A separate account in the *History of the Flag of the United States of America: and of the Naval and Yacht Club Signals* is similar. Mrs. Patrick Hayes was told by her aunt Sarah Austin, that the patriotic ladies of Philadelphia met at the Swedes' Church in that city, and under the direction of John Brown, Esq., secretary of the new Board of Marine, formed or arranged a flag, which was presented to Jones by Misses Mary and Sarah Austin in behalf of the patriotic ladies of Philadelphia. Captain Jones was so delighted and enthusiastic, that after the presentation he procured a small boat, and, unfurling the flag, sailed up and down the river before Philadelphia, showing it to thousands on shore." Sarah later became the wife of Commodore John Barry, U.S.N.

Since Betsy Ross and the women of Old Swedes were involved with the making of the first American flag in June of 1776, it can be assumed that Ross at least visited Old Swedes. Based on her being around Old Swedes it would seem natural that this was the reason she chose to be married in the Church to her second husband Joseph Ashburn. The date June 15, 1777.

