



AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Presents *Panama Canal*

New Film Documents the Human Drama behind the Creation of One of the Wonders of the Modern World

Premieres Monday, January 24, 2011
9:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m. ET on PBS

On August 15th, 1914, the Panama Canal opened, connecting the world's two largest oceans and signaling America's emergence as a global superpower. American ingenuity and innovation had succeeded where, just a few years earlier, the French had failed disastrously. But the U.S. paid a price for victory: more than a decade of ceaseless, grinding toil, an outlay of more than 350 million dollars -- the largest single federal expenditure in history to that time -- and the loss of more than 5,000 lives. Along the way, Central America witnessed the brazen overthrow of a sovereign government, the influx of over 55,000 workers from around the globe, the removal of hundreds of millions of tons of earth, and engineering innovation on an unprecedented scale. The construction of the Canal was the epitome of man's mastery over nature and signaled the beginning of America's domination of world affairs. Directed by Stephen Ives (*The West, Seabiscuit, Roads to Memphis*), **Panama Canal** will premiere on the PBS series **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE** on Monday, January 24, 2011 at 9:00 PM (check local listings.)

The story of the Canal features a fascinating cast of colorful characters ranging from the indomitable Theodore Roosevelt, who saw the Canal as the embodiment of American might and ingenuity, to Col. William Gorgas, an army doctor who instituted a revolutionary public health campaign that all but eradicated Yellow Fever, to the visionary engineers who solved the seemingly impossible problem of cutting a 50 mile long slice through mountains and jungle. The film also delves into the lives of the thousands of workers, rigidly segregated by race, who left their homes to sign on for an unprecedented adventure. In the Canal zone, skilled positions were reserved for white workers while a predominantly West Indian workforce did the backbreaking manual labor, cutting brush, digging ditches and loading and unloading equipment and supplies. Using an extraordinary archive of photographs and footage, rare interviews with canal workers, and first hand accounts of life in the Canal zone, director Stephen Ives and

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producer Amanda Pollak unravel the remarkable story of one of the world's most daring and significant technological achievements.

About the Participants

Frederick E. Allen is the Leadership Editor of *Forbes*. He was previously a senior editor of *Forbes Magazine*, managing editor of *American Heritage* and the editor of the quarterly *Invention & Technology*.

Edward Tenner is an independent writer, speaker, and consultant on technology and culture. His book *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* has been an international bestseller. His most recent book is *Our Own Devices: The Past and Future of Body Technology*.

Carol R. Byerly teaches history at the University of Colorado and is a scholar of military medical history; she is the author of *Fever of War: The Influenza Epidemic in the U.S. Army during World War I*.

Matthew Parker was born in Central America and is the author of *Panama Fever: The Battle to Build the Canal*.

Ovidio Diaz Espino is a Panama-born writer and lawyer and the author of *How Wall Street Created a Nation - J. P. Morgan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Panama Canal*.

T.J. Jackson Lears is the Board of Governors Professor of History at Rutgers University and author of *Rebirth Of A Nation, The Making Of Modern America, 1877-1920*.

Walter LaFeber is an award-winning author and historian and retired professor of history, Cornell University. His many books include *The American Century: A History of the United States Since the 1890s*.

Dr. Marco A. Mason is a Panama-born scholar/activist. He is the Chairman/CEO of the Panamanian Council of New York Inc.

Julie Greene is a labor historian at the University of Maryland and author of *The Canal Builders: Making America's Panama Canal*.

William Daniel Donadio is a descendent of a canal worker.

Dr. Carlos E. Russell, a native of Panama, is Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College where he served as Dean of the School of Contemporary Studies, Chairman of the Department of Educational Services, and Director of the SEEK program.

John W. Bowen - canal worker.

Egbert C. Leslie - canal worker.

Granville Clarke - canal worker.

Eustace Tabois - canal worker.

The Panama Canal By the Numbers

56,307	Total number of workers employed between 1904 and 1913
11,873	Europeans
31,071	West Indians
11,000	Americans
69	Unclassified
5,609	Number of people who died of diseases and accidents during the U.S. construction period
4,300	Number of West Indian fatalities
350	Number of white American fatalities
375,000,000	Approximate total cost in dollars of the Panama Canal
40,000,000	Dollars paid to French Canal Company for the rights to the Canal.
10,000,000	Dollars paid to Panama
30,000,000	Cubic yards of material excavated by the French
238,845,587	Cubic yards of material excavated during the U.S. construction period
268,000,000	Total Cubic yards of excavated material (3x excavated from the Suez Canal)
50	Length of the Panama Canal in miles
8 to 10	Average number of hours for ship to traverse the Panama Canal

About the Filmmakers

STEPHEN IVES (Producer/Director)

In his twenty years of work in public television, Stephen Ives has established himself as one of the nation's leading independent documentary directors. His landmark series *The*

West was seen by more than 38 million people nationwide during its national PBS premiere in the fall of 1996, making it one of the most watched PBS programs of all time. Caryn James of the New York Times wrote that *The West* was "fiercely and brilliantly rooted in fact," and The New York Daily News called the programs a "breathtakingly beautiful series of films. . . that make riveting TV." Ives' documentary film *Lindbergh*, a portrait of the reluctant American hero Charles A. Lindbergh, premiered the third season of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE on PBS in 1990. In 1987, Ives began a decade-long collaboration with filmmaker Ken Burns, as a co-producer of a history of the United States Congress, and as a consulting producer on the groundbreaking series, *The Civil War* and *Baseball*.

After the premiere of *The West*, Ives turned his attention towards contemporary films, producing a profile of the innovative Cornerstone Theater Company, which aired on HBO in the fall of 1999, and *Amato: A Love Affair with Opera*, a portrait of the world's smallest opera company which aired nationally on PBS in 2001 and earned Ives a nomination from The Director's Guild of America for Outstanding Directorial Achievement.

His profile of the 1930's thoroughbred *Seabiscuit*, which aired on AMERICAN EXPERIENCE in April 2003, won a prime-time Emmy award, and his PBS series, *Reporting America at War*, about American war correspondents, was described by the Los Angeles Times as "television that matters...a visual document of power and clarity."

Since 2003, he has directed five films for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: *Seabiscuit*, *Las Vegas*, *New Orleans*, *Kit Carson*, and *Roads to Memphis*.

MARK SAMELS (Executive Producer) was named to lead PBS's flagship history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, in 2003 after serving as senior producer since 1997. Produced by WGBH/Boston, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is television's most-watched and longest running history series, and the recipient of every major industry award, including the Peabody, Primetime Emmy, Writers Guild and duPont-Columbia Journalism Award. Numerous films for the series have been recognized at major film festivals, including Sundance, and eight have been nominated for Academy Awards®. Prior to joining WGBH, Samels worked as an independent documentary filmmaker, an executive producer for several U.S. public television stations and as a producer for the first co-production between Japanese and American television. A native of Wisconsin, he is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Television's most-watched history series, **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE** has been hailed as "peerless" (*Wall Street Journal*), "the most consistently enriching program on television" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "a beacon of intelligence and purpose" (*Houston Chronicle*). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America's past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE** documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including twenty-seven Emmy Awards, four duPont-Columbia Awards, and fourteen George Foster Peabody Awards, one most recently for *Two Days in October*.

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