



CHOWNING'S *Tavern*



Evening Bill of FARE

FIRST COURSES

- Peanut Soupe*—A southern favourite garnished with roasted Peanuts and Sippets \$5.50 *cup*
\$6.25 *bowl*
- Chowning's Favourite Salet*—Seasonal Greens with Grape Tomatoes,
Cucumbers, Carrots, and Herb Dressing \$7.50
- Brunswick Stew*—Made with young Fowl and garden Vegetables seasoned to taste \$7.75 *cup*
\$11.00 *bowl*
- Josiah's Best Welsh Rarebit*—Warm Ale and Mustard-spiced Cheddar Cheese
over Sippets \$8.75
Add shaved Virginia Ham \$2.25

MAIN COURSES

- Prime Rib of Beef*—The Favourite English joint of Beef fired over a gridiron
served with Horseradish and Red Wine Reduction \$32.25
- Dish of Pork*—Grilled Pork Rib-eye served with a Port Wine Sauce
and slow-cooked barbecued Pork Rib \$28.75
- Gloucester Dinner*—Southern-style fried Chicken
put forth with a rasher of salty Ham \$26.75
- Grilled Salmon and Crab Cake*—Gridiron-cooked Salmon
paired with a patty of the finest Crabmeat with Spicy Dill Sauce \$32.00
- Forest Mushroom Ragoût*—A blend of stewed fresh Mushrooms
served over soft Polenta with garden Vegetables \$23.25

SWEET TREATS

- Crumb-topped Apple Pie*—Country-spiced Apples baked under a
Crust of Flour, Butter, and Brown Sugar \$5.25
- Chocolate Fudge Torte*—Dark Chocolate Cake with a rich Fudge Icing \$6.50
- Williamsburg Ice Creams*—Vanilla, Chocolate, or Raspberry Sorbet \$4.75

All Dinners served with Cook's Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetables, and Tavern Bread

To assure the dining pleasure of all our guests, please be kind enough to turn off cellular phones and refrain from smoking.

Josiah Chowning first appeared in local records when he advertised in the *Virginia Gazette* on July 3, 1752, for a horse that had strayed from his James City County plantation. Chowning owned 235 acres in rural James City County about three miles from Williamsburg. Some years later, in October 1766, he opened a tavern in town. While documents indicate Chowning had a residence in Williamsburg for only a couple of years, he remained a resident of the vicinity until his death in 1772. His estate, consisting of land, an enslaved worker, livestock, and “a great variety of household furniture, beds &c.” was sold at public auction in 1773.

Very little is known about his background or family connections. The county records for the time he lived in James City County are among those that were destroyed during the Civil War. No information has been found about his place of birth, parents, or siblings, but it is known that he was married. Chowning and his wife, Mildred, were coplaintiffs in suits recorded in York County Court from June 1771 through April 1772, at which time one of the suits abated because Josiah had died. Mildred Chowning survived her husband, but she disappears from historical records after May 1773.

Tavern furnishings varied from basic to luxurious and included numerous tables, chairs, and beds, but did not include bar stools as we think of them. The bar in a tavern was usually in a corner, and patrons did not sit at it; it was just for dispensing drinks. The bar got its name from the lockable, slatted gate that kept expensive liquor, sugar, and fruits secure.

It is unlikely that 18th-century taverns had written menus. Taverns offered two types of meals. The “dyet” was the public meal, and its price was set by law. Patrons would have been offered only one choice—usually a stew or an inexpensive food, such as seafood in this area. Tavern keepers also offered special meals, which were not price regulated, for wealthy guests. The bill of fare was determined by the patron’s taste, budget, and the ingredients available at market, in gardens, and from the larder.

Tavern keepers used their family to help operate the tavern, but in most cases, additional hands were necessary. Every sizable tavern in Williamsburg had slave cooks, laundresses, kitchen hands, and stable hands. The size of a tavern and its location determined the size of the labor force. Larger taverns required about the same number of slaves and distribution of labor as a large household. For example, in 1771, Anthony Hay of the Raleigh Tavern owned 20 slaves, including a coachman and carter, waiters, good cooks, and others. Christiana Campbell employed a barkeeper. Only the largest, most popular taverns like the Raleigh, Campbell’s, and Wetherburn’s operated year-round.

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