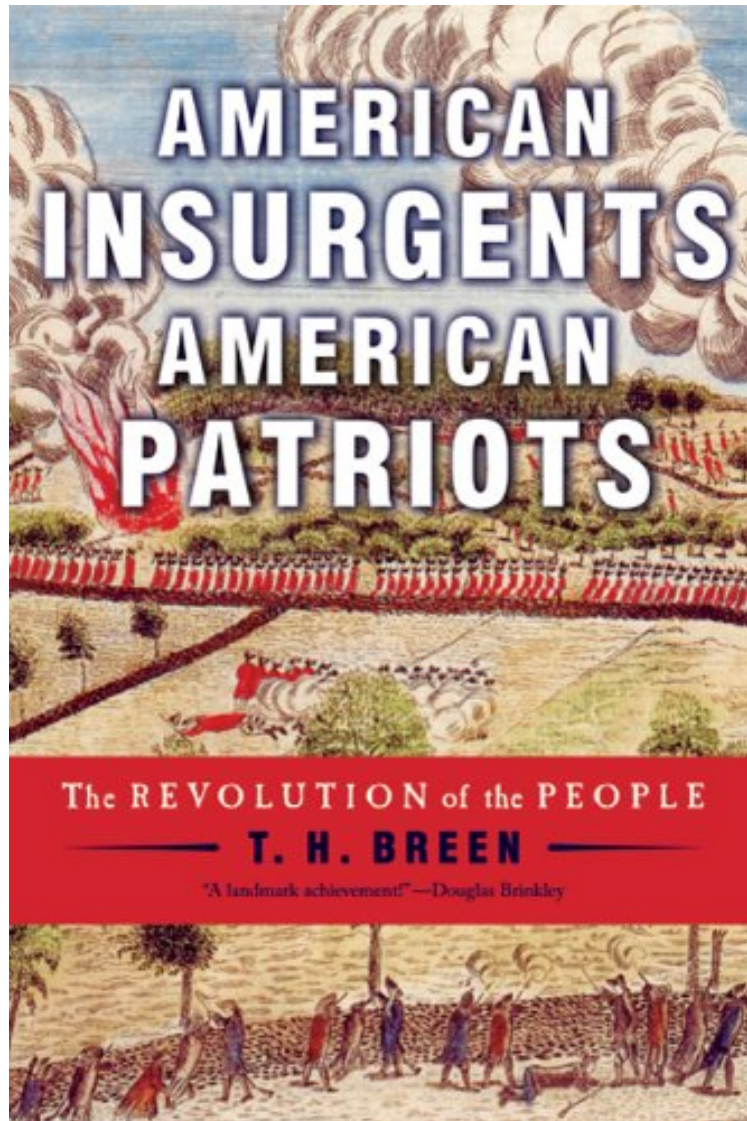


(Download pdf ebook) American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People

American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People

T. H. Breen

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T. H. Breen : American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. How American Insurgents ignited a People's RevolutionBy gloine36T.H. Breen, William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University continues his

