

### 3.4: Performing as Paul Revere: interview with Mike LePage Transcript

Tegan 00:13

So welcome back to Revere House Radio. I'm Tegan Kehoe, and with me today is Mike LePage, who is a first-person interpreter who portrays Paul Revere so for those of you who have not visited the Paul Revere House, first of all, come on by. But second of all, you may not know that when you visit the Paul Revere House, you'll be talking to people who are in modern day dress, speaking as themselves, teaching you about what you are seeing at the house. But on special occasions, and some of those special occasions are just specific, Saturday afternoons, we have guests, including Mike, who portrays Paul and gives people a bit more of a reenacted experience. So first of all, welcome and thank you so much for being on the show today.

Mike 00:58

Good morning, Tegan. It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me.

Tegan 01:01

So to start off, can you tell us a little bit about what first-person interpretation is, and, for listeners who haven't had the pleasure of seeing you in action, what a typical program with you as Paul Revere is like?

Mike 01:13

First-person is...Well, obviously I'm not the actual Paul Revere. But what I try to do is I try to bring him to life for the public in a language they can understand, which means that I speak to them as I'm speaking to you, Tegan, now, and I try to make it sound a little bit more 18th century. But for me, the most important thing to do is to show them that this person actually lived -- was actually a human being that worked, had a family, cared about what was happening around him or her -- and to be able to get them to relate to "Hey, he's thinking about things that I think about, only in the 18th century and not in the 21st century." I try to bring them to life as real people, and that is what turned me on to this many years ago.

Tegan 02:10

Very cool. And how did you get involved in in doing this? How did you start out?

Mike 02:15

Well, I started out...I graduated from the University of Maine in 1989, and I had a history degree, and I had taken some teaching classes, and imagine the shock of my parents when I came home with that history degree and said I didn't want to teach. So they didn't know what to do with me. And I ended up working at the golf course that I worked at for many years, until I figured it out. And I figured it out by volunteering at Pilgrim Hall and Plymouth Plantation in Plymouth. Through being a volunteer there or docent, I met a gentleman named Winston Stone who was a historical reenactor for the First Foot Guards reenactment group, and I remember my first thought was "Cool. I've always wanted to do that." I was a bicentennial kid, and I'd always wanted to be in uniform and reenact Lexington and Concord. And through him, I, as they say,

took the Shilling and became a Guardsman of His Majesty's first Regiment of Foot Guards -- who weren't here in 1775 but came in 1776 -- so I got to live my reenacting dream by being a red coat and learning about the other side. And through that experience, I met a gentleman named Dave Connor, who was my predecessor at the Paul Revere House as Paul Revere, and a mentor to me. And maybe it's because we marched next to each other a lot, and he got tired of hearing me go on and on about Dr. Joseph Warren, but he turned me on to a company called Historical Entertainments, who he worked for, and I got to play Dr Warren for them and some other characters. And I eventually took over for for him as Paul Revere there and at the Paul Revere House. You know, I just remember thinking, "actually playing a historical person." And I, when I first started had no idea how much research went into it. It was, it was incredible how much I had to read. But fortunately, I love to read, so it, it's kind of taken on a life of its own.

Tegan 04:32

Very cool. And can you tell us more about that research process, both when you first started out, and how you prepare for a particular appearance?

Mike 04:40

Well, as my wife Annie will tell you, we have quite a library. So before the age of internet, all of my research was through books and finding the primary sources in the backs of those biographies, such as Paul Revere's Ride by David Hackett Fisher and the biography of Paul Revere by Jane Triber -- I believe it's called the True Republican, if I'm not mistaken...

Tegan 05:09

Yes.

Mike 05:09

...and reading those and then looking in the back and finding the primary sources from them. Now I've been very fortunate with primary sources, because we have the Massachusetts Historical Society. And when I took over for Dave as Paul Revere here, I remember that first meeting, I had Patrick Leehey and Nina Zannieri, and they gave me a pile of primary sources. And I thought, "Oh, my God. What have I gotten myself into?" But fortunately, I like to read, and to go from reading a biography to the primary sources is incredible, because you go from reading an author's interpretation to the words from that person themselves. It puts the biography that you've read into context by reading what they actually wrote. Especially when you consider Paul Revere in the Midnight Ride, he had two depositions that he sat through. Then, of course, he had a letter to the Mass Historical Society and Jeremy Belknap. And among those three depositions, one, one is the rough draft, I believe, and then one is the final draft. And then there's the deposition to Jeremy Belknap. Paul Revere himself takes you through the Midnight Ride. The other resources were other letters of Paul Revere's from earlier in his life to later in his life. And I also played John Adams, and the Adams letters and his own autobiography and journal, there's nothing like reading their writing -- what they've written, whether it be a letter, whether it be a pamphlet -- it's invaluable.

