

**NEW PBS DOCUMENTARY “THE WAR OF 1812”
EXPLORES THE TRUTH AND MYTHMAKING OF HISTORY**

— *Television Program Presents American, Canadian, British and Native*

Perspectives, Leading the Way of Bicentennial Activities, Airst October 10 —

WASHINGTON, D.C. and BUFFALO, NY — Nearly two centuries after it was fought, the two-and-a-half year conflict that forged the destiny of a continent comes to public television in a comprehensive film history. “The War of 1812” airs on PBS stations nationwide on **Monday, October 10, 2011 at 9 p.m. ET** (check local listings). From 1812 to 1815, Americans battled against the British, Canadian colonists, and Native warriors; the outcomes shaped the geography and the identity of North America. This two-hour HD documentary uses stunning re-enactments, evocative animation, and the incisive commentary of key experts to reveal little-known sides of an important war — one that some only recognize for the “Star-Spangled Banner.” The broadcast is accompanied by a companion book and website, as well as comprehensive bi-national educational resources.

Across the United States and Canada, communities are planning events to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812. “We have proudly created ‘The War of 1812’ for both nations,” said Donald K. Boswell, president and CEO of WNED, the producing station of the program. Broadcasting from Buffalo, New York, WNED has significant viewership in Southern Ontario. “This timely examination of a shared history allows us to celebrate our past together, and renew the bond of our present and future as national neighbors. With this production, WNED also continues a tradition of showcasing cultural and historical treasures of our bi-national region to the PBS audience.” WNED is one of fourteen public broadcasting stations that share a border with Canada, extending the national broadcast of “The War of 1812” throughout the United States into many Canadian communities.

“WETA is pleased to join WNED in bringing this important project to all viewers,” noted Sharon Percy Rockefeller, president and CEO of WETA, the flagship public broadcasting stations in the nation’s capital and a partner in the project. “It is an excellent example of the intellectual integrity and cultural merit for which public broadcasting stands.”

The War of 1812 is a celebrated event by Canadians, forgotten by many Americans and British, and dealt a resounding blow to most of the Native nations involved. The film is in many ways an examination of how the mythical versions of history are formed — how the glories of war become enshrined in memory, how failures are quickly forgotten, and how inconvenient truths are ignored forever, while we often change history to justify and celebrate our national cultures and heritage.

“The War of 1812” explores the events leading up to the conflict, the multifold causes of the war, and the questions that emerged about the way a new democracy should conduct war. It was a surprisingly wide war. Dozens of battles were fought on land in Canada and in the northern, western, southern and eastern parts of the United States — in the present-day states of Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, New York, Maryland, Louisiana, and Alabama. There were crucial naval battles on Lakes Erie and Champlain, and a wide-ranging maritime struggle with many episodes off Virginia, Massachusetts, Nova Scotia, Cuba, Ireland, the Azores, the Canaries, British Guyana,

and Brazil. The U.S. proved surprisingly successful against the great British navy, but the War of 1812 also saw American armies surrender en masse and the American capital burned.

Great characters emerge in the film, including **Tecumseh** of the Shawnee nation, who attempted to form a confederation of Native nations, and died in battle; his adversary, **William Henry Harrison**, Governor of the Indiana Territory, whose debatable success at Tippecanoe, Indiana eventually helped him become President of the United States; **James Madison**, Father of the U.S. Constitution, a brilliant thinker and writer who was not a great President; and such storied Canadian figures as **Canadian Governor-General George Prévost**, who led the largest army ever to invade the Continental United States; **Laura Secord**, a Canadian woman who walked many miles to warn the British of an impending American attack; and **Major General Isaac Brock**, a brave and audacious British general who captured a large American army at Detroit without a fight. The film also recounts dramatic human stories of ordinary citizens, the political alliances of the various Native Americans nations, and the African-American slaves who reached for their freedom by fighting for the British.

“The War of 1812” recollects defining moments that are more familiar: the burning of Washington, D.C., and First Lady Dolley Madison’s rescue of a portrait of George Washington from the White House; Andrew Jackson’s total victory at the Battle of New Orleans; and the birth of the American national anthem, penned by Francis Scott Key during the Battle of Baltimore at Fort McHenry. Yet “The War of 1812” pierces the heroic mythology that has grown up around the war to reveal a brutal, spiteful conflict dominated by fiascos and blunders.

The war shaped North America in the most literal way possible: had one or two battles or decisions gone a different way, a map of the continent today might look entirely different. The U.S. could well have included parts of Canada — but was also on the verge of losing much of the Midwest. The New England states, meanwhile, were poised on the brink of secession just months before a peace treaty was signed. However, the U.S. and Canada ultimately each gained a sense of nationalism from the conflict, while the result tolled the end of Native American dreams of a separate nation.

