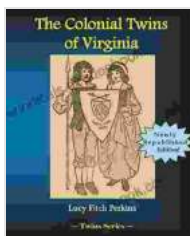


# The Colonial Twins of Virginia: A Tale of Intrigue, Scandal, and Revolutionary Spirit

In the tapestry of American history, the Colonial Twins, Mary Willing Byrd and Elizabeth Willing Powel, stand as captivating figures. Born into a wealthy and prominent Philadelphia family, these identical twins possessed a captivating combination of beauty, wit, and influence. Their lives were a whirlwind of high society, political intrigue, and a secret that would forever alter the course of their destinies.



## The Cononial Twins of Virginia by Angela Broyles

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 4379 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 133 pages
Lending	: Enabled



## Early Lives and Society Debut

Mary and Elizabeth Willing were born on May 27, 1743, into a prominent Philadelphia family. Their father, Charles Willing, was a successful merchant and landowner, while their mother, Anne Shippen, descended from a distinguished family. From a tender age, the twins exhibited a striking resemblance, not only in appearance but also in their personalities.

As they blossomed into womanhood, Mary and Elizabeth made their social debut in Philadelphia society. Their beauty and charm instantly garnered them attention, and they quickly became the toast of the town. Their social calendar was filled with lavish balls, receptions, and dinner parties, where they mingled with the city's elite.

## **Marriage and Scandal**

In 1766, at the age of 23, Mary Willing married Colonel William Byrd III, a wealthy planter from Westover Plantation in Virginia. Elizabeth, just two months later, married John Powel, a lawyer and politician from Philadelphia. Both marriages were considered brilliant social alliances, cementing the twins' status as prominent figures in society.

However, behind the façade of grandeur lurked a dark secret. In 1771, a scandalous letter emerged, alleging that Mary Willing had engaged in an affair with Captain John Mercer, a close friend of her husband. The revelation sent shockwaves through Philadelphia society and cast a shadow over Mary's reputation. Despite the denials, the scandal followed her for the rest of her life.

## **Revolutionary Spirit**

As tensions mounted between the American colonies and Great Britain, Mary Willing and Elizabeth Powel found themselves on opposing sides of the conflict. Mary, influenced by her husband's loyalist views, remained steadfast in her support for the British Crown. Elizabeth, on the other hand, became a staunch advocate for independence and actively supported the Patriot cause.

Elizabeth's Revolutionary spirit manifested in her involvement in various patriotic organizations. She founded the Ladies Association of Philadelphia, which provided support to the Continental Army and fostered a sense of unity among women. Her home became a gathering place for Patriot leaders, including George Washington and John Adams.

In contrast, Mary's loyalty to the British Crown drew criticism and disapproval. She faced ostracism from her friends and neighbors, and her reputation was irreparably damaged. Despite her unwavering support, her husband, William Byrd III, eventually acknowledged the inevitability of American independence.

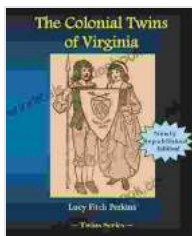
### **Later Lives and Legacy**

After the war, Mary Willing and Elizabeth Powel's paths diverged further. Mary remained in Virginia, where she lived a relatively quiet life, haunted by the scandal that had plagued her. Elizabeth, on the other hand, returned to Philadelphia and continued to be an active figure in politics and society. She became a close friend and confidante of Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States.

The Colonial Twins left an enduring legacy on American history. Mary Willing's life serves as a testament to the consequences of societal judgment and the enduring power of a scandal. Elizabeth Powel's story, on the other hand, highlights the transformative role that women played in the American Revolution and the fight for independence.

The Colonial Twins of Virginia, Mary Willing Byrd and Elizabeth Willing Powel, were complex and fascinating figures whose lives were intertwined with both intrigue and historical significance. Their stories offer a glimpse

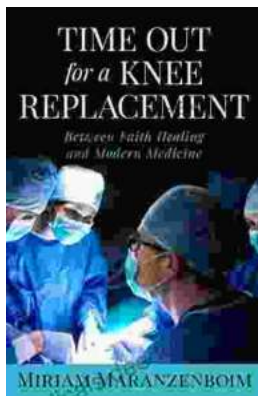
into the social, political, and cultural landscape of 18th-century America and remind us of the indomitable spirit that shaped the birth of a new nation.



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