

**LOUISE
TRIMMIER
FUNK FLUKE
1900-1986**



**BETSY
ROSS
OF
OKLAHOMA**

The Oklahoma flag was designed by bride-to-be Louise Fluke who took time from sewing her wedding dress to enter a contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her winning design acknowledged the diverse cultures in the state.

Louise Trimmier Funk was born in February 1900 in Van Buren, Arkansas. In 1901, her family moved to Shawnee. After high school, she studied art at Columbia University, Audubon Tyler Art Institute and Chicago Art Institute.

Fourteen different flags – including Spain, France, Great Britain, and Mexico – have flown over Oklahoma since Coronado appeared in 1541. The first Oklahoma State Flag, adopted in 1911, displayed a blue ‘46’ surrounded by a white star edged in blue on a red background. Oklahoma began the 46th state in 1907.

In 1919, the red flag with its single white star became associated with communism – and the 1917 Russian Revolution. A 1924 contest would choose a new flag design. Encouraged by her husband-to-be, Louise consulted with Oklahoma History Society’s Dr. Joseph Thoburn, and studied Oklahoma history, Indian lore and artifacts. In three weeks, she designed five entries!

Her winning design became the official state flag in April 1925. It included a field of sky-blue (devotion) inspired by the 1860 Choctaw flag. On it were emblems of Native Americans: a traditional Osage buffalo-skin battle shield with seven eagle feathers (love of peace by a united people) covered by a Plains-style ceremonial calumet (peace pipe) representing Native Americans and an olive branch representing European Americans. Six golden brown crosses (Native American symbols for stars) were spaced on the shield, to represent high ideals.

Louise married George Fluke in December 1924, and moved to Ponca City. George worked for Marland Oil Company and Louise was a substitute art teacher in the public schools. She moved to Oklahoma City after a 1953 automobile accident killed George and injured her.

The word ‘Oklahoma’ was added to the flag in white letters below the shield in 1941. The flag salute was adopted in 1982: “I salute the Flag of the State of Oklahoma. Its symbols of peace unite all people”. A 2005 Oklahoma law standardized the flag’s colors and shapes due to numerous unauthorized versions. In 1982, Fluke received the Pioneer Woman Award from Governor George Nigh.

She died in July 1986 in Oklahoma City. Flags were flown at half-mast for two days in her honor. Shawnee’s Fairview Cemetery, where Louise is buried, displays a flagpole with a small granite plaque: “Oklahoma flag designed by Louise Fluke 1925 Dedicated by Wunagisa Chapter D.A.R. 2010”. A white marble monument is also located in Centennial Park. The 41-foot Louise Fluke Plaza, located east of Marland’s Grand Home in Ponca City, displays the state flag and pledge.

Her original flag was donated to the State of Oklahoma in 2005. Displayed at the state capitol, the large silk flag edged in gold fringe was both sewn and painted by hand. Her signature is plainly seen on the right side below the shield.