



The Fairgrounds is thronged with eager buyers.

# Flea Market: Ancient Phenomenon

James H. Hillestad captures the unique qualities of the ubiquitous flea market

TEXT AND PHOTOS: JAMES H. HILLESTAD

During a 2019 vacation in St. Augustine, Fla., I stopped at a roadside flea market. I was struck by the colorful personalities, not to mention the hodgepodge of wares on display at the U.S. venue. Surely this patchwork

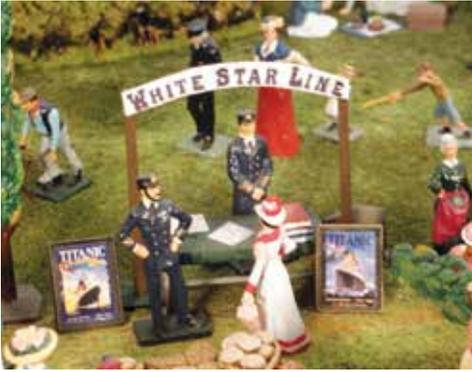


The St. Augustine Flea Market on a Sunday in March 2019.



Treasures large and small await just the right buyer in a Florida flea market.

## FEATURE



Booths offer countless luxuries and necessities, including White Star Line transatlantic travel.



Fresh, homemade cakes, bread and jam tempt shoppers.

of sights and sounds was worthy of a diorama!

As defined by Wikipedia, a flea market or swap meet is a type of public marketplace that has its roots in bazaars of more than 5,000 years ago. It is a gathering place for people who want to sell, barter or buy merchandise of all kinds.

In the United Kingdom, flea markets are known as "car boot sales" where vendors sell their



A constable and a cat welcome attendees.



Tractor rides attract children of all ages.



A shopper considers the possibilities.



Entertainment encourages fair-goers to linger.



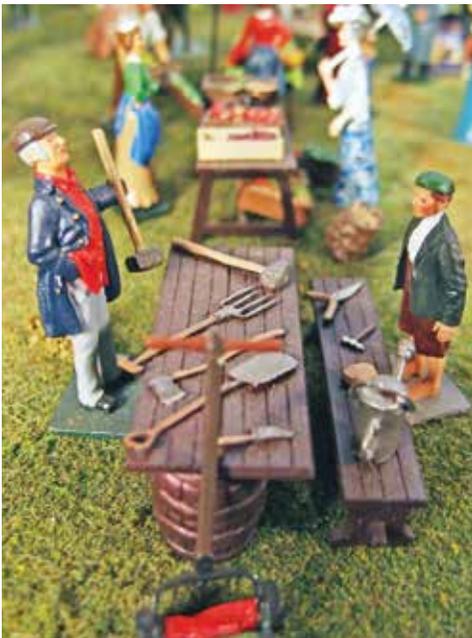
The market makes much-needed farm goods available to rural communities.

goods from the trunk of a car.

In Quebec, Canada, and in France, they might be called "marchés aux puces"; and in Germany, "flohmarkt."

Having accumulated a