

Jim Hillestad's completed Battle of Leuthen diorama measures 30 inches by 60 inches.



Battle of Leuthen

The Toy Soldier Museum's James H. Hillestad deploys Austrian and Prussian troops from John Jenkins Designs in a dramatic new diorama

Text and Photos: James H. Hillestad

It's hard not to be inspired by figures crafted by John Jenkins.

Using his wonderful John Jenkins Designs brand creations, I have made dioramas of three French and Indian War clashes in North America: Braddock's Defeat near the Monongahela River, Rogers' Rangers in the Battle on Snowshoes and the Black Watch's attack during the Battle of Carillon (Ticonderoga). Plans are under way to install these dioramas in the Fort Pitt Museum in Pittsburgh, Pa., USA.

As for the wintry Battle of Leuthen, it took place during the same period in Europe, where the overall conflict is referred to as the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

FREDERICK'S TRIUMPH

Leuthen pitted King Frederick II of Prussia against Austrian Gen. Prince Charles Alexander of Lorraine.

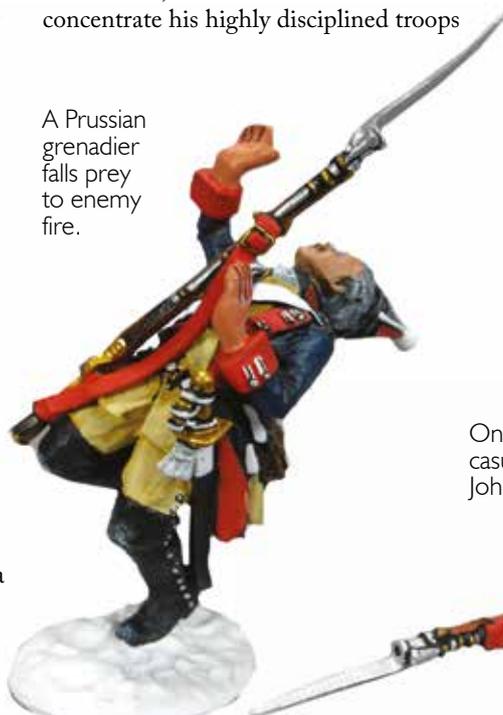
The Prussian monarch, who became known as Frederick the Great, marched his army of about 36,000 soldiers to Silesia (in present-day Poland). He was intent on challenging 80,000 Austrian troops who were attempting to recapture the region.

Frederick sighted the Austrians arrayed

perpendicular to the route of his advance Dec. 5, 1757. They were drawn up in a long line, centered at the village of Leuthen.

Hills obscured the Prussian movements, so Frederick could concentrate his highly disciplined troops

A Prussian grenadier falls prey to enemy fire.



Te Deum

The celebrated hymn of praise "Now Thank We All Our God" was written by a Lutheran minister, Martin Rinkart, about 1637. At the conclusion of the Battle of Leuthen, a Prussian soldier started to sing it. Soon the entire army joined in singing the hymn. This sacred song is still sung today on a variety of occasions of national rejoicing. It is often called Germany's national "Te Deum."

--James H. Hillestad

One of the Prussian casualties made by John Jenkins.





Two-figure set of Austrian soldiers in firing poses.

to attack the Austrian left wing, without being observed. Meanwhile, Prince Charles obliged by transferring men to his right wing, further weakening his vulnerable left wing.

A strong point of the Austrian defense in the village was a Catholic church. It was garrisoned by the elite Imperial regiment of Roth-Wurzburg. The church was ideal for defense because it stood set apart on its own, surrounded by a churchyard wall with



"Beadboard" was used to create a mockup of the Leuthen church.

Prussia's Military Genius: Der Alte Fritz

Prussian King Frederick II was born Jan. 24, 1712, in Berlin. He was the son of King Frederick William I of Prussia and his Queen Consort Sophia Dorothea of Hanover. He was also a grandson of King George I of Great Britain and a nephew of King George II.

For his accomplishments, he became known as Frederick the Great. In later years, he was affectionately nicknamed "Der Alte Fritz" (Old Fritz).

