



PBS

**PBS ANNOUNCES “SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE”
New Documentary Goes Behind the Glittering Facades to Discover What
Life Was Really Like in the Great Houses of Edwardian England**

– Premiering Sunday, January 22, 2012 at 8 p.m. on PBS –



Dunham Massey House, Cheshire

Credit: Susannah Ward

ARLINGTON, VA – JANUARY 11, 2012 — PBS announced today that **SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE** will premiere on January 22, 2012 at 8:00 p.m. ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)) and will stream in its entirety beginning January 23 on video.pbs.org. A fascinating glimpse of life behind the velvet curtains, **SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE** goes inside the great homes of Edwardian England, recently brought to life on PBS’ **MASTERPIECE**. One hundred years ago the British manor house was in its heyday, sheltering families of enormous wealth and privilege within its stately walls. But what was really going on behind closed doors, where these wealthy families and their poor servants coexisted? Shot on location

at some of Britain’s finest estates and country houses and featuring interviews with contemporary masters and the servants, **SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE** reveals that life in the manor house was a world unchanged for almost a thousand years. By the time the 20th century entered its second decade, mounting financial, political and social pressures would alter the world of the Edwardian aristocrat forever.

“**SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE** allows viewers to delve deeper and understand the history and context behind costume dramas that **MASTERPIECE** has made famous on PBS,” said Beth Hoppe, PBS vice president of programming. “This new special gives viewers an enriched understanding of the historical circumstances that shaped the fictional characters they love.”

SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE goes inside two of Britain’s most legendary manor houses, Manderston in Berwickshire and Dunham Massey, former home of the Earl of Stamford. During the Edwardian era, behind the facades of these great houses, a hidden army of up to 300 servants tended to every need of an aristocratic family. In 1901, there were more than 1.5 million servants in Britain and grand estates occupied half the land. The tradition of primogeniture insured that they were handed down to the first-born son. Land was power and wealth, and not only did the first-born son inherit the land, he inherited the title of earl, marquess or duke, and the political power that accompanied it. And like their masters, the serving classes in the great manor houses also adhered to a well-defined ranking system.

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SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE features some of the premiere historians of the Edwardian era, including Lawrence James (*The Illustrated Rise and Fall of the British Empire.*) As he and others explain, by Edwardian times, the agricultural revenues of the great country estates were dwindling. With the Industrial Revolution, wealth began moving away from agriculture and into manufacturing and banking. While the easiest solution would have been to sell some of their land, the practice of entailment demanded that estates be passed on intact. Many aristocrats, finding themselves in need of cash, married rich American heiresses in a trend that was quietly called “cash for titles.” As historian Dr. Elisabeth Kehoe (*Fortune’s Daughters: The Extravagant Lives of the Jerome Sisters*) recounts, among the many American heiresses who married into the aristocracy was Jennie Jerome, who wed the second son of the Duke of Marlborough and was mother to Winston Churchill.

Rumblings of change were also coming from below stairs. Those who served the lords and ladies led backbreaking lives of non-stop work for little pay and less freedom. Thousands of working-class Edwardians left these country estates to make their way across the sea to America, hoping for a better life and more freedom in the land of opportunity. When hundreds of these would-be immigrants, traveling in second and third class, perished in the sinking of the *Titanic*, the inequity of the British class system was shown to the world in all its ugliness.

In 1914, the outbreak of the First World War caused complete upheaval in British society. It was the men of the aristocracy who, as officers, led the soldiers into battle. A brutal, terrible war, it sent millions of young men to their deaths, most of whom did not even have the right to vote.

By 1918 when the war had ended, an old world had passed away and the modern era had begun. For the British aristocracy, it was the end of life as they had known it. But it is a world that lives on in the continued popularity of authors from Jane Austen to Evelyn Waugh, and beloved television series from “Upstairs, Downstairs” to “Downton Abbey.”

Produced and directed by Susannah Ward, **SECRETS OF THE MANOR HOUSE** is a production of Pioneer Productions. Executive Producers are Stuart Carter and Robert Strange.

About PBS

[PBS](#), with its nearly 360 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches 124 million people through television and 20 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’ broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS’ premier children’s TV programming and its website, [pbskids.org](#), are parents’ and teachers’ most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at [pbs.org](#), one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our apps for mobile devices. Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](#) or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

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About Pioneer Productions

Pioneer Productions is one of the UK's most successful independent production companies. They have developed an outstanding reputation for producing innovative, high quality and popular programs for both the UK and US markets. Their investment in nurturing creative and editorial skills has meant the company continues to attract the leading on and off-screen talent.

Pioneer Productions has produced over 700 hours of adventure, science and technology, docu-drama, lifestyle, current affairs and history programming for the US and International markets, with films having been screened in over 80 countries worldwide. Critically acclaimed Pioneer productions have attracted both high audience viewing figures as well as many prestigious awards, including Emmys, BAFTAs, the Grand Award — at the New York Television Festival, a UK Indie award, a Sony award and a Royal Television Society award to name a few, and Pioneer is the only independent company to win the coveted Best Science film at the Banff TV festival. Pioneer's clients include Discovery, PBS, SKY, National Geographic, History, TLC, Travel Channel, HGTV, Discovery Canada, France 5, ZDF, ITV, BBC, Channel 4 and Channel Five.

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