

What the FBI Has on Betsy Ross

Post 3/6/76
By Art Buchwald

The FBI has finally firmed up its plans as to what it will do to help celebrate the country's Bicentennial.

Efrem Zumguard, the agent-in-charge of American revolutionary activities, told me, "The FBI plans to have one of the biggest exhibits of any government institution. We are going to put on display for the first time our top-secret files on George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Francis Lightfoot Lee."

"I didn't know the FBI still had those files," I said.

"They were found in J. Edgar Hoover's office. He never threw anything away. We also have a very interesting slide show on Benjamin Franklin's sex life."

"Wow. I'd like to see that."

"There isn't anything about the American radicals we didn't know. We have photographs of everyone who participated in the Boston Tea Party, and one of our

agents infiltrated Washington's rabble and got the names and addresses of everyone who crossed the Delaware."

"Then you must have known about Paul Revere?"

"Of Course, we knew about Paul Revere. Our agents bugged his horse, and when he rode from Lexington to Concord we got tapes of him shouting, 'The British are coming.' We also had the Old North Church under surveillance for months. When the signal was flashed from the Belfry, Hoover knew about it in 48 hours."

"You people were really on the ball."

"We're going to devote one whole wall to Thomas Paine. He was the worst agitator this country has ever known. Hoover was on to him from the start. We have the original copy of 'Common Sense,' the most subversive document that was printed in the last 200 years."

"More subversive than the 'Declaration of Independence'?"

and Other Radicals'

Capitol Punishment

"Maybe it would be a tossup. We're going to have a room set aside for the 'Declaration of Independence' which, incidentally, Hoover considered his greatest case. He knew everything that was going on in Philadelphia. The files on the Second Continental Congress would make your hair stand on end. Did you know Jefferson wore a wig and high-heel shoes when he wrote the Declaration?"

"No, I didn't."

"Hoover did. That's why Jefferson couldn't fire him."

"You heard about Betsy Ross and Lewis Morris?"

"Not the Lewis Morris of New York?" I whistled.

"Hoover had pictures of them."

"Before or after she made the flag?"

"During."

"What about Lafayette?"

"He had an illegitimate child by John Paul Jones' wife. King George III really chuckled when he read that one."

"I guess there was no one in the government Hoover didn't know about."

"Do you know the first letter ever sent by the continental post office? We opened it. It was from Jane Fonda's great-great-great-grandmother to Nathan Hale."

"I knew Hoover was diligent, but he seemed to have a sixth sense about things. No wonder everyone in the 13 colonies was afraid of him."

"Now do you want to hear of the piece de resistance of our exhibit?"

"Of course."

Zumguard said, "Remember the famous painting of 'The Spirit of '76? Hoover had the original in his files. Do you recall the boy on the left playing the drums?"

"Yes."

"He was an FBI undercover agent. That's how we managed to convict the other two."