

Women as Cooks in the Revolutionary War

Hannah Till was an enslaved cook and servant to General George Washington during the Valley Forge encampment in 1777-78. She purchased her freedom during the American Revolution and continued to work as a salaried cook. By 1776, Hannah was legally owned by Reverend John Mason of the Associate Reformed Church in New York. Reverend Mason leased Hannah to cook for George Washington and his wartime staff, and so she joined her husband Isaac Till, also an enslaved cook. Both cooks had an arrangement with the commander-in-chief and their respective enslavers whereby they would purchase their freedom. On October 30, 1778, Hannah reached the required sum. Now paid directly for her work, Hannah Till continued working as Washington's personal cook, except for half a year, which she spent working for Major General Marquis de Lafayette. After the war, Hannah and Isaac Till employed themselves cooking for families in Philadelphia.