previous works on the American Revolution with this new entry into the field. Breen's research is in keeping with the trend of recent scholarship in this era which involves examining the beginnings of the Revolution. This bottom up approach to the questions of why the Revolution occurred in the manner it did has yielded a plethora of information which point to a completely different understanding of the event when compared to the top down approach. Breen and his contemporaries have done just what they were trained to do as historians and that is to use primary sources in order to construct their interpretations of what happened. As a result, they have delved into the diaries, newspaper accounts, and letters of the common people of that time. The results have challenged the older interpretations that have been in the mainstream of American historical thought. Formerly, most of the attention for the Revolution was given to the men classified as Founders such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and George Washington. These men played an important part in codifying the ideology of the era and expressing it through their own actions and writing. However, as Breen shows us through *American Insurgents*, these Founders were late to the party. By the end of 1775 most of the vestiges of British government in the colonies had been ejected by a popular uprising of the people. The few enclaves of royal authority were in coastal cities, most of the royal governors and officials had fled, and the main center of rebellion, Boston, was a city besieged by a popular army of the people. The Continental Congress was composed of men who for the most part represented landed interests within the colonies and were merely representatives of their colonial legislatures. They could take no action on independence without the consent of those legislatures. As Breen shows, this was often at odds with the demands of the colonists who had for all purposes began to throw off British control in 1774 throughout the colonies. Previous histories have attributed the publication of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* with changing the minds of the people from reconciliation to that of independence from the Crown. As Breen and others have shown, *Common Sense* changed the minds of those legislatures. The common people had already made up their minds. Breen illustrates this with the example of the New England response to a false rumor that the British had cannonaded and destroyed Boston in September of 1774. The spread of this news sparked a previously unimaginable outpouring of thousands of armed men with estimates ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 marching upon Boston as soon as they heard the news. No Founders led this movement or directed it. The people themselves marched to war, only to turn back as they learned the news was false. Breen also shows how the plight of Bostonians due to the enforcement of the Coercive Acts led to an unprecedented outpouring of support from all thirteen colonies in the form of foodstuffs and monetary contributions. This was done before the First Continental Congress met which shows how the colonists had united in the face of what they perceived was a common threat to all of them. Breen covers the establishment of committees that directed the local efforts of the Americans in a common goal. These committees were made up of locals who had very little instruction from the Continental Congress and often made up their rules as they went along. What was really interesting about this point is that this is where revolutions tend to become bloody excesses with reprisals and the settling of old scores. The committees kept this in check and used different methods including many that Americans accustomed to the Bill of Rights would find highly illegal such as seizure of weapons, courts of the people, lack of legal representation, preventing the freedom of speech, and threats of physical violence, all forms of intimidation short of actual killing. This included the closing of royal courts, forcing officials to recant their positions or statements supporting the Crown, and removal of local officials from local positions such as officers in the militia. The result is a book that builds a substantial case for comparing what happened in 1773-1776 to a modern insurgency. This shows that the American Revolution was one in every sense of the word. It was the complete rejection of British authority which had come to be perceived as tyranny by the common people. It is very difficult today to wonder whether the Revolution would have occurred with the support of the American people in that time. Often John Adams's quote about the American people being divided in thirds for, against, or neutral regarding the Revolution is seen as the standard for how the people felt about the event at that time. Breen's research indicates that this didn't seem to be the case, particularly in New England. Neutrality was a far more limited expression and those who supported the Crown often had to flee for their lives. Breen's work is quite good and the book is very readable. Each chapter covers a specific aspect of the Revolution. Readers who want a military history will be disappointed as will those who prefer a chronological history. This book was not designed to be such. It was written to explain how the patriots of the American Revolution were comparable to insurgents. Along the way, Breen explores some of the reasons why the Revolution did not turn into a bloodbath which is critical to the United States developing the ideology that evolved from the uprising of the people. Had it turned into a bloody uprising it is most likely that the concepts of freedom and democracy that emerged as we know them today would have been stunted at birth. As a result, Breen shows how Americans worked together for a common goal and constructed a Revolution that would be harnessed by the men who emerged as Founders in forging what became the United States of America. If anything, Breen could have expanded upon the concepts in this book and doubled it in size. However, in limiting the content to what is in it, he delivers a compelling interpretation of American insurgency which made up the Revolution.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. *American Insurgents, American Patriots* reviewBy michaelaippaso'*American Insurgents, American Patriots*' is about the lead up to the American Revolution. It contains many valuable facts, but for me it seemed as if the book was written too much in a text book manner. It was definitely a challenge to read, however, I learn a huge amount from this book once i got into it, which took a few chapters. At

some points 'American Insurgents, American Patriots' was hard to follow, because it was not organised chronologically. The book also stays in New England, and so you don't get a full sight of what was happening to the other colonies. It does very well in continuing the storyline of the "New England" commoners in their insurgency before the beginning of the Revolution, as these events are not well talked about. The book also gives some great, descriptive examples of history to support his thoughts, which makes the book a lot more interesting, and easier to follow. I would recommend this book to anybody who is very interested in the American Revolution and the time period leading up to it. Breen gives new insights to what really caused America to become independent. 'American Insurgents, American Patriots' certainly is not a easy read, but you will feel accomplished at the end of the book, and will have learnt a lot. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Another compelling work by Breen By Steven Deyerle In American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People, T.H. Breen analyzes the actions of the common man in the coming of the War for American Independence. He argues that the ordinary citizens of America "launched an insurgency that drove events toward a successful revolution" and that it was their activities that radicalized the Revolution (4-5). First through unorganized bands of militia and later through structured local committees, these insurgents led the way in the radicalism of the Revolution. Their actions forced Congress to adopt more radical positions than they otherwise would have. Thus, the move toward independence was a bottom-up process rather than a top-down one. Breen's argument is convincing, if a bit limited in geographical scope (he focuses a little too much on the Northeast). As always, Breen divides his chapters into subsections that make his arguments easy to follow and comprehend. With a title obviously influenced by the recent American wars in the Middle East, American Insurgents is a great history of the insurgents on our own continent 240 years ago and a welcome addition to the historiography of the Revolution.

