

***On the Wild Frontier of Pennsylvania in 1754, Three Great Cultures Clashed
and a Young Officer Named George Washington
Learned the Bitter Lessons of War***

**WQED Multimedia Launches Production On
THE WAR THAT MADE AMERICA**

**Four-Hour Public Television Event is a Centerpiece of
250th Anniversary Commemoration of the French and Indian War**

What if the French had won? Almost 250 years ago, French and English armies clashed in the primeval forest of western Pennsylvania as they struggled to control the most important piece of real estate in 18th century North America. The army that controlled the forks of the Ohio, a confluence of mighty rivers that would one day become Pittsburgh, held the gateway to the entire continent. Native Americans boldly tried to manipulate the balance of military power between the English and the French. It was the French and Indian War, and an inexperienced Virginian soldier named George Washington, serving under the British flag, learned battle-scarred lessons that would indelibly shape his life.

Overshadowed in the American consciousness by the Revolutionary War that followed two decades later, it was the French and Indian War that rooted America's destiny as an independent nation. Historians argue it was truly the war that made America, the defining conflict of the 18th century. ***The War That Made America, an unprecedented four-hour television series targeted for broadcast in Fall, 2005,*** is history that has been waiting to be told about a poorly understood – but vastly important – period of American history. The television series is the result of a unique collaboration between WQED Multimedia, Pittsburgh's public broadcasting station, and French and Indian War 250, Inc., a public-private partnership formed to spearhead a national commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the war and develop heritage tourism in southwestern Pennsylvania. French and Indian War 250, Inc. (formerly known as the War for Empire, Inc.) is a co-producer of the series. The story of the French and Indian War has never been told on television before, and this series is expected to awaken new

interest in this history both among American audiences and around the world when the broadcast rights are sold internationally.

Combining feature film techniques with meticulous documentary accuracy, ***The War That Made America*** is embracing a new style of dramatized documentary. It will have the viewer appeal of a feature film, but the authenticity of an historical documentary. Shot in high definition video, the production will include a cast that is rigorously trained to work and fight in true 18th century style. Everything from forts to horse tack, Indian dwellings to trading posts, will be exactly recreated to provide an accurate picture of life in the mid-18th century and an authentic context for the unfolding historical story.

The War That Made America will be largely produced in Pittsburgh and the adjacent countryside of southwestern Pennsylvania, drawing on local businesses and regional talent for most aspects of the project. “***The War That Made America*** is exactly the kind of national television series that reflects WQED Multimedia’s mission,” says George L. Miles, Jr., President and CEO of WQED Multimedia. “It enables us to tell the nationally-significant history of our region to television audiences around the world while we make an immediate impact on our community as we pump millions of dollars into the local economy. Especially now, as Pittsburgh is working to revitalize its film industry, we are pleased that WQED can provide leadership, jobs, and training to contribute to this progress.”

By bringing the unfamiliar history of the French and Indian War to the attention of national audiences, ***The War That Made America*** is also expected to support the growth of heritage tourism, with all its economic benefits. “Heritage tourism is the fastest growing sector of vacation travel. This film will illuminate the riveting story of the French and Indian War and create an appetite to see the actual places where this crucial American history occurred,” says Laura Fisher, who heads up French and Indian War 250, Inc. “We expect our historical sites in southwestern Pennsylvania, along with other key French and Indian War locations in a dozen other states, to take their place beside such attractions as Mount Vernon, Williamsburg, the Liberty Bell and Plymouth Rock on the Colonial America heritage tourism trail that attracts millions of visitors annually.”

The film is the hub of a comprehensive multimedia project. A robust Web site on pbs.org will be the primary portal for information on the French and Indian War on the Internet. A companion book for the television series will be written by author and historian Fred Anderson. His highly-acclaimed book *Crucible of War*, which was

recognized with the prestigious Parkman Prize from the Society of American Historians as the best American history book published in 2001, has already contributed to a surge of interest in this seminal period in American history. WQED Multimedia is also producing innovative curriculum components for middle and high school students and planning an extensive outreach campaign targeting tourism organizations, historical societies and groups, libraries and museums to engage the public in a fuller understanding of this important chapter in America's story.

"The public has never had the opportunity to see a television series on the French and Indian War, and our goal is for ***The War That Made America*** to significantly reframe how early American history is understood," says Deborah Acklin, Senior Vice President of Production and Technology at WQED Multimedia. "This project will offer a broad range of multimedia extensions to give the public, as well as teachers and students, insight into the fascinating characters, the tremendous physical challenges, the complex politics and the high stakes that are all part of the story."

