



The Revolutionary War may be over, but one of its best-known battles is still being fought. More than two centuries after the Lexington militiamen rallied against His Majesty's regulars at what would become known as the Battle of Lexington and Concord, sixty-five Redcoats and sixty-seven colonial patriots face off each April 19 to bring to life the beginning of the American Revolution.

On Monday, April 19, *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE* premieres *Patriots Day*, a one-hour verité-style documentary from Marian Marzynski (*Shtetl*) that follows reenactors as they prepare for and engage in this annual encounter. "This film is a real departure for us," says Mark Samels, executive producer of *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE*. "Whereas we typically focus on historical subjects, this is a contemporary, behind-the-scenes look at the passion people have for history."

The modern-day Lexington Minutemen and their British counterparts switch between centuries (eighteenth and twenty-first), roles (military and civilian), and allegiances (revolutionary and loyalist). They pride themselves on the authenticity of their uniforms and pay painstaking attention to recreating every detail of the battle. Yet the realities of twenty-first century life are undeniably part of the occasion. Chirping cell phones alert powdered-wig wearing commanders to troop movements. Big yellow school buses transport weary Redcoats from one encounter with the revolutionaries to the next. Traditional uniforms are stitched on modern sewing machines. And all the while the cameras are rolling.

The historically white, male, Anglo-Saxon troops today include people like Kristen Acorn, a private in the British First Regiment of Footguards, and banker Henry Liu, who says, "I was concerned about being Asian, but everyone kept telling me, don't worry about it, just come celebrate the history with us." Charles Price honors his African American heritage by assuming the identity of Prince Estabrook, a slave who joins the militia with the hope of obtaining his freedom.

Mike Coppe, a pediatric dentist, joined the Lexington Minutemen twenty-three years ago, playing the part of militiaman Nathaniel Mulliken for twenty years, then switching sides to become one of King George's finest. Clinton Jackson, who had five relatives serve in the original American Revolution, finds gratification in the smallest details, such as the type of linen used in reenactors' uniforms: "It itches and scratches – I not only look like this individual, I *feel* like him." Jackson also admits that engaging in the battle brings him something larger: "Just like everybody else in our society today, I am confused as to what the country stands for; whether the

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A MARZ ASSOCIATES PRODUCTION FOR *AMERICAN EXPERIENCE*



constitution really works; whether the government is straight or crooked. I have to find a reference point.” Electrical engineer Paul O’Shaughnessy – known to his troops as British Major John Pitcairn – spends his weekdays as a manager at a biotech company, and his weekends trooping the colors and participating in military drills. “The twenty-first century slips away,” he says. “There is just the smoke and the flames and the swords and bayonets. That is the moment you’ve been waiting for. It really is a magical thing.”

In military terms, the original battle of Lexington and Concord was not a major encounter. But over the centuries it has assumed a near-mythical quality: witness Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *The Shot Heard Round the World*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*, Daniel Chester French’s *Minuteman* statue and the latest on the subject, David Hackett Fischer’s *Paul Revere’s Ride*.

Then there are the thousands of people – both tourists and New England natives – who annually flock to the battle sites in Lexington and Concord to observe the early dawn reenactment of the conflict on the third Monday in April, a state holiday in Massachusetts since 1894.

Says Marzynski, “Following the reenactors gave me a new perspective on patriotism and civic duty. Patriots Day celebrates these ordinary, inspired lives; their true, far from textbook, passion for history; their admiration for this country’s humble beginning. Plus, they have so much fun doing it.”

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Marian Marzynski has been an award-winning producer for PBS for over twenty years, producing films for FRONTLINE, NOVA, and AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. His work has earned him an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Silver Baton (*Shtetl*), two Emmy Awards (*Messenger to Poland*, *Out of the Shadows*), and a George Polk Award in broadcasting journalism (*Inside Gorbachev’s USSR*).

Marzynski graduated from the University of Warsaw with Master’s Degree in broadcast journalism and a Diploma in film directing. He is currently working on a documentary entitled *Berlin*, which compares the contemporary city with its World War II past.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Patriots Day was shot in widescreen on 16mm Kodak Vision2 stock, transferred to Digi-Beta, and edited in video.

CREDITS

Patriots Day is a Marz Associates production for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE.

Producer, director, writer: Marian Marzynski

Editor: Bernice Schneider

Cinematography: Jason Longo

Original music composed by: John Kusiak

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AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is a production of WGBH Boston. Mark Samels, executive producer
Sharon Grimberg, series editor

ACCESSIBILITY

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is closed captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, and described for people who are blind or visually impaired by the Media Access Group at WGBH. The descriptive narration is available on the SAP channel of stereo TVs and VCRs.

ABOUT AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, television's most-watched history series, is a leading producer of historical documentaries, related Web sites, and DVDs. The pioneer of quality historical programming for public television audiences, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has won every prestigious broadcast award and enjoys consistent widespread support from television critics and viewers alike.

For more information about American Experience and Patriots Day, visit the World Wide Web: pbs.org/amex.

ABOUT WGBH BOSTON

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcasting producer. More than one-third of PBS's prime-time lineup and companion Web content as well as many public radio favorites are produced by WGBH. The station also is a pioneer in educational multimedia and in access technologies for people with disabilities. For more information visit wgbh.org.

Download press materials and images for *Patriots Day* and other AMERICAN EXPERIENCE programs at pbs.org/pressroom and pressroom.wgbh.org.

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