

Broad Stripes and Bright Stars

Act Three

Video online at: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/Videos/Stars3.asx>

Codes:

A = Actor (Mary Pickersgill)

“ “ =interrupting, pause

[] = not speaker's words

A = We have been working very late hours at the house; sometimes to well past midnight. My daughter, Caroline, she's barely thirteen. Then there is Grace, the indentured girl, and my young nieces: Elise, Margaret, and Jane. I know by the end of the day that the girls' fingers are sore, their nerves are frayed, bodies exhausted, but it cannot be helped. This commission must be completed on time and you have joined me at a most auspicious point of the process. For just look at these stars; each one of them more than two feet across, and I don't mind my telling you it takes a very skilled hand to manage to piece out all fifteen stars required for this canton. Ausneberg Muslin has been very difficult to acquire. Some of them had to be stitched together out of bits and scraps. Though they appear overwhelming in my tiny hand, you can imagine how they will be just a flash of white on a sea of blue as this completed project is waving proudly in the skies over the garrison. Well, you may be curious as to why there are fifteen stars when of course there are eighteen states here in 1813. The reason is because the last time the design of this flag was approved by Congress that was 1795. It was the year I was married. Some time has passed since then, of course. While I am aware that the gentlemen on the hill are very busy with the recent war affairs, I do believe that the citizens of Ohio, Tennessee, and Louisiana would each appreciate representation of their own. So, if you have a moment today, could you write a letter to Congress and request that they update the design of this flag? That of course would make more commission work for me. I would have pinned these stars but not a drop of precious blood is to be spilt here. God help us too much has already been spilled in the defense of these stars.

George Washington once said that for him the stars symbolize the heavens and man's divine aspiration to achieve. May thoughts such as these carry our brave sailors and soldiers in what battles may come, and spur me and my girls on despite the tedium and tiredness of the endeavor.