

The Truth About  
the  
Betsy Ross Story

by

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banners be “. . . of fuch colour and with fuch devices as fhall be deemed proper by the [Provincial] Congress.”<sup>19</sup> Apparently at this time regimental flags were meant, but there is no doubt that Washington felt the importance of standards and was eager to have a suitable national ensign.

→ At this juncture it may be well to inject an enigma which exists as to the Grand Union Flag. Although that banner has been assumed to have been invented some time during the latter half of 1775 there is a further complication which should be recognized.

In 1752 one George Heap, a surveyor, produced an engraving which he entitled, “*Perspective View*” of Philadelphia. He died before it could be printed in London as planned, but it was produced in 1754 under the direction of Nicholas Scull, Surveyor General of the Province of Pennsylvania.<sup>20</sup> Lo and behold — a Grand Union streamed prominently from a ship in the left foreground! That was in 1752 when we were a placid colony, a proprietorship under the king; the Seven Years War had not yet been fought, there were no Townshend Acts, no oppressive tea taxes. It has been said the flag was not a Grand Union but was the exactly similar house flag of the British East India Company, but that could hardly be so because it was not flown from the main or foremast where the house flag belonged. Instead it was worn on her taffrail staff astern where the national ensign belonged, and forward on the jackstaff was the union jack, where it belonged. She was unmistakably a provincial vessel. To add to the enigma — Heap showed less than 13 stripes, however he may not have had room for more, also Georgia did not become a royal province until 1754 so a lesser number was acceptable.

We flag historians should thus learn not to jump to conclusions but to realize we don't know it all and to allow that there are enigmas which remain unsolved.

<sup>19</sup> Morris, Robert, *The Truth About the American Flag*, op. cit. p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Snyder, Martin P., *City of Independence*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975, pp. 42-47.