Tegan 06:52

Yeah, definitely. And all of our staff, when a new staff member starts reads those three versions that Paul Revere wrote of his Midnight Ride. We love that they're very consistent with one another. They don't contradict one another, which, as historians, is great because it makes it much more likely that it's going to be reliable. But I agree that those primary sources really, really take you to the person.

Mike 07:13

Yeah, definitely.

Tegan 07:14

So you've mentioned John Adams as well as Paul Revere, and you mentioned Warren earlier. So how many, how many different characters do you portray? And other than being here at the Paul Revere House, where do you do this kind of thing?

Mike 07:26

Well, over the years, I've played multiple characters. When I first started out in the late 90s, I was asked for a Boston walk for the homeless to play Dr. Warren along the Freedom Trail. I had been a huge fan of Dr. Joseph Warren since I was a child, because I went to grammar and elementary school during the bicentennial in 1976 and I was exposed to it then, even out in western Pennsylvania, where we were living at the time, and had read Johnny Tremain with my mother, and watched Johnny Tremain on Disney and everything that was on TV at the time, and I was hooked. We had educational programs at school, and through Johnny Tremain, I kept hearing about Dr Joseph Warren. So when Dave Connor recommended that I join the historical group that he was with that was entertaining at corporate events, Historical Entertainments, he said "There's no Dr. Joseph Warren, and you talk about him a lot." So I decided that I would take up the torch for Dr. Warren, even though he was taller than me by four inches or so, I believe. But at the time, no one was playing him, and for a decade or so, I was playing Dr. Joseph Warren. And then I was contacted by the Paul Revere House, and I also played Dr. Warren -- and still will when needed at the Revere House -- as well as a Tory character. Now Tories were -- or as the proper name would be, loyalist -- were those that stayed loyal to his Majesty's government, and I was exposed to that because I lived in Duxbury at the time. And the next turnover was Marshfield, and my mother and I went on a tour of the historical Winslow house, which was a loyalist house.....Dr Isaac Winslow. So it went from that to actually having to give an 18th century medical talk. So it's a good thing I like to read, and I like research, because I was reading through various pamphlets and journals of 18th century medicine. And the doctor was a bit mild in his politics, and so when I was asked to play a loyalist for the Paul Revere House, I had to find someone much more lively. So I chose Chief Justice Peter Oliver of Middleborough. The wonderful thing about playing different people is that you get to give a very different interpretation or spin on the same issues, whether it is the Stamp Act, or the Boston Massacre, or the Tea Party, or Lexington and Concord. To tell it from another point of view is fascinating to me and hopefully fascinating to the audience.

Tegan 10:26

Yeah.

Mike 10:26

Then around that same time, perhaps a little bit earlier, I was contacted by Adams National Park to join their group of historical interpreters as a volunteer, an independent contractor, to be part of their Continental Congress. And before that, for their trial of the century, the Boston Massacre trial, I played every single role, which was all of about three. I played the judge who was Peter Oliver when we did the program then. And then I would play either Samuel Quincy or Robert Treat Paine as the prosecutor, and eventually I got to be John Adams. My predecessor there, Ed Page -- and another one that followed him was Tom Macy -- both were invaluable resources for learning to become John Adams. And I'm currently at Adams National Historical Park in Quincy as their John Adams. I have played a number of roles. When we had the Continental Congress and the 2000s at Adams, I would play Edward Rutledge of the South, which took a great deal of courage, when you consider that slavery was one of the topics we were supposed to bring up for the audience while we voted on approving the Declaration of Independence. It was...I was very concerned. I was wondering how the crowd would react. And the head park ranger at the time, John Stanwich, told me, "You're playing a role. You're not that person. It happened. They debated it, and they finally had to vote on it and remove the article regarding the slave trade, the Declaration of Independence. It's a historical fact that it happened. So you're not doing anything terrible by playing this role. You're adding a historical point of view." And so I did that, and eventually, with the retirement of Ed Page and our sadly losing Tom Macy some time ago, I became the John Adams at the park, and have played both John Adams and Paul Revere a great deal of the time. I have a new Tory that I play, Joshua Winslow...

Tegan 12:32

Of the house?

Mike 12:32

...of the Winslow House. But for the most part, in recent times it is, I've gone from playing many, many people, from the Revolutionary War era to the Civil War era to early baseball times of the 1900s. Now, almost exclusively I say that -- and I do still play other roles -- but mostly now it is John Adams and Paul Revere.

