



"The opportunity to serve together"

Portsmouth Knightly News

The Official Newsletter of Knights of Columbus, Fr. Christopher S. Rooney Council No. 3618
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"When in the course of human events..."

Taxation without representation! That was the battle cry of the 13 colonies in America who were forced to pay taxes to England's King George III with no representation in Parliament. As dissatisfaction grew, British troops were sent in to quell any signs of rebellion, and repeated

attempts by the colonists to resolve the crisis without war proved fruitless.

On June 11, 1776, the colonies' Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, formed a committee with the express purpose of drafting a document that would formally sever their ties with Great Britain. The committee included Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston. The document was crafted by Jefferson, who was considered the strongest and most eloquent writer (nevertheless, a total of 86 changes were made to his draft). The final version was officially adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4.

The following day, copies of the Declaration of Independence were distributed, and on July 6, The Pennsylvania Evening Post became the first newspaper to print the extraordinary document.

The Declaration of Independence has since become our nation's most cherished symbol of liberty.

On July 8, 1776, the first public readings of the Declaration were held in Philadelphia's

Independence Square to the ringing of bells and band music. One year later, on July 4, 1777, Philadelphia marked Independence Day by adjourning Congress and celebrating with bonfires, bells and fireworks.

The custom eventually spread to other towns both large and small, where the day was marked with processions, oratory, picnics, contests, games, military displays and fireworks. Observations throughout the nation became even more common at the end of the War of 1812 with Great Britain.

On June 24, 1826, Thomas Jefferson sent a letter to Roger C. Weightman, declining an invitation to come to Washington, D.C., to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. It was the last letter that Jefferson, who was gravely ill, ever wrote. In it, Jefferson says of the document:

May it be to the world, what I believe it will be ... the signal of arousing men to burst the chains ... and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. That form, which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. ... For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.

In 1941, Congress declared July 4 a legal Federal holiday.

(from PBS.ORG)

Outgoing Grand Knight's Message



Brothers All,

Another Columbian Year is coming to a close.

It was a privilege to serve our council as the Grand Knight for the second time. When you have the support of a commendable group of Officers and a small, but

very energetic core group of members, the success of the council doesn't fall on the leadership, but rather reflects the dedication and energy of its active membership.

We had a very successful year. In addition to our regular activities, we introduced our quarterly Newsletter – thanks to the efforts of Paul St. Laurent – and for the first time we instituted a scholarship program and awarded a \$1,000.00 scholarship to a deserving senior at Portsmouth High School.

As this Newsletter is being mailed to all our members I am using it again as a recruitment tool. It was hard to fill the new slate of Officers for the upcoming year. Some of our members have committed time and energy to the council beyond the call of duty. Changes in health and family situations have precluded their continued commitment at the current levels and only with much individual soul-searching and willingness to sacrifice were we able to put together the core officers needed to run the council. I continue to appeal to all our members to attempt to recruit among their families, friends, acquaintances and church communities. Father Christopher Rooney Council has a long and proud history. To continue the mission of our Council we need new, young and energetic members. As you know, the best recruitment method is to ask, face to face, someone that you know and respect, if he would be willing to serve his parish and his community by joining one of the most vibrant fraternal organizations in the world dedicated to charity work.

As I read through the membership list periodically, I am sorry that I have not had the opportunity to meet most of you. I have been with our Council only six years and I am humbled by the continued membership of some of our members that span multiple decades. I hope that your involvement with the Knights of Columbus has afforded you the same degree of pride and spiritual rewards that I have experienced.

I pray that our new Grand Knight may be blessed with divine inspiration and will continue to have the support and dedication that are necessary to propel Council 3618 to another successful year.

Vivat Jesus,
Paulo De Sousa
Immediate Past Grand Knight

Incoming Grand Knight's Message

My Brother Knights,

Another Columbian Year is about to begin.

It is both an honor and privilege to serve as your Grand Knight, especially since I transferred into our council not much more than one year ago. I bring the experience of having served as Grand Knight of Fr. Robert E. Nudd Council in Chantilly, Virginia for the 2001-2002 Columbian Year. I appreciate the vote of confidence that our membership has given me. With the grace of God and the help of Our Blessed Mother, I will do my best to ensure a successful 2008-2009 Columbian Year for Fr. Christopher S. Rooney Council in Portsmouth.



Our council supports the parishes of St. Anthony and St. Barnabas, as well as a number of Church and community organizations, in a number of ways. This past year we provided a college scholarship to a deserving senior at Portsmouth High School, donated money to local organizations that meet the needs of the developmentally challenged in our community, and provided funds for more traditional Catholic organizations that help the needy, support vocations and defend life. We also supported our CYO, Boy Scouts, and the Portsmouth Senior Center.

In addition to the financial support we give to the parishes of St. Anthony and St. Barnabas, many of our Brother Knights serve as Ushers, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, and on various parish committees and councils.

In order to perform all of the aforementioned tasks it takes the dedicated support of our able membership. This year I would like to focus on growing our number. We have just over 90 Brother Knights, with only about a dozen or so actively attending our meetings or participating in various activities over the past year. I would like to increase these ranks by recruiting a few good men, and their families, into our council. We have been strong in the past, and it will take only a few more active members to continue to make us strong going into the future. If you are able to recruit one new Brother Knight, it can help make all the difference to our council.

