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SOFT SKULL PRESS TO REISSUE CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY BOOK
REVISED EDITION OF MICHAEL BELLESILES'S *ARMING AMERICA*
TO PUBLISH OCTOBER 2003

Brooklyn, NY
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Soft Skull Press today announced that it will republish the controversial history of American gun culture, former Emory professor Michael Bellesiles's *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*.

Published to critical acclaim in 2001—"Bellesiles has dispersed the darkness that covered the gun's early history in America. He provides overwhelming evidence that our view of the gun is as deep a superstition as any that affected Native Americans in the 17th century," wrote Garry Wills in the *New York Times Book Review*—the book and its author were subjected to vicious attack by the pro-gun Right. In an orchestrated series of web and print articles, organs such as the *History News Network* and the *National Review* furiously denounced the book.

However, serious historians also raised a number of questions concerning what appeared to be sloppy research. In the January 2002 issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, some of Bellesiles's research in probate records was criticized for misattribution and lack of verifiability. Facing a political firestorm, Emory University in Atlanta appointed a committee to investigate the allegations. Following the committee's report (available on Emory University's website), Bellesiles resigned from Emory, and Columbia University rescinded the prestigious Bancroft Prize it had awarded the author. Last month, Knopf decided to end their contractual relationship with the author.

"This is not the first time it has fallen to Soft Skull to ensure the American public can read books the Right doesn't like," says Publisher Richard Nash. "It is imperative that we stand up to the NRA smear machine. We believe in allowing readers to evaluate for themselves how Bellesiles has responded to the legitimate criticisms and whether the core thesis of the book—the undermining of the creation myth of the Second Amendment—stands up."

The book will feature a new introduction by the author, as well as several clarifications concerning research and a new Table One (the original being the source of much of the controversy) in which the author recreates the contested data.

"I challenge anyone to show how the revised paragraphs addressing probate materials undermine in any way the thesis or logical structure of this book," said Bellesiles, who is currently teaching in the U.K.

Arming America will be published October 2003.

Soft Skull Press (<http://www.softskull.com/>) is distributed to the book trade by Publishers Group West (<http://www.pgw.com/>).

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