

Thomas Willing

Thomas Willing (December 19, 1731 – January 19, 1821) was an American merchant, politician and slave trader who served as mayor of Philadelphia and was a delegate from Pennsylvania to the Continental Congress. He also served as the first president of the Bank of North America and the First Bank of the United States.^[1] During his tenure there he became the richest man in America.^[2]

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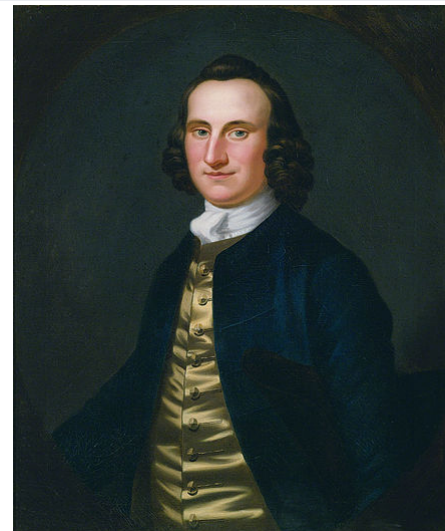
Early life

Thomas Willing was born in Philadelphia, the son of Charles Willing (1710–1754), who twice served as mayor of Philadelphia, and Anne Shippen (1710-1791), granddaughter of Edward Shippen, who was the second mayor of Philadelphia. His brother, James Willing, was a Philadelphia merchant who later served as a representative of the Continental Congress and led a 1778 military expedition to raid holdings of British loyalists in Natchez, Mississippi.^[3]

Thomas completed preparatory studies in Bath, England, then studied law in London at the Inner Temple.^[4]

Career

Thomas Willing



President of First Bank of the United States

In office

October 25, 1791 – November 10, 1807

President George Washington
John Adams
Thomas Jefferson

Preceded by Position established

Succeeded by David Lenox

President of the Bank of North America

In office

January 7, 1782 – March 19, 1791

President George Washington

Preceded by Position established

Succeeded by John Nixon

Mayor of Philadelphia

In office

October 4, 1763 – October 2, 1764

Preceded by Henry Harrison

Succeeded by Thomas Lawrence

Personal details

In 1749, after studying in England, he returned to Philadelphia, where he engaged in mercantile pursuits in partnership with Robert Morris.^{[5][6]} They established the firm Willing, Morris and Company in 1757, which exported flour, lumber and tobacco to Europe while importing sugar, rum, molasses, and slaves from the West Indies and Africa.^[7] Their partnership continued until 1793.^[5]

He was elected to the revived American Philosophical Society in 1768.^[8]

Political career

A member of the common council in 1755, he became an alderman in 1759, associate justice of the city court on October 2, 1759, and then justice of the court of common pleas February 28, 1761. Willing then became Mayor of Philadelphia in 1763. In 1767, the Pennsylvania Assembly, with Governor Thomas Penn's assent, had authorized a Supreme Court justice (always a lawyer) to sit with local justices of the peace (judges of county courts, but laymen) in a system of *Nisi Prius* courts. Governor Penn appointed two new Supreme Court justices, John Lawrence and Thomas Willing. Willing served until 1767, the last under the colonial government.^{[9]:52[5]}

A member of the Committee of Correspondence in 1774 and of the Committee of Safety in 1775, he served in the Continental Congress. In 1775 and 1776 he voted against the Declaration of Independence,^[10] but later subscribed £5,000 to supply the revolutionary cause.^[5]

Banker

From 1781 to 1791, Willing served as president of the Bank of North America, preceding John Nixon. In 1791, President George Washington appointed Willing along with two others as commissioners of the newly created First Bank of the United States. He was elected president of the bank later that year, and during his tenure, he became the richest man in America.^[11] In August 1807, Willing suffered a slight stroke, and within a few months, he resigned his position with the bank for health reasons.^{[9][12]}

Personal life

In 1763, Willing married Anne McCall (1745–1781), daughter of Samuel McCall (1721–1762) and Anne Searle (1724–1757). Together, they had thirteen children, including:^[5]

- Anne Willing (1764–1801), who married William Bingham (1752–1804)^[13]
- Thomas Mayne Willing (1767–1822), who married Jane Nixon (1775–1823)^[5]
- Elizabeth Willing (1768–1858), who married William Jackson (1759–1828)^[5]

Born	December 19, 1731 <div>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, British America</div>
Died	January 19, 1821 (aged 89) <div>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.</div>
Resting place	Christ Church Burial Ground
Spouse(s)	Anne McCall (m.: 1763; died 1781)
Children	13, including <u>Ann</u> and <u>Mary</u>
Relatives	<u>Charles Willing</u> (Father) <u>James Willing</u> (Brother) <u>Mary Willing Byrd</u> (Sister) <u>Elizabeth Willing Powel</u> (Sister) <u>Edward Shippen</u> (Great-grandfather)
Education	<u>Inner Temple</u>

- Mary Willing (1770–1852), who married Henry Clymer (1767–1830)^[5]
- Dorothy Willing (1772–1842), who married Thomas Willing Francis, a cousin^[5]
- George Willing (1774–1827), who married Rebecca Harrison Blackwell (1782–1852)^[5]
- Richard Willing (1775–1858), who married Eliza Moore (1786–1823)^[5]
- Abigail Willing (1777–1841), who married Richard Peters (1780–1848).^[5]

Willing died in 1821 in Philadelphia, where he is interred in Christ Church Burial Ground.^[14]

Descendants

Willing was the great-uncle of John Brown Francis (1791–1864), who was a governor and United States Senator from Rhode Island.^{[15][16]}

Willing was also the grandfather of Ann Louisa Bingham (b. 1782),^[17] who married Alexander Baring, 1st Baron Ashburton (1774–1848), in 1798, and Maria Matilda Bingham (1783–1849), who was briefly married to Jacques Alexandre, Comte de Tilly, a French aristocrat and later married her sister's brother-in-law, Henry Baring (1777–1848), until their divorce in 1824. Maria later married the Marquis de Blaisel in 1826. Their brother, and Willing's grandson, William Bingham (1800–1852) married Marie-Charlotte Chartier de Lotbiniere (1805–1866), the second of the three daughters and heiresses of Michel-Eustache-Gaspard-Alain Chartier de Lotbinière by his second wife Mary, daughter of Captain John Munro, in 1822.^[5]

See also

- Stephen Simpson, an outspoken journalist and fierce critic of the First National Bank and its practices.
- List of wealthiest historical figures
- List of richest Americans in history

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Anne McCall Willing and William Shippen Willing, by Charles Willson Peale



Portrait of Willing, by Charles Willson Peale

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Further reading

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External links

- Biographical sketch and portrait at the University of Pennsylvania (http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1700s/willing_thos.html)
 - The Willings and Francis Records (<http://www.hsp.org/files/findingaid1874willingsandfrancis.pdf>), including correspondence, deeds and legal documents of Thomas Willings' mercantile firm (Willings and Francis), are available for research use at the [Historical Society of Pennsylvania](#).
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