Before there could be a revolution, there was a rebellion; before patriots, there were insurgents. Challenging and displacing decades of received wisdom, T. H. Breen's strikingly original book explains how ordinary Americans most of them members of farm families living in small communities were drawn into a successful insurgency against imperial authority. A few celebrated figures in the Continental Congress do not make for a revolution. It requires tens of thousands of ordinary men and women willing to sacrifice, kill, and be killed. Breen not only gives the history of these ordinary Americans but, drawing upon a wealth of rarely seen documents, restores their primacy to American independence. Mobilizing two years before the Declaration of Independence, American insurgents in all thirteen colonies concluded that resistance to British oppression required organized violence against the state. They channeled popular rage through elected committees of safety and observation, which before 1776 were the heart of American resistance. American Insurgents, American Patriots is the stunning account of the insurgency that led to the nation's founding.

From Publishers Weekly Breen presents a provocative reinterpretation of the American Revolution as more of a grassroots movement of ordinary persons than is often presented. Beginning roughly two years before the 1776 Declaration of Independence, thousands of colonists mostly farm families living in small communities selected committees to channel their mounting fear, fury, and resentment into organized resistance. Fed up with the British Empire's incessant demands for ever greater loyalty, obedience, and taxes and, Breen emphasizes, motivated by their evangelical faith they had resolved to fight well before their famous leaders made it official, according to Breen. Their tipping point was the Battle of Lexington and Concord of April 19, 1775, news of which spread effectively throughout the 13 colonies, thanks to established communications systems. Northwestern history professor Breen (The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence) writes compellingly, but, contrary to his repeated claims, his is hardly the first account to focus on grassroots rural rebels. Even Mel Gibson's shock movie The Patriot made the same basic point. Still, this is a valuable book by a distinguished scholar. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Breen elegantly demonstrates how much we miss when our histories are focused principally on the Founding Fathers. Nicholas Guyatt, The Times Literary Supplement Generation after generation, students are taught that the Founders inspired a hesitant, though hardy, American populace to reclaim its rights . . . The truth is a good deal messier and more interesting. Historians in our own time--Mr. Breen, Gary B. Nash and Gordon S. Wood, among others--have shifted the emphasis to the common people. Alan Pell Crawford, The Wall Street Journal Founding Father John Adams, looking back at the heady and trying days of the American Revolution, famously wrote the Revolution was effected before the war commenced.' T. H. Breen's new history sets out to fill in the detail -- showing that by the time embattled farmers fired the shot heard round the world' in Concord in 1775, the battle had already been joined by tens of thousands of colonials . . . Breen's book shows an energetic and necessarily untidy process of invention on the part of a people, and captures well its improvisatory nature. Art Winslow, Chicago Tribune a scholarly, unnerving account of the American Revolution's darker side--the violence, death threats, false rumors, and extremist rhetoric that introduced a new political order Caleb Crain, The New Yorker In this compellingly structured and argued book, T.H. Breen asserts that a de facto nation came into existence between the spring and fall of 1774. It was in these crucial months that the people

