



## FOUNDING FEMALES Female Qualifying Ancestor Index

Female Ancestor Number: 094

**Name:** Ross, Elizabeth “Betsy” (Griscom)

**Dates:** (1 Jan 1752 - 30 Jan 1836)

**Colonial Society:** PA

**Date added to ROA:** 1-26-2024

**Service:** Woman of Distinction, **Business Owner:** Upholsterer and flag maker

**Authority:** Miller, Marla R., *Betsy Ross and the Making of America*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2010, pp. 12-15.

### **Biography:**

The legend of Betsy Ross is well-established in American patriotic lore. Recent scholarship has sought to move beyond Betsy’s rumored role in making the first American flag. Marla Miller, in her definitive biography of Betsy Ross, states that there is no doubt that Ross was one of Philadelphia’s most important flag makers of the Revolution, and indeed the primary flag maker on the eve of the War of 1812, but her life and work represents something deeper and more important in the course of Colonial Philadelphia. As Miller states, she was an ordinary woman who went to work as a teenager and labored in the furniture trades until she retired in her seventies, the mother of seven, and the grandmother of thirty-two. Through her extensive family and business, she was connected to all the important people of her time. While her supposed encounter with George Washington (and his request for an American flag) made her famous through time, it is her own life as a craftswoman and business owner—supporting her family through three husbands (and ultimately the American Revolution)—which stands testament to all those who labored each day to literally and figuratively build a new Nation. Today, whether flags or upholstered furniture, if a piece can be linked to the handiwork of Betsy Ross, its value is thought to be irreplaceable, and indeed many items have sold at auction for record-breaking millions of dollars. Her name now stands on its own merit. Betsy is buried on the site of her home and workshop on Arch Street in the Old City section of Philadelphia, where each year, more than a quarter-million visitors learn the secret of cutting the five-pointed star featured on the U.S. flag.