Frederick II was, however, only age 28 when he ascended to the throne of Prussia and only 45 when he prevailed at Leuthen, his greatest battle.

TACTICAL GENIUS

Frederick always tried to match his methods to the terrain and then to bring to the fore the qualities of speed and flexibility.

At Leuthen, both wings of the Prussian army worked in complete harmony. The cavalry led by Lt. Gen. Hans Joachim von Zieten provided a feint to the Austrian right, drawing the Austrian reserves, while Frederick pounced on the Austrian left (First Legion Ltd. has released new figures of both the monarch and his cavalry commander).

Frederick often led his troops personally. He had a half-dozen

horses shot from under him during battles.

In the field of military science, Frederick the Great is admired for his operational successes. He is also regarded as a tactical genius, particularly for his deployment of an oblique order of battle to focus on attacking one flank of an opposing line, thereby affording advantageous local numerical superiority to his overall weaker force, as was the case at Leuthen.

PRESERVED PRUSSIA

Frederick's leadership skills were underscored during the Seven Years' War as he managed to preserve Prussia and keep it in the fight while repeatedly driving off invading armies. This feat was all the more remarkable because England was his only ally against a powerful coalition composed of Austria, France, Russia, Saxony and Sweden.

Frederick the Great died at age 74 in Potsdam, Prussia, Aug. 17, 1786. He was entombed next to his father, Frederick William I, in the Potsdam Garrison Church.

French Emperor Napoleon I regarded Frederick the Great as the greatest tactical genius in history. After Napoleon defeated the Fourth Coalition in 1807, he visited Frederick's original tomb in Potsdam and appreciatively remarked to his officers, "Gentlemen, if this man was still alive, I would not be here."

--James H. Hillestad



First Legion Ltd. has paid tribute to the tactical genius with its new mounted figure of Frederick the Great.



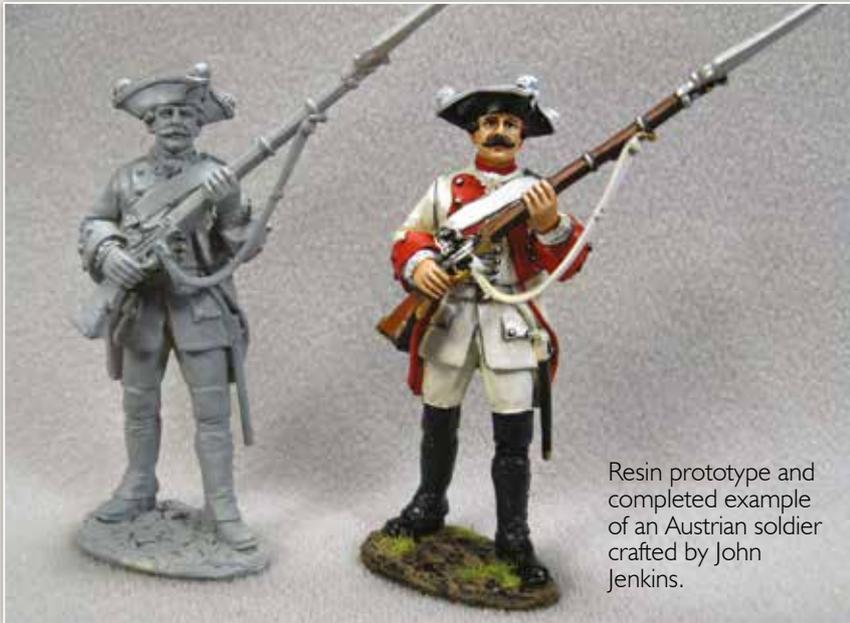
Colorful and detailed figure by First Legion Ltd. portraying Lt. Gen. Hans Joachim von Zieten, who led the Prussian cavalry at Leuthen.

round turrets in each of the four corners.

Despite the Austrians' formidable defensive position, Prussian grenadiers succeeded in forcing their way into the churchyard by way of a side gate and through a breach in the southern wall made by their army's heavy artillery.

The Prussian attack rolled back the Austrian left and went on, after a series of actions, to win the day.