Tegan 12:54

Huh! So I'm starting to get a sense, and I'd like you to, I guess, corroborate or correct me on this, that in the first-person kind of community, one starts by playing either lesser-known roles or locally-known roles, and you have to be a bit more experienced to play someone very famous, like Revere or Adams. Is that, do you get a sense that that is happening and that it's intentional, or is it just sort of the famous roles are always taken when you arrive in a group.

Mike 13:23

Well, I did it a little bit backwards. Although, although your point is good, because I suppose when I think about it, Dr. Warren, as far as I'm concerned, is one of the major roles, but one of the lesser-known major roles, which is why I was hooked on him...

Tegan 13:42  
Mhmm.

Mike 13:42

...when I first started doing this. I was surprised that no one played him in the late 90s, mid to late 1990s and I took on that role for that reason, because I wanted to tell his story. Then I played Dr Winslow at the Winslow house, which I guess you would call would be a lesser role, and then it was basically a matter of waiting my turn to play John Adams and Paul Revere. But playing the other roles, the lesser-known roles, sometimes is even more interesting because you're not necessarily dealing with someone who lived in Boston, let's say, might have lived in Marshfield or Taunton or somewhere else...Middleboro? And we're talking about the same issues, but someone who we haven't read about in our histories or studied in our classrooms. There are many people out there now who do what I do, who are playing a lot of those roles and bringing them to life. When I first started, other than doing local programs as I did in Marshfield, the major roles were the ones that were out there, such as Paul Revere and John Adams and Samuel Adams and John Hancock. But as historical interpretation has evolved, it has become more inclusive of other sorts of people. There are a number of very talented people out there playing roles of women, roles of those who were forgotten, who were enslaved, people from smaller towns. Or people that were prominent at the time, or who have been forgotten, such as Mercy Otis Warren of Plymouth, who wrote a history of Massachusetts. And it's wonderful, because when I was in the hobby to begin with, for the most part, it was a hobby of military interpretation. In the 2000s the desire to play civilian roles has just grown and grown and grown to include all of these groups of people. There is a young lady named Audrey Stuck Gerard who plays Abigail Adams with me, and, of course, Jude Kalaora, who also performs here, plays Rachel Revere, and Michelle Gabrielson plays Mercy Otis Warren. In recent times, with the reenactments of great events and terrible events such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, pains have been made to include all of the people of Boston at that time, no matter what their station in life was, and it has made the programs better, because now we are now including all the people who lived there at that time.

Tegan 16:26

Yeah, I'm thinking back to what you said a few minutes ago about interpretation "making these people real for the visitors." It sounds like the greater diversity and accurate representation of who was in Boston at the time, the more real you're making it for the visitors.

Mike 16:41

Right! And it, it has come a long way since I've begun much like today. Not everyone wore a powdered wig and had fancy clothes and debated liberty. There were all sorts of people, all sorts of classes of people, from lawyers, down to shipwrights, to the enslaved. There were all sorts of people that lived in Boston at that time, so it would be unfair not to represent all of their points of view.

17:11

Yeah, absolutely. And that's a really interesting trend that has changed in the past few decades. Have you noticed any trends in what kind of programs organizations ask you to do?

Mike 17:22

Yes, when I first started, especially playing Paul Revere, my program here in the courtyard was always a half an hour. I always-- because I was still learning about him. I was...I focused mostly on his early years, leading up to the war, and then the war. And of course, I always finished with the Midnight Ride. But then I was asked by the Old South Meeting House, some years ago, as they were reinstalling a Revere Bell, to talk about Paul Revere and casting church bells. I've been asked again to speak of church bells, at places such as Westford Academy. I've been asked to talk about casting cannon. The recently-opened historical site in Canton, the Paul Revere Heritage Site, asked me to speak of the rolling of copper, which to me, has been an open door. And I've even been asked by the Masons to speak of Paul Revere in his Masonic experience, which was another good portion of education. And I gave a talk from my Historical Society, the Walpole Historical Society, of which my wife and I are on the board, of Paul Revere's military service, which is not, shall we say, the funnest part of his life to talk about...but it's important to do so because it was his military career that made his later industrial success. And it is that part of his life which I have found the most interesting in recent times, because there was so much that I did not know about him. I knew about the Midnight Ride. I knew he served during the war, and it was not very successful, and I knew that he had great success after the war with the casting of church bells and cannon and rolling of copper and all of that. But to actually study it and study the process of, processes of each, I have to admit, when I read Mr. Martello's book about it as as the first industrialist, that I was overwhelmed at first. I mean, what right do I have to talk about what it takes to cast a church bell, for instance. But with careful research and asking people who knew of such things, I've been able to be able to speak of that.

19:15

...And that book, Rob Martello's Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn, is so detailed and thorough, I imagine it would have been overwhelming at first to try to portray all that information.

