



The term “Groaning Board” may have originated in the Middle Ages and was used in the 17th and 18th centuries to describe a table that is so full of food, the boards groan from the weight of it. Or that the guests at the table groaned with delight at the sight of the feast!

Taverns in the eighteenth-century were hubs of news and information, as well as stopping places for travelers. Guests paid a fee set by the Governor and the amount included a meal and a place to sleep. There wasn't a choice in the meal, guests ate what the tavern keeper prepared for the day, and the lodging was often a spot on the floor in a crowded room on the second floor.

An eighteenth-century visitor to Shields Tavern would have found ample evidence of the cosmopolitan nature of the Atlantic world. Many consumables came to the tavern from afar. A customer would find molasses, sugar, and rum from the West Indies; wines from Portugal, Spain, and France; coffee from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean; tea from Asia; lemons and limes from the Caribbean; and spices from all over the world.

Archaeology shows us Shields served his patrons with British, Chinese, and German ceramic wares. Newspaper at the tavern reported the news of the world. Although a guest at Shields Tavern would have heard mainly English spoken by those about him, he would have been surrounded by many variations from Britain, the West Indies, and Africa. Taverns were both gathering places for locals and for people, objects, and ideas from all over the Atlantic world. Jean Marot, a Frenchman, operated a tavern on this site from about 1709 until his death in 1717, when his widow Anne took over. Their daughter Anne and her husband James Shields began to run the business in the early 1740s. They lived here with their several children, who likely assisted their parents with the work as soon as they were old enough. Shields also owned several enslaved workers.

By 1750, when Shields died, his tavern was one among seven licensed taverns competing for customers in Williamsburg. Located in a crowded commercial and residential part of town, it offered food and drink, overnight lodgings, and entertainment including gambling and billiards. The clientele could gather in a public room to mingle and exchange news with fellow customers or reserve a small space in which to conduct private business. Shields Tavern catered to the lesser gentry and upper middling ranks of Williamsburg society and to travelers to the capital from near and far.





Mr. Shields Groaning Board

Served with Salad, Good Bread, both Entrees, Potatoes, Vegetables, and a pitcher of Iced Tea
29 per person



To Start

To Make a Grand Sallet

AFTER washing your lettuce, be sure it is dry and chopped, arrange it on a platter with pippins sliced fine, good cheese as you choose, pickled vegetables, candied nuts...dress with the juice of lemons and good oil mixed up well or dressing four

sour'd cream and sweet herb will also be fine

(The English Art of Cookery, Richard Briggs, 1788)

Entrees

Beef Olives Another Way

The best beef is from the leg, pounded thin with a rolling pin, stuff it with cubes of a dry penny loaf to which is added vegetables chopped fine...brown them and put in your baking dish with gravy...place in a slow oven...

(The Art Of Cooking made Plain and Easy, Hannah Glasse 1766)

To Fry Chicken

Clean your chicken well, being sure it is clear of feathers, marinated with salt and vinegar or lemon juice, rolling in fine flour and fry quickly in lard or clear oil

(Dictionarium Domesticum, Nathan Bailey, 1736)

Corner Dishes

Mashed Potatoes and Mr. Shields Vegetables of the Season

AFTER they are boiled...mash then in a mortar, or a clean board with a broad knife, and put them into a pan with milk and butter until it is melt...

(The English Art of Cookery, Richard Briggs, 1789)

Dessert

To make Strawberry Cream

Take one pint of thick cream and set it on the fire, keep stirring and make it sweet with double re-fined sugar, add in strawberry jam and the peel of a lemon, when it is cold bring it to froth...

Is very good served with warm doughnuts

(The Complete Confectioner, Hannah Glasse, 1765)

Strawberry Cream **10**

Plate of Warm Doughnuts **10**