

## FOUNDING FATHERHOOD

The scratch of quill nib against parchment ended with a flourish, and John Hancock turned to address the solemn body over which he presided. “Gentlemen,” he intoned, “with that last stroke of the pen our Declaration of Independence is formally adopted.” And having received a firm affirmation of the finality thus achieved in this, their most pressing and sacred endeavor, the delegates assembled for that solemn purpose broke into a furious and hearty ovation.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident,” Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts exclaimed over the tumult, quoting from the text that lay newly-ratified before them, “that all men are created *equal!*”

“Here, here!” shouted Benjamin Rush of Pennsylvania, raising a bowl of brown ale in a sloshing salute to their labors’ happy conclusion. “Let us to the tavern! Huzzah!”

A back-slapping multitude dutifully tramped towards the celebratory environs of Suzanna Berkeley’s nearby hostelry. “What better way to celebrate our affirmation of the Rights of Men than with some of Mrs. Berkeley’s delicious Johnnycakes,” Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire declared.

“Indeed,” affirmed Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, “they are exceedingly toothsome. But, in truth,” he added, “you know who truly makes the most mouth-watering Johnnycakes in all the thirteen colonies? My slave.”

“Is that a fact?” Bartlett responded. “*My slave* is particularly adept at the preparation of Pepper Cake.”

“Mmm, a good Pepper Cake would be a most fitting repast to commemorate our adoption of Universal Equality,” Rutledge opined, his appetite strongly piqued. “Especially one prepared by slaves.”

“Yes, they certainly do seem to know how to cook and bake and whatnot,” Bartlett affirmed.

“Of whom do you speak?” interjected William Hooper of North Carolina, joining the duo.

“Slaves,” replied Bartlett.

“Ah, ’tis true,” Hooper agreed. “*My* slave Uncle Ben prepares the most exquisite rice dishes. Pilafs and whatnot. What a pity he’s not here to concoct a most delectable feast for our celebration of Freedom and Equality.”

“A pilaf!” sighed Rutledge. “That *would* be divine.”

“Ah,” added John Witherspoon of Connecticut, joining the throng, “but you have not *truly* tasted divinity till you have supped upon *my* slave Aunt Jemima’s pancakes.”

“Indeed?” scoffed Hooper. “Mere pancakes?”

“Very much so,” affirmed Witherspoon, lowering his voice conspiratorially, “I’m told her recipe involves a rather substantial infusion of buttermilk.”

“Ah, here we are!” Bartlett announced, as the gathered multitude found themselves at the threshold of Mrs. Berkeley’s storied establishment. Posthaste the celebratory delegates were seated at adjoining tables, heaping platters of the vaunted Johnnycakes steaming before them.

“Mrs. Berkeley!” George Wythe of Virginia exclaimed, “your flavorsome cakes serve as a fitting metaphor for the new nation that shall arise from the document we have signed today. Just as you have brought together cornmeal, salt, and water in perfect quantity and proportionality, so will our newly-forged union bring together men, *all* men, in perfect opportunity and equality. Indeed, the only thing that could possibly improve upon these delectable cakes is a heaping dollop of my slave Mrs. Butterworth’s ambrosial maple syrup.”

“Well, gentlemen,” a beaming Mrs. Berkeley intoned, “I must needs tell you the honest truth, lest I commit a sin of falsehood. The Johnnycakes for which you are so fulsome in your praise are, in actuality, prepared by *my* slaves!”

Hearty gales of unbridled laughter washed over the assembled tables as hats were tossed and flagons raised. “Slaves,” Josiah Bartlett marveled, shaking his head in wonder. “Is there anything they *can't* do?”