Mike 20:00

It was. There were times where I thought my head was going to explode. But it was just a matter of not feeling the need to get into every single detail, but to be able to speak of it in broad strokes that people will find fascinating. And of course, you know, reading about the whole process itself and all of, all of its detail I found fascinating. The trick of something like that is to weave it into a story that teaches but is also fun to listen to. So it...there's a little bit of trick of talking about casting church bells and rolling copper, but it was an integral part of his life and made him an American success story, and has to be told. And thanks to Dr. Martello, because I'm not sure I could have told it without his book.

Tegan 20:51

I'd also like to ask if there are any changes or trends in what visitors have asked you, and I'm sure there are some, just based on what story you're telling. But have you noticed any other trends or differences?

Mike 21:03

Well, I can tell you, not so much as Paul Revere, but the one question that people ask a lot more than they ever used to is about where your historical figure stood on slavery.

Tegan 21:20

Oh, yeah.

Mike 21:22

I can tell you, as Paul Revere I never get asked that, because everyone presumes, and rightly, that he did not own slaves. He had apprentices that worked in his shop. John Adams did not own slaves either, although his father-in-law did. Both were very much against slavery. It's fairly easy for me to put it that way, that question is easy for me to answer. But not so much me, but I marvel at how others answer it, because I'm at John- The John F. Kennedy Library every President's Day, and I'm usually there with President Thomas Jefferson, played by Bill Barker, magnificently, and Fritz Klein, who plays Abraham Lincoln magnificently. And they are both pointedly asked the question about slavery, and they both answer it as fairly as they can as their character. The question is usually about us signing a Declaration of Independence or a Constitution with the institution of slavery, and it is the question that historical interpreters, at least in my experience, have had to grapple with more than they ever used to. In the past it was always just understood that it was there. But people today now ask "why?" and want to know why, and it's important to be able to answer it, and it also requires research. As John Adams, my answer is that I am very much against slavery, but we would not have been able to declare our independence without the southern states and winning the war of independence. So we were obliged, forced, whichever word you wish to use, to accept things as they were at the time and move on, knowing that in history, that it would come back to haunt later generations, which it did and and still does. But it's, it's an honesty that has to be there, because our country is filled with all sorts of people that want to know why those before us did what they did.

Tegan 23:27

Right.

Mike 23:28

And it is a question that generations have grappled with, and it started with our founding fathers having to form a country with that institution there. That is probably the most important question that we get asked that we never used to.

Tegan 23:44

Yeah.

Mike 23:44

...And the roles of women. The roles of women is very important. Of course, I'm very lucky to have two young ladies who play my significant others in Jude Kalaora and Audrey Stuck Gerard as Rachel Revere and Abigail Adams, and they both do a tremendous job -- and Michelle Gabrielson, who plays Mercy Otis Warren. And they bring to the forefront the fact that these women just did not sit at home and take care of the family and the farm or the house, that they had opinions and that they expressed them when they could. And some more than others, it's another question that I'm asked. Those are- because people want to know more about the family life and the times, as opposed to just the documents and the people themselves.

Tegan 24:36

Yeah, I think that the political life is kind of well covered in, you know, what people get in school and that sort of thing. And so I'm not surprised to hear that the people are looking to the informal education to hear more. And I wonder if, if some of the visitors are almost...not testing, but curious as to how you will handle the question when you are portraying a historical character and you're asking about something like slavery. I also wonder whether some people are sort of looking to hold Founding Fathers accountable in a way that we can't from here, but then you're in front of someone who's portraying one, and John Adams can say, you know, we could make the decision and move on, but there were people enslaved in his lifetime who were not able to move on, and it's just, I find it really interesting the, the role that you play in helping people today grapple with that history, because they are face to face with someone that they can't literally ever be face to face with.

Mike 25:35

Right, and that's why, when I'm asked...most specifically the question about slavery, I try to explain why the decision was then, but then I also remind them of what will happen in the future, but without coming out of my role and saying something that he would not have said.

Tegan 25:55

Right.

Mike 25:56

I think that is the point I try to make, more than any other: that these documents, such as the Constitution, and before it the Declaration of Independence, their beginnings. If they weren't beginnings, why would we create in the Constitution a need for amendments?

Tegan 26:14

Right.

Mike 26:14

So it's, it's an ongoing process.

Tegan 26:17

Yeah, absolutely. So one of the questions I had initially wanted to ask, and I think that you've in many ways answered it, is: "What is it like talking with members of the public as Paul Revere,



and do they feel comfortable interacting with you?" But it sounds like if they're asking you these tough questions, they do feel comfortable. Do you ever find situations where you have to kind of help people figure out how to interact with a historical character, or do people seem to just step right in?