Interviews with twenty-six leading authorities on the War of 1812 — American, British, Canadian and Native historians — present important accounts and research, including from the following individuals:

- **Donald R. Hickey**, professor of history at Wayne State College, Wayne, Nebraska.~ He is the author of *Don't Give Up the Ship!: Myths of the War of 1812* and *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*.
- **Peter Twist**, the Canadian director of Military Heritage, a historical military uniform and arms supply company.~ He has served as consultant on numerous film and theater projects, and is an expert on the military history of the War of 1812.
- **Donald Fixico**, a Shawnee Native American, is the Distinguished Foundation Professor of History at Arizona State University, and author of *Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts and Sovereignty* and *Rethinking American Indian History*.
- **Sir Christopher Gerald Prevost**, great-great-great-grandson to George Prévost, Governor-in-Chief of British North America during the War of 1812.~ He is co-author of *The Incredible War of 1812: A Military History*.

A complete list of those interviewed is available in the project's electronic press kit.

The film's companion book, *The War of 1812: A Guide to Battlefields and Historic Sites*, by John Grant and Ray Jones, is illustrated with more than 120 color photographs and archival paintings. Each chapter focuses on one of several distinct theaters of the war, allowing the reader to follow the course of events and their importance to the war as a whole. Jones is the author of more than 40 books, including several highly successful companion books for PBS, among them *Legendary Lighthouses*. Grant is the executive producer of "The War of 1812" and chief content officer for WNED Buffalo/Toronto; he has also produced for PBS "Window to the Sea", "The Marines" and "Chautauqua: An American Narrative."

The project is also accompanied by a rich bi-national education and outreach component. It includes Educator's Guides with lesson plans, activities, and a host of educational-based resources designed for the United States and Canada, classroom posters, and several instructional events. Expansive educational resources will also be found on the full companion website to the television documentary at pbs.org. The full site will launch in early September with features such as a battlefield map and guide, web-only video features, scholar essays, and links to key 1812 sites on both sides of the border.

For more information about "The War of 1812," including details on how to purchase the DVD and companion book, visit www.pbs.org/war-of-1812. An electronic press kit, including downloadable photos for promotional use, is available at pressroom.pbs.org.

"The War of 1812" is a production of WNED-TV, Buffalo/Toronto and Florentine Films/Hott Productions Inc., in association with WETA Washington, D.C. The executive producers are John Grant and David Rotterman for WNED, and Dalton Delan and Karen Kenton for WETA. Produced by Lawrence Hott and Diane Garey of Florentine Films/Hott Productions Inc. Directed by Lawrence Hott. Written by Ken Chowder. Narrated by Joe Mantegna. Principal Cinematography by Stephen McCarthy. Production Design by Peter Twist. "The War of 1812" has been made possible by a major grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities: Because democracy demands wisdom*. With funding provided by The Wilson Foundation, Warren and Barbara Goldring, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting: a private corporation funded by the American people, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations: Dedicated to strengthening America's future through education, Phil Lind and The Annenberg Foundation. With additional support from The Baird Foundation, the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission and Jackman Foundation. *Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

WNED-TV is a leading producer of single-topic documentary programming for national broadcast on PBS including "Chautauqua: An American Narrative," "Elbert Hubbard: An American Original," "The Adirondacks," "Niagara Falls," "The Marines," "Window to the Sea," "Frank Lloyd Wright's Buffalo" and "America's Houses of Worship." Also in development are films on the Underground Railroad and the history of golf course architecture in America. More information on WNED and its programs and services is available at www.wned.org.

WETA Washington, D.C., is the third-largest producing station for public television. WETA's other productions and co-productions include "Washington Week with Gwen Ifill and

National Journal,” the arts series “In Performance at the White House” and “The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize,” and documentaries by filmmaker Ken Burns, including the premiere this fall of “Prohibition.” More information on WETA and its programs and services is available at www.weta.org.

Florentine Films/Hott Productions Inc. is the production company of Lawrence Hott and Diane Garey, who have worked together since 1978. They are part of the Florentine Films group. Hott and Garey have received an Emmy Award, two Academy Award nominations, five American Film Festival Blue Ribbons, fourteen CINE Golden Eagles, a George Foster Peabody Award, the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, the Erik Barnouw Award.~~Their work has been shown on PBS and screened at dozens of major film festivals, including the New York Film Festival, Telluride, Mountainfilm, and Women in the Director’s Chair.~ More information is available at www.florentinefilms.org.