

# Super Saturday in Paradise

Editor Stuart A. Hessney joins dealers, makers and fellow collectors on hand to enjoy The Toy Soldier Museum Open House

Text and Photos: Stuart A. Hessney

**T**he Toy Soldier Museum was the place to be for nearly 80 attendees on a sunny and super Saturday, Nov. 05, 2011.

Carol and James H. Hillestad hosted a record turnout for their autumn Open House and Cellar Sale in the Paradise Valley of Cresco, Pa., USA. Appearances by prominent manufacturers and dealers helped draw enthusiasts from Canada and the United States to the 33rd edition of the semiannual event.

Most participants were en route to the following day's 29th Annual East Coast Toy Soldier Show & Sale in Hack-

ensack, N.J. Stopping along the way afforded collectors a chance to renew acquaintances and make new friends, tour the museum, chat with makers and dealers, and do a little shopping.

As usual, the hospitable Hillestads offered grateful attendees hot and cold drinks, roast beef and turkey sandwiches, Carol's "Pocono Mountain Smokey Ham and Pea Soup," cookies and more for lunch.

## BIRTHDAY BOY

Two manufacturers, W. Britain General Manager Richard Walker and John

Jenkins, set up shop in Carol's cottage studio located across an expansive garden from the museum.

Iowa-based Walker was accompanied by his son, Ricky, who had just turned 9 the day before. The engaging and energetic youngster was still celebrating his birthday by showing off a cavalry saber his dad had purchased for him while they were visiting historic Gettysburg, Pa.

Richard exhibited the new British gunboat and figures from the 19th-century "War Along the Nile" series. In addition, he demonstrated how to cast metal soldiers on the museum's porch, providing attendees with perfect free keepsakes of the day.

The Welshman behind John Jenkins Designs traveled from his Hong Kong home for the event. He brought prototypes for a variety of possible future releases, including British dragoons and infantry of the Jacobite Rebellion, French and Indian War combatants, British soldiers and Dervishes from the Mahdist Wars, and a Soviet-made BT-5 tank supplied to the Popular Front during the Spanish Civil War.

Impending additions to the Jenkins World War I "Knights of the Skies" series include a German Fokker Dr.I triplane and a British S.E.5a biplane. Like a proud papa, John also showed off his new "flight stand" for displaying aircraft.

In addition, the cottage housed



**ABOVE:** Birthday boy Ricky with his new sword and his dad, Richard Walker of W. Britain.

**LEFT:** John Jenkins' prototypes of British dragoons of the Jacobite Rebellion.



Osprey Publishing representative Larry Weindorf with a selection of books.

Nearby in the cottage were two new dioramas created by Jim Hillestad. Black Watch Highlanders, French infantry and field fortifications by Jenkins breathed life into a diorama depicting the 1758 Battle of Carillon (Ticonderoga), where the Scottish regiment lost almost half its strength trying to claw through an abatis. An American Civil War diorama featured Britains products re-creating the fighting at Miller's Cornfield during the Battle of Antietam in 1862.

### MUSEUM MARVELS

Inside the marvelous museum, visitors could explore Jim's displays and study the history, action and humor incorporated in his wide-ranging dioramas, including a new circus (a related article appears elsewhere in this edition).

Enthusiasts also had a chance to meet Nikki and Thor Johnson of The AeroArt St. Petersburg Collection and see their stunning, 300-mm figure of German Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa crafted in Russia.

Thor is also collaborating with Figarti Miniatures to develop The Marco Polo Collection, which aims to offer top quality items at relatively reasonable prices. Examples included ancient Roman civilians, buildings and columns. ACW items ranged from artillery to generals. Rising head and shoulders above the tabletop



**ABOVE:** Union troops navigate a cornfield in the museum's new Antietam diorama.

**TOP, RIGHT:** Part of Jim Hillestad's new diorama depicting the Battle of Carillon.

**ABOVE, RIGHT** John Jenkins (left) and Michigan collector Jack Eagan with WWI aircraft prototypes on the new stands.

**RIGHT:** The new British gunboat and related figures were displayed by W. Britain.



## hobby event

were prototypes of ancient Troy's city walls and an awesome Trojan Horse.

Jack Carleton of Le Petit Soldat took a well-deserved break from business demands in St. Louis to fly out for his first visit to the museum and the East Coast show. He was selling Lucotte's exquisite mini-vignettes depicting French Emperor Napoleon I and his soldiers in bivouac scenes.

Martin Ritchie of U.S. Military Miniatures in nearby Gilbert, Pa., previewed and took orders for 24-piece ACW marching bands and complementary colour parties. Figures of Union President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln reviewed the 3rd Infantry Regiment while Confederate President and Mrs. Jefferson Davis saluted the 1st Virginia Regiment accompanied by Gen. Robert E. Lee on horseback.

Collectors could also meet maker/dealer Ted Deddens of Tedtoy Miniatures and his bright and charming 13-year-old daughter Abby. They stopped by the museum to simply enjoy the day and the camaraderie while en route from their home in Owensboro, Ky., to the East Coast show.

"All in all it was a great time on a glorious sunny day attended by more than 70 people -- a record turnout!" Jim Hillestad exclaimed. ♦

**ABOVE, RIGHT:** Confederate artillery from The Marco Polo Collection.

**RIGHT:** ACW bands, colour parties and personalities by Martin Ritchie.



**LEFT:** Ted Deddens, Richard Walker, host Jim Hillestad, Jack Carleton, Larry Weindorf, Thor Johnson, John Jenkins and Martin Ritchie (from left) gathered outside the museum.

**BELOW:** Napoleon commands attention in one of the Lucotte vignettes available from Jack Carleton.