Mike 26:43

Well, the one thing I've learned in doing this for so long is that every audience is different. There are audiences where it can be indoors, it could be outdoors, it could be a large group, it could be a small group, it can be children, it can be adults, and they all come at it from a different angle. I found in one instance, if I'm at a historical society, there comes a time where I have to cut off questions.

Tegan 27:11

Oh, yeah.

Mike 27:12

Of course, if it's a classroom...and we've all been there in school when the teacher is asking us to respond, and no one says a word...

Tegan 27:22

Right.

Mike 27:24

...It depends on the audience. Sometimes I don't have to worry about people asking questions, because their hands will immediately go up. Some require encouragement, and some don't.

Tegan 27:34

It sounds like a similar mix to someone who's presenting to a group about history, not in costume and not as a person, but it's really just...it kind of runs the gamut. Can you tell me about one or two of your favorite questions that people have asked you?

Mike 27:49

Well, one of my favorite questions to get with Paul Revere especially, is so much is known, has been studied about his Midnight Ride. I love it when someone asks me about his later life and all that he accomplished -- and that tends to be more a question I would get at a historical society -- specifics about his being a silversmith before the war, and then with his...all of his industrial work after the war, because it makes me think, it challenges me. And sometimes the best questions are the ones that I have to really think about, and then go home and double check my notes to make sure that I got it right. Those are the challenging ones, the ones that make you uncomfortable are a lot of times the best questions. Now on the other, one of the more humorous questions I get asked -- I guess I would call it a favorite question -- is to name each and every Revere child from one through 16.

Tegan 28:54

And can you do it?

Mike 28:56

Not without something in front of me. I can throw out some names, such as Paul Jr. and Joseph Warren and some of the girls such as Lucy. But I...without something in front of me, I could not go through every single name.

Tegan 29:12

I couldn't either. Yeah, Joseph Warren named for his friend. That one we we've got cemented, you know, Paul Jr, of course. But certainly there were a lot of them, and as was the custom at the time, some of the names were repeated, naming children after a dead older sibling. So you've got... you don't have 16 names to remember, but you've got an order of 16 to remember and that could be quite a lot.

Mike 29:34

I know, now my mind is working in overdrive. Okay, let's see Harriet and Joshua and John and...and when I've been asked that question, I will not necessarily throw them out in the order that they were born, but as they pop into my head, which I'm guessing the Reveres went through when they were alive, the names of all of their children.

Tegan 29:57

Yes, and I think many people from a large family, have the experience of being called "Joshua, Harriet, Paul..." before you get to the actual name, right?

Mike 30:06

Right. Francis, yes, yes, Mary, Um, um...John! And John is the last one, so he's, he's one of the easiest.

Tegan 30:15

I'd like to circle back quite a few topics here, just because it's been nagging in my mind, you mentioned that one of the early projects you worked on was working for a company that did historical reenactment or presentations for it sounded like it was corporate groups. What...What kind of corporate event has a historical reenactor? I've never been to that kind of event.

Mike 30:32

Yes. Well, it's, it's a funny story, because I was very excited to start doing it, and I expected a lot of interpretation and with with some exceptions. Now, this all started to take place in the late 90s and into the 2000s when there were a lot of conferences and conventions that were multiple days in Boston, and then, of course, with the recession and then a slight comeback, and then covid, it has struggled to come back to where it was. But it wasn't what I would call historical interpretation.

Tegan 31:11

Okay.

Mike 31:12

It was...I guess it was in a smaller sense. But we would go to a place, such as the top of the hub was one of the places we went to a great deal, and we would literally walk around their cocktail parties, and without breaking into the conversations, try to introduce ourselves as who we were playing, whether it was John Adams or Paul Revere, Dr. Warren, the town crier, more often than not, in those early days, just to have a short conversation with them, as they were, you know, talking to each other and networking, so to speak, and give them a very quick story. And then out would come the cameras for for for photo ops, and it would be for two hours or so. After a while, the conversation would drop off, and it would be a great deal of walking around and just nodding at them. And there were a number of those shows. And they were, they were enjoyable -- and I don't do as many of those as I used to -- and meeting people from all across the world.

Tegan 32:22

Yeah.

Mike 32:22

It was...I would call it light interpretation, because they were not looking for a half-an-hour talk.

Tegan 32:28

Right, you were mingling.

Mike 32:29

Mingling. Or sometimes I would play, usually Paul Revere, and I would open up one of these conventions where whoever was in charge of it, the president of the organization, would set up an opening speech that had much to do with their company, and would throw in some historical phrases where I would say something along the lines of "as on the night of April 18, when I got onto the back of my horse and rode to the countryside to alert the countryside, so and so does this today." And somehow I would try to weave the story of the Midnight Ride into whatever this corporation was trying to do.