of the thirteen colonies -- not the Founding Fathers, not the Continental Army, not the maladroit British government -- executed a series of steps that collectively solved problems of governance and demonstrated how a republic could be successfully constituted. What's even more surprising is that Breen makes this somewhat counterintuitive argument, one rooted in a social history sensibility, in the form of a chronological narrative. He achieves this cohesion despite lacking a discrete sense of leading characters or a dramatic set of circumstances (the most consequential event of his story is actually a rumor). The result is a book that's highly readable as well as provocative. Jim Cullen, History News Network
American Insurgents, American Patriots is one of the most compelling accounts I've read of how the people' forged the Revolution. Thomas S. Kidd, Books and Culture
American Insurgents, American Patriots is a much-needed corrective to the notion that the Revolution was the product solely of intellectuals and pamphleteers . . . Breen is especially good on reminding us of the passion that the mass of people -- whom he calls insurgents' -- brought to the cause. He traces the role played by newspapers in firing up these rural folks and shows how their readiness to react, sometimes violently, fueled the cause of independence. Tony Lewis, Providence Journal
Casting a wide net in his research to reconstruct the patchwork of grassroots rebellions and self-organized protests across the colonies. Breen is among the growing ranks of historians convincingly uncovering how the Founding Fathers followed and controlled, rather than precipitated, the move toward independence and democracy. American History
T. H. Breen's American Insurgents, American Patriots is a pioneering and riveting new analysis of how America was born. Skirting the whole Founding Fathers phenomena, Breen champions instead the everyman of the pre-revolution as a brave citizens' brigade of change. A landmark achievement! Douglas Brinkley, Professor of History at Rice University and official CBS News Historian
The Founding Fathers have all the honor they need. Now it's time to honor the ordinary men and women who T. H. Breen brilliantly assays in this riveting book on the crucial run-up to the Declaration of Independence. He shows how people from small farming communities, risking all, purged the countryside of royal officials, dismantled royal authority, shuttered court houses, and defied the King's troops. In this tautly constructed book, Breen shows how much the bewigged Founding Fathers owed to those beneath them, and how much we owe to the plain-spoken, inconspicuous, and roughened colonial insurgents who are the unsung heroes of the American Revolution. Gary B. Nash, author of The Unknown American Revolution
Who made the American Revolution? Not the men who typically get the most credit for it, says T.H. Breen in American Insurgents, American Patriots. This bracing and impassioned recounting of the origins of America's break with Great Britain puts the people'--ordinary men and women--back into their rightful place in the story. Sure to provoke discussion, Breen's work is a much-needed and welcome addition to the literature on the founding of the American nation. Annette Gordon-Reed, winner of the Pulitzer Prize
T. H. Breen's revisionist page-turner recaptures the ungentlemanly labors of Colonial America's dangerous classes, those vigilantes, night riders, and terrorists who made the Revolution possible even before Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Paine proclaimed its necessity. There is sobering contemporary relevance here for Americans about great empires and the violent resistance they spawn in the name of freedom. David Levering Lewis, winner of the Pulitzer Prize
In this engaging book, Breen tells the vivid stories of thousands of ordinary Americans who made an extraordinary revolution. American Insurgents, American Patriots reminds us that we have many more Founding Mothers and Fathers than we usually recognize. Breen deftly explores the American Revolution in its full social depth, revealing how it affected everyone: the rich and poor, free and slave, and Patriot and Loyalist. Alan Taylor, winner of the Pulitzer Prize
Breen has uncovered the grass roots of the American Revolution in the unheralded acts of ordinary people. Meeting in towns and villages throughout the colonies, they gave public notice that they no longer consented to British rule. Without the prompting of the leaders who have figured so largely in standard histories, they established their own independence well before Thomas Jefferson and company declared it in their famous document. Edmund Morgan, winner of the Pulitzer Prize
American Insurgents, American Patriots reveals startling details of the alienation and anger that pervaded the minds of thousands of Americans long before shots were fired on Lexington Green. This is a book that deepens our understanding of the American Revolution--and it's a great read in the bargain! Thomas Fleming, author of Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge
This compelling narrative examines the lives of ordinary Americans who in the years 1774 and 1775 led the way to American independence. The book's great merit is to describe the foundation that an insurgency of common people constructed for the building of a new nation. Mark A. Noll, Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History, University of Notre Dame
T. H. Breen restores the people to their proper place in our understanding of the coming of the American Revolution. Showing how popular anger at misguided British policies was channeled into political and military action, Breen gives us fresh perspectives on the ways ordinary Americans mobilized themselves for war and helped create a new nation. Beautifully written and powerfully argued, American Insurgents, American Patriots should attract a wide and grateful readership. Peter S. Onuf, author of Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood
Breen's account restores a vivid sense of what the American Revolution felt like to the brave men and women who lived through its enormous ups and downs, and its everyday violence as well. With a scholar's command and a writer's sympathy, he infuses a world of meaning into the word insurgent'-- an apt description for the Americans who were turning the known world upside down. Ted Widmer, Director and Librarian, John Carter Brown Library
If earlier authors convinced you that Americans owe their independence to a handful of founding brothers,' you will be

fascinated by T. H. Breen's persuasive demonstration that the Founders of the republic could not have succeeded--and might not have tried--without support and pressure from tens of thousands of ordinary Patriots who recognized that sometimes leaders need to be led. Woody Holton, author of *Abigail Adams* Casting a new light on the origins of the struggle for independence, Breen mines letters, sermons and diaries to create a lively, nuanced account of ordinary farmers' growing resistance to the British government in the two years before the Declaration of Independence. Angry at oppressive parliamentary acts that abrogated their God-given rights, tens of thousands of rebellious insurgents laid the groundwork for a successful revolution. Their anger was every bit as important to the revolutionary story as the learned debates of the Founding Fathers . . . An important new view of a revolution in the making. Kirkus sBreen presents a provocative reinterpretation of the American Revolution as more of a grassroots movement of ordinary persons . . . This is a valuable book by a distinguished scholar. Publishers WeeklyAbout the AuthorT. H. Breen is the William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University. The author of several works of history, Breen has also written for *The New York Times Magazine* and the *London of Books*. He lives in Evanston, Illinois.