The Austrians lost 33 percent of their army before they fell back into Bohemia. The Prussians, who were outnumbered better than 2-to-1, lost 20 percent of their strength.



Resin prototype and completed example of an Austrian soldier crafted by John Jenkins.

Prussians and Austrians

By John Jenkins Designs

THE PRUSSIANS

On his accession to the Prussian throne in 1740, Frederick formed the Guard regiment. Composed of three battalions, they were the elite of his infantry.

Grenadiers of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were charged with making the attack on Leuthen. Both battalions wore basically the same dress blue coats, yellow undergarments (waistcoat and breeches) and red cuffs. The only variation was the back of the mitre cap, which was red for the 2nd Battalion and yellow for the 3rd Battalion.

John Jenkins Designs produces Prussian grenadiers sold singly and in sets. There are soldiers in varied advancing poses as well as Prussians firing their muskets and casualties. A set made up of an ax-wielding pioneer and a grenadier using his musket as a club are designed to be positioned assaulting the churchyard's main wooden gate.

THE AUSTRIANS

The Leuthen church was defended by Austria's Roth-Wurzburg Regiment. This mercenary unit was raised in 1757 by the Prince Bishop of Würzburg, a

staunch opponent of Prussia.

The musketeers wore the conventional tricorne with white lace, decorated with three white pompoms. They wore white coats and waistcoats with red facings.

At Leuthen, the Roth-Wurzburg Regiment lost more than 500 men. Only five officers and 33 men survived the battle.

John Jenkins Designs offers both two and four-figure sets of the Austrians in action poses such as kneeling and standing firing.

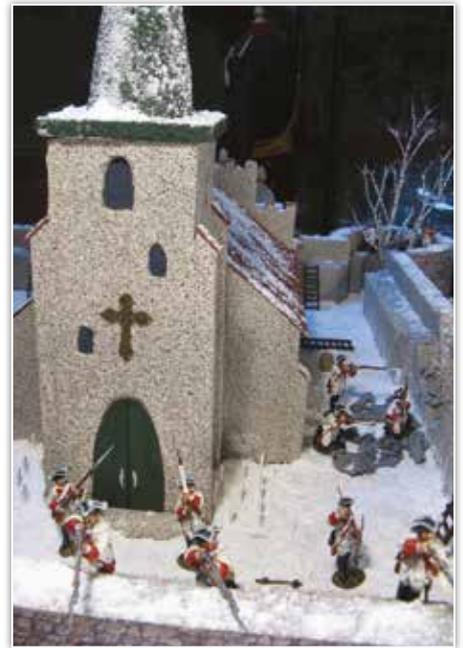
SCENIC PIECES

To complement his 1:30-scale figures, maker John Jenkins has also fabricated scenic items to help collectors build their own Battle of Leuthen dioramas.

The churchyard can be re-created with a gateway, a straight section of stone wall and a corner turret. These factory-made items are sold separately.

The manufacturer even offers a snow-covered diorama base. It measures a shelf-friendly 25.5 inches long by 10 inches deep to help collectors display their Prussians and Austrians clashing over the churchyard.

--James H. Hillestad



The Austrians lost 36 regimental colours and 131 cannons in the battle. About 12,000 Austrian troops were captured.

The victory secured control of Silesia for Prussia for the duration of the war. Leuthen was a signature triumph for Frederick the Great. His use of maneuver and terrain to decisively vanquish a much larger enemy army established him as one of history's great military commanders.

DIORAMA PROJECT

The new matt-painted, 1:30-scale series by John Jenkins Designs is based on Carl Röchling's painting "Die Schlacht

ABOVE: The Leuthen church and graveyard.

BELOW: A Prussian grenadier loses his mitre cap but not his resolve.



WWII's Operation Bodysnatch

Near the end of World War II, German leader Adolf Hitler ordered the coffins of Frederick the Great and his father, Frederick William I, as well as those of statesman/Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and his wife, to be disinterred and moved to an underground bunker near Berlin to safeguard them from destruction.

As the Soviet Red Army advanced ever closer to Germany's capital city, the four distinguished corpses were relocated to a salt mine near Bernrode, Germany. When U.S. Army troops discovered the caskets April 27, 1945, they were salted away deep in the 14-mile mine complex behind a 6-foot masonry wall 1,800 feet underground.

