



Eyewitness of the American Revolution

January 3, 1777

**Princeton
Battlefield**
Society
www.pbs1777.org

*Courtesy of
Nick Johnson
& John Rees*

December 31 was to be my last day in the army. As a free Black man who had joined the Continental Army ten months after the indenture my mother had bound me out in ended on my 21st birthday, I was ready to be free once again. I had served for fourteen months, managing to avoid being seriously wounded in combat or taken sick like so many others in my regiment. I had done my duty well, even though I had not been paid regularly nor supplied with proper food and clothing. Today, Washington and other high ranking officers encouraged us to extend our enlistments for just six weeks and offered us a ten dollar bonus, virtually a month's extra pay, if we did so. After they spoke to the regiments and virtually no one responded favorably, General Washington, mounted on his horse, addressed our troops saying, "My brave fellows, you have done all I asked you to do, and more than could be reasonably expected; but your country is at stake, your wives, your houses, and all that you hold dear. You have worn yourselves out with fatigues and hardships, but we know not how to spare you. If you will consent to stay only one month longer, you will render that service to the cause of liberty, and to your country, which you probably never can do under any other circumstances. The present is emphatically the crisis, which is to decide our destiny."

Although I saw that a number of men then agreed to stay, like a good number of other men I could not join them. While I had enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment, I was originally from New Jersey and was now very near the home and mother I had not seen for almost a decade due to my indenture and military service. I needed to see if my mother was still alive and to learn from her what my family name was. When I enlisted, I had adopted the name Gulick from one of the five men who had owned my indenture time. Now I wanted to know my real name. I believed in the ideals of the Revolution and wanted to see all men, both black and white, enjoy freedom and equality. I would not give up the fight, just change how I helped it. Taking up residence in Amwell Township, New Jersey I would serve in the local militia and fight the British whenever my company was called out to defend part of the State. *Text by Larry Kidder.*