Tegan 33:10

I see. So you're, you're bringing a bit of Boston to their, their convention, which is in Boston.

Mike 33:16

Right, right.

Tegan 33:17

And...yeah, yeah, that's fascinating.

Mike 33:19

It was very fascinating, and I met a lot of incredible people from all across the country and all across the world. But whenever I was doing one of those openers, I was always wondering, how are they going to try to weave the story of Paul Revere into whatever product they are selling?

Tegan 33:37

I can't...I...I'm fascinated to, to imagine what Paul Revere would have thought of portraying...being portrayed in this way. I mean, as a shrewd networker and businessman himself, I think he probably would have gotten a kick out of it. But it has to be strange.

Mike 33:54

It...it is very strange, and it's, it's funny you mentioned that, Tegan, because now, when I think about it...in those days, I would say "what??" but now I think, well, he, he did cast church bells and cannon, and he did roll copper. So in some strange way, this does sort of filter into what they're trying to do?

Tegan 34:19

Right. So one type of question that I think many visitors wish that they could ask first-person interpreters -- and whether that's a visitor to a museum or someone at these corporate events, perhaps -- is about the costumes and wigs. Where do you get them? Are they comfortable? What's...What's the deal with these costumes?

Mike 34:37

Right, well, that harkens to the question that we always get from spectators and tourists: "Are you hot in that?" Especially at this time of year, being July. And we use any number of answers. There is the answer that well, that, that is what they wore, and it's not as heavy as you think, and wool breathes all true. But more often than not, when someone asks me if I'm hot wearing that clothing on this 90 degree day, I will say yes, it is not natural in these times to wear a wool suit and a powdered wig on a 90 degree day. Or I will make a comment of the fact that I also have a linen suit which I wear, which I wish I had worn today. I find the clothing comfortable and not as uncomfortable as one would think on a hot day. It's just a matter of having done it for so many years that I've just grown accustomed to it, I guess would be the best way to put it. And the wonderful thing is that whatever you want to call it, historical interpretation, historical reenacting, there are people who do what I do, who make all of this clothing, who dress the wigs, who make the shoes, the stockings, all of the leather that goes into a military uniform and, and kit, as well as things that a civilian would wear...everything from hats down to shoes, is made by someone who is also in the historical interpretation world. So it's a matter of networking. The young lady who plays Abigail Adams with me, Audrey Stuck Gerard dresses and makes wigs. There are a couple of my fellow historical interpreters who have made the clothing that I wear. One is also a performer here, Henry Cook, and there's another young man who has done historical tours on the Freedom Trail and is a, an excellent reenactor named Tom Dietzel. Chris Cook made my Paul Revere clothing. There are all sorts of folks out there that make all of this clothing. There, there are people who make the hats, such as Matthew Brankel. It sounds like I'm trying to plug every one of my friends in historical interpretation, which I suppose I am. But there is someone who does what I do, who makes something that I wear...

Tegan 37:05

Yeah. That's very cool.

Mike 37:06

Everything I have was made by someone.

Tegan 37:08

Yeah. And I mean, that's always the case, but sometimes that someone is working in a factory, and that's not the case for the reenactment. And in fact, Henry Cook, one of the characters he portrays here at the Paul Revere House is a tailor, so he's showing off what it is that that they would have done at the time,

Mike 37:26

Absolutely. And they do the research. These people go back and read the first-hand primary sources of how this clothing was made, and they hand stitch it the way it was done then. From Henry Cook all the way through to all the others. It is amazing the research that my contemporaries put into what they do, whether it is what I do, which is talk, or whether they make the clothing or they portray the regiments that fielded in those times. I'm...I'm dazzled by my contemporaries, and I try very much to stay up with them in their research. And it's a labor of love, of course, otherwise I wouldn't have a house worth of books in an apartment.

Tegan 38:16

Right.

Mike 38:16

So it's just...there's someone that makes something that you need.

Tegan 38:20

Yeah, that's very cool. My impression is that the hobby is a very tight knit community, and I'm saying "the hobby" with a capital "H" that you on the- the podcast listeners can't hear the capital letter. But I understand that that's how a lot of kind of historical interpreters refer to it, whether for them, it is a hobby, or what we might call a side hustle, or the few who make a living at it. But my impression is that it's...the hobby is a very tight community.

Mike 38:48

And you know, there are various terms that are used for it: historical interpreter, historical reenactor, living historian, "the hobby," reenacting. I mean all of these terms. I mean some people like some terms better than others. None of them bother me.