The coffins were moved to the basement of heavily guarded Marburg Castle, a collection point for Nazi plunder recovered by the Allies.

In conjunction with a secret project called "Operation Bodysnatch," the American Army laid the quartet of corpses to rest at St. Elizabeth's Church in Marburg. The pair of Prussian kings were later moved to Hohenzollern Castle, located atop a mountain about 31 miles south of Stuttgart.

After the postwar German reunification, the kings' caskets were returned to Potsdam in 1991. Frederick the Great was placed in a tomb overlooking the gardens he created at Sanssouci, his summer palace and favorite residence.

--James H. Hillestad

von Leuthen." It depicts the Prussians storming the main gate.

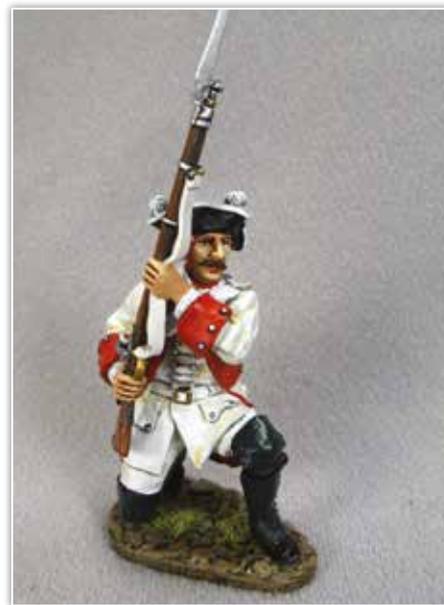
In addition to the painting, reference materials that I used included "Rossbach and Leuthen 1757: Prussia's Eagle Resurgent," a 2002 Osprey Publishing book authored by Simon Millar and illustrated by Adam Hook. My online research revealed a photo of a superb

TOP OF PAGE: Prussian grenadiers exploit a breach in the stone wall.

MIDDLE: Prussian grenadiers advance through woods.

RIGHT: The Leuthen church was defended by Austrian soldiers of the Roth-Wurzburg Regiment in white coats with red facings.

FAR RIGHT: An Austrian soldier takes a knee during the clash.





Leuthen diorama with flat figures on display at the Zinnfigurenmuseum Plassenburg in Kulmbach, Germany.

Based on this information, I started making my own diorama. Without blueprints, I had to extrapolate sizes and distances from the various images at hand. This wasn't easy, given that the wall and the church were shown at oblique angles. Further, in the case of Röchling's painting, structures were obscured by the action.

John ships sets of his figures in boxes lined with sheets of white foam board or "beadboard." I used these sheets to make a pro forma model of the church. Once I was satisfied with the mockup, the church was rebuilt with sturdy Styrofoam.

For the windows, I cut their shapes out of one-quarter-inch plywood. Then they were then laid on the church wall and hammered in place. The plywood template was then removed, leaving the window indentation.

I painted the windows charcoal black and covered them with plastic mesh to

give the impression of window leading. The indentation technique was also used to create the doors of the church.

The turrets were made from Styrofoam rings, such as those available at craft stores for wreath-making. The church steeple is a Styrofoam cone.

I spray-painted the church and the wall with textured paint. Then I covered the outside of the walls with sheets printed to simulate stone. Cemetery headstones were made from wooden coffee stirrers. The completed diorama measures 30 inches by 60 inches.

All in all, re-creating the Battle of Leuthen was a challenging project. But given the superb figures of John Jenkins Designs, it was worth the effort. ■

about the writer

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum and shop in Cresco, Pa., USA.



ABOVE LEFT: An ax-wielding pioneer spearheads the Prussian assault on the main gate.

ABOVE: John Jenkins' own resin prototype and finished model of an Austrian infantryman.

BELOW: A Prussian takes aim at an Austrian foe.



ABOVE: Prussian grenadiers posed advancing from John Jenkins Designs.

LEFT: Austrian soldiers of the Roth-Wurzburg Regiment defend one of the round turrets of the walled churchyard.