Casting for ***The War That Made America*** will draw from the regional talent pool, and local professionals will help fill key production functions from lighting and sound, to set design and dressing, to make-up and wardrobe. Regional vendors will be tapped for all the ancillary services that a production requires from catering to lodging. Filming locally where much of this history happened is not only part of the station's commitment to authenticity, it is an essential part of WQED Multimedia's strategy to make its production projects an economic engine in the region. "The French and Indian War started in our backyard," says Series Producer Lynne Squilla, who has lived overlooking the historic forks of the Ohio River for over fifteen years. "It's a wonderful opportunity to be able to tell this pivotal story in American history to the rest of the world and bring attention to the historic sites here in the region."

The French and Indian War is not as familiar to many Americans as the Revolutionary War, but distinguished history professors including Fred Anderson of the University of Colorado in Boulder, John Murrin of Princeton University and Daniel Richter of the University of Pennsylvania who are among the historians advising the project, believe that it laid the essential foundation for the formation of both the American nation and the American character. Recent scholarship has also shed light on the important role that Native Americans played at the time as active agents driving the historical developments. Filmmakers Eric Stange and Ben Loeterman are tackling the challenge of bringing this compelling and complex story to life by pushing the envelope of the

dramatized documentary genre. Stange explains, "If this history were easy to tell, it would have been done before on television. We are creating a new synthesis by combining the research skills and attention to historical detail of the documentary filmmaker with the techniques and narrative power of drama."

The mid-18th century frontier was a pre-photographic world that has left few physical traces, but a rich trove of journals, documents and other accounts are a vital resource the filmmakers are mining for both drama and realism. "We have been shaping characters and weaving together a vibrant narrative by creating a script with dialogue that is drawn directly from these original sources," says Loeterman.

Slated for broadcast in Fall, 2005, the series will premiere during the second year of the national commemoration of the French and Indian War, which gets underway in 2004 and will continue through 2010. Substantial public and private funding has already been committed for major site improvements and special programming at a number of French and Indian War locations in Southwestern Pennsylvania that will enhance the visitor experience and accommodate the growing numbers of tourists that the national commemoration is expected to attract.

A production Web site for ***The War That Made America*** has launched at www.thewarthatmadeamerica.org providing additional information on the project for media and the large number of historical societies, educators, museums, historians and others who are focused on the French and Indian War, the resources the multimedia project will provide, and the impact the film will have on public awareness of this pivotal history.

Funders to date for ***The War That Made America*** project include the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Eden Hall Foundation, the Heinz Endowments, the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, the Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation, the Laurel Foundation, the Grable Foundation, the McCune Foundation, and The Pittsburgh Foundation.

The War That Made America is a co-production of War That Made America Productions LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of WQED Multimedia, and French and Indian War 250, Inc. (formerly War For Empire, Inc.) in association with Spypond Productions, Inc. and Ben Loeterman Productions, Inc. Executive producers: Deborah Acklin for War That Made America Productions LLC and Laura Fisher for French and Indian War 250, Inc.; Series producer: Lynne Squilla; Written, produced and directed by:

Eric Stange of Spypond Productions, Inc. and Ben Loeterman of Ben Loeterman Productions, Inc.

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ABOUT WQED Multimedia

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2004, the nation's first community public broadcaster has been Southwestern Pennsylvania's multimedia equivalent of the concert hall, the theater, the schoolhouse and the public library. Through public television, FM radio, regional PITTSBURGH magazine, its web site and Education Resource Center, WQED is a treasured local and national resource. WQED also has a proud tradition as a producer for national public television audiences. Family Communications, Inc. has produced Mister Rogers Neighborhood at WQED since 1968. WQED exports the region nationally with television projects that fall under the umbrella title of "Telling America's Stories." These projects include All-American Documentaries, America's Home Cooking and American Soundtrack.

ABOUT FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR 250, INC.

French and Indian War 250, Inc., is a non-profit formed by a consortium of regional partners in southwestern Pennsylvania to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the conflict. Originally called the War for Empire Consortium, a name that referenced the goal of France and England to establish their supremacy in North America, the effort is now incorporated as French and Indian War 250, Inc. to identify more closely with the commemoration of the event. What was a regional initiative is currently expanding into a national commemoration embracing the six other states where the French and Indian War unfolded, including Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

The national broadcast of this dramatized documentary is expected to energize heritage tourism to important French and Indian War sites in Pittsburgh and its countryside, as well as to historic sites in other states. French and Indian War 250, Inc. has raised significant philanthropic, government and corporate funding to preserve and improve the visitor experience at the heritage sites in Pittsburgh and environs and to support commemorative programming at these locations. It is also seeking federal funding for commemorative activities and services that will benefit all French and Indian War sites.

Learn more at www.frenchandindianwar250.com