Tegan 39:06

Yeah.

Mike 39:07

All I can tell you is, I love the people that I do this with.

Tegan 39:11

That's great, that's great. And I can tell by your, you know, naming all of these colleagues, and how much you respect one another, and all the work that goes into it, and all of the research. And certainly those of us at the Paul Revere House -- and other sites who are not doing it, but who are benefiting from, kind of, interpreting in tandem with people doing it first-person, you know -- we also have a lot of respect for that. So my last question for you is, if you could ask Paul Revere one question, what would it be?

Mike 39:38

Oh my, there's so many. As opposed to asking him, well, I don't need to ask him anything about his later life with industry, because Mr. Martello covers all of that. I would specifically ask, even though there are depositions about the Midnight Ride and his report to Jeremy Belknap, just the...not so much where he stopped and who he spoke to, but he himself. My one question would be "Paul Revere, what was it like that night? What was what was going through your mind? What was going through your mind when you met with Dr. Warren? What was going through your mind when you went home to get everything you needed to ride, meet with your friends, when you crossed the boat, spoke to the men in Charlestown, and went on on your ride - what was going through your mind? Most specifically the ride itself: What did it smell like? What did it look like? What did you hear? Who did you run into on the road? Did you run into anyone, or did you just see people at the places that you stopped? What was the tension like when you were captured? Were you worried before that about Mr. Dawes and where he was until he arrived, when you were meeting with Mr. Hancock and Mr. Adams? The capture, especially though, after that: what was it like to be in that meadow surrounded, pistols drawn and questions being answered? How huge was your sigh of relief when you were released?

Tegan 39:52

Yeah.

Mike 39:56

And then how mad were you when you returned to the parsonage of Reverend Clark had saw that Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock were still there! What was going through your mind and your senses that night? That would be my question.

Tegan 41:30

Yeah, I think that's an excellent question to end the interview on today. Thank you so much, Mike for talking with us today. This has been really informative, and I know that visitors will see you around as Paul Revere.

Mike 41:43

Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here today.

Tegan 41:52

We just heard from Mike LePage who portrays Paul Revere at the Revere House and elsewhere. Now, listeners, if you'll follow me, we'll step into the Paul Revere House for our next segment, our favorite questions.

Derek 42:08

Welcome to our little weekly podcast segment. Can you tell us your name and what you do here at the Paul Revere house?

Adam 42:15

My name is Adam. I'm one of our historical interpreters on site.

Derek 42:18

How long have you been here for?

Adam 42:20

Oh, about a year and a half.

Derek 42:22

Ooh, so a pretty long time! Much longer than I've been here. And so today we're going to talk about kind of our experiences as interpreters. You know, we see a lot of guests throughout the day, and so we have a lot of fun stories. Adam, if you could tell me what are some of your favorite questions that people ask you pretty regularly?

Adam 42:39

One of my absolute favorite questions usually comes from kids, also often from parents, when their kids are too scared to ask, and that's "Where's the bathroom?" This is pretty much the only...what we consider a major room in the house that's not visible anywhere. And it's a great question, because sanitation and bathing, those are all parts of everyday life, and something we really take for granted. A lot of our visitors come in and seem even shocked at the idea of not having indoor plumbing, even though, you know, most of our grandparents would have not necessarily had that, depending where in the country they lived. So when I have someone asking me about the bathroom, I like to talk to them about it in two parts. Depends a bit on what room we're in. If we're in the back chamber, the children's room, what I usually start by talking about the actual toileting, because there I can point outside, I can show them where in the back garden the privy would have probably been.

Derek 43:32

A fancy name.

Adam 43:33

Uh-huh. I explain it's the polite name for an outhouse.

Derek 43:35

Right.

Adam 43:36

And then I point under the bed and showed them the chamber pot. Explained that's for emergency or nighttime use, how you dump it out in the privy again in the morning. Depending on how receptive and attentive the crowd is, I think that's often a fun time to introduce Paul Revere's post-war civic jobs.

Derek 43:53

Right, very important!

Adam 43:53

He had-...people get a big chuckle out of his being in charge of the health board and licensing the sanitation workers, right?

Derek 44:01

Right. Yeah. I mean, he was definitely concerned about, I'm sure, the very smelly Boston at the time, and making sure that it was pretty clean. Yeah, it's always a big reaction. Whenever you talk about the chamber pot. People are always, like, a little disturbed, I think.

Adam 44:16

Right, and a lot of people come in with misconceptions about what urban sanitation was like, people saying "oh, then they dump it out the window." No, we had miasma theory. We knew that smelly stuff is bad for you in the 1700s.

Derek 44:29

It's definitely bad for you.

Adam 44:31

My favorite adult question though, that I've been getting a lot lately...often it's downstairs in the hall where we talk about the wealthy family who first owned the house, then how later it passed more into Boston's artisan middle class people ask, "So did it become a lower class neighborhood?", "Did the merchants move somewhere else?," questions like that. And I love taking that opportunity to challenge people's preconceptions they come in with about the way that American cities work. A lot of people take for granted that different social classes live in different places, that our cities have always been somewhat segregated along those lines. But I always take that opportunity to explain that before industrialization, that wasn't the norm. All kinds of people all lived close to each other. I point out that when Revere lived here just a block away, there was the governor...

Derek 45:21

Right.

Adam 45:21

...representing the king. Everything was always a mixed class neighborhood. And a lot of people, because they don't think much about a pre-industrial world, doesn't occur to them, and that they always walk away, I can tell, thinking a little harder about the space around them.



Derek 45:35

Right, exactly! I feel like the North End has such a complicated and like, interesting history of so many kinds of people. And so, you know, there's a lot of questions that we ask. Those are some really good ones. Has there ever been a specific favorite question you've ever been asked? Anything that stands out?

Adam 45:52

One of my favorite question-memories is less about the question itself and more about how the person asked it. People ask a lot "What happened to the kids? How come some of them die very young?" Of course, that's always a conversation about things like antibiotics, medicine, the normality of a very high infant mortality rate in the 18th Century. But there was a child who walked up to me several weeks ago, and the way she asked it stood out to me. She said, "Why did only 11 of the children live to adulthood?" And what I really appreciated that is it's showing curiosity, not just....I mean, it is about why people die, but it was framed in a very different way than most people ask. It's...it's thinking more about the potential all the children had to eventually become adults.

Derek 46:44

Right. Yeah, I mean, I think it's something that I always try to bring up is just how many children Revere had. I mean, 16 to us is a lot of children...

Adam 46:52

Yes.

Derek 46:52

...but I think people are always pretty shocked that, you know, only 11 of them made it. And even by the end of his life, most of his children were dead, right? It's only five of them that actually out-survived Paul Revere himself. And he did live, you know, an uncommonly long time. But you know, it is, it is pretty shocking to think about how frequent death would be occurring at this time period.

Adam 47:13

And and I do find it helpful to bring up death whenever it's appropriate, because death is part of the everyday 18th Century landscape, in a way, it isn't for us today.

Derek 47:24

Right.

Adam 47:24

For example, I sometimes mention that Paul's first wife, Sarah Revere, would have died somewhere in the house.

Derek 47:32

Yeah, I mean, I'm sure a lot of people have died somewhere in that house! But definitely during Revere's lifetime, he would have been experiencing death almost, y'know, constantly, I feel. Or at least...

Adam 47:41

Yeah, yeah.

Derek 47:41

...pretty frequently. And so to close this out, what are some questions that you wish visitors asked you more? Like, what are some things that you really want to talk about but you just don't find, you know, people ask you all the time?

Adam 47:51

Well, of course, people come to the Paul Revere House for Paul Revere, right? And I love talking about Paul Revere and interpreting his life and his role in the revolution. But I think one of the greatest strengths of our site -- I think we recognized this all the way back in 1908 when we opened up shop -- is the fact that it's a 17th Century house, the fact that is a First Period home, that the very Early Modern merchant class lived in it. I wish I got more opportunities to talk about how the house is an example of the world becoming globally connected for the first time. That the 17th Century, Atlantic World system...it's connecting China and India and the Caribbean and Africa and Europe, and Boston plays a big role in all of that. But commonly, people aren't looking for that kind of story when they walk in and I wish I got more chances to show them this house actually has an important place in world history.

Derek 48:45

Absolutely! I mean, I feel like the house itself is something to go for, you know, to this museum, because it really has seen almost every stage of the city's history. I mean, it's really been there for a very, very long time. Well, thank you, Adam, for talking with me. You have a wealth of information. I'm glad you shared some of it with us. Yeah, thanks for coming.

Adam 49:04

Thanks for interviewing me.

Tegan 49:14

Thank you for tuning in to Revere House Radio. I'm your host, Tegan Kehoe, and I am the research and adult program director here at the Paul Revere House. Our production team for this season includes Derek Hunter, Tyler McDonald, Katie Stefani, Gabe Queeley And Adrienne Turnbull Riley. Revere House Radio is a production of the Paul Revere Memorial Association, the nonprofit which operates the Paul Revere House Museum. You can find more information, subscribe to our mailing list or social media, or become a member on our website at [www.paulreverehouse.org](http://www.paulreverehouse.org) or come visit us in Boston.