Again, I would like to extend my gratitude to our membership for giving me this opportunity to serve our council, our parishes, and our community as Grand Knight for the upcoming Columbian Year. I look forward to meeting you and your family in the not too distant future.

Vivat Jesus,
Paul St. Laurent
Grand Knight

Fr. Christopher S. Rooney Council 3618 Schedule of Upcoming Events

| DATE | EVENT | TIME | POINT OF CONTACT | COMMENTS |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| July 10 | Council Business Meeting | 7:00 PM | Grand Knight | No Second Meeting In July |
| August 14 | Council Business Meeting | 7:00 PM | Grand Knight | No Second Meeting in August |
| September 11 & 25 | Council Business Meeting | 7:00 PM | Grand Knight | |

Some of Our Council Members in Action



The Story of Betsy Ross



Betsy Ross made the first American flag after a visit in June 1776 by George Washington, Robert Morris, and her husband's uncle, George Ross. She demonstrated how to cut a 5-pointed star with a single clip of the scissors, if the fabric were folded correctly.

So the story goes -- but this story was not told until 1870 by Betsy's grandson, and then even he claimed it was a story that needed confirmation. Most scholars agree that it was not Betsy who made the first flag, though she was a flagmaker who, records show, was paid in 1777 by the Pennsylvania State Navy Board for making "ship's colours, etc."

She was born Elizabeth Griscom in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Samuel and Rebecca James Griscom. She was the great-granddaughter of a carpenter, Andrew Griscom, who had arrived in New Jersey in 1680 from England.

Young Elizabeth probably attended Quaker schools and learned needlework there and at home. When she married John Ross, an Anglican, in 1773, she was expelled from the Friends Meeting for marrying outside the meeting. She eventually joined the Free Quakers, or "Fighting Quakers", because they did not adhere strictly to the historic pacifism of the sect. John and Elizabeth (Betsy) Ross began an upholstery business together, drawing on her needlework skills.

John was killed in January 1776 on militia duty when gunpowder exploded at the Philadelphia waterfront. Betsy acquired property and kept up the upholstery business, beginning to make flags for Pennsylvania as well.

In 1777 Betsy married Joseph Ashburn, a sailor, who had the misfortune of being on a ship captured by the British in 1781. He died in prison the next year.

In 1783, Betsy married again -- this time, her husband was John Claypoole, who had been in prison with Joseph Ashburn, and had met Betsy when he delivered Joseph's farewells to her. He died in 1817, after a long disability.

Betsy lived until 1836, dying on January 30. She was reburied in the Free Quaker Burying Ground in 1857.

When Betsy's grandson told his story of her involvement with the first flag, it quickly became legend. Published in *Harper's Monthly* in 1873, by the mid-1880's the story was included in many school textbooks.

What made the story turn into legend so quickly? Probably three social trends helped:

First, changes in women's lives, and social recognition of such changes, made discovering a "founding mother" to stand alongside "founding fathers" attractive to American imagination. Betsy Ross was not only a widow making her own way in life with her young child -- widowed patriotically in the American Revolution not once, but twice -- but she was earning a living by a traditionally women's occupation: seamstress. (Notice that her abilities to buy and manage land never made it into her legend, and are ignored in many biographies.)

Second, a growing patriotic fever connected with the American flag required a tale that was more than just a business transaction, such as the probably-true story of Francis Hopkinson.

Third, the growing advertising industry made the woman with a flag a popular image, used to sell a variety of products (even flags).

Ignoring many other stories of women's involvement in the American Revolution, Betsy Ross became a prominent character in the telling of the story of America's founding. (Continued on Page 5)

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Opinions expressed are those of the individual author and do not necessarily reflect those of Fr. Christopher S. Rooney Council, its Officers, or the Knights of Columbus. Contributions to the *Portsmouth Knightly News* by Brother Knights are welcome. Articles may be on a variety of topics: upcoming events, council related, personal experience, religious, etc. Please send all articles for consideration in PC format via e-mail directly to the Newsletter Editor.



The Story of Betsy Ross (Continued from Page 4)

Today, a tour of Betsy Ross' home in Philadelphia (there is some doubt about its authenticity, too) is a "must-see" when visiting historical sites. The home, established with the aid of two million ten-cent contributions by American schoolchildren, is still an interesting and informative tour. One can begin to see what home life was like for families of the time, and to remember the disruption and inconvenience, even tragedy, that war brought to women as well as to men.

Even if she did not make the first flag -- even if the visit by George Washington never happened -- Betsy Ross was an example of what many women of her time found as the reality in time of war: widowhood, single motherhood, managing household and property independently, quick remarriage for economic reasons (and, we can hope, for companionship and even love, too).

(From www.womenshistory.about.com/library/bio/blross.htm)

For those of you that did not know.....

.....Fr. Christopher S. Rooney was the first pastor of St. Anthony Parish, from 1901 to 1919.

Thanks to Brother Dan Hurson for all the effort he recently performed in obtaining this information. If you would like additional details related to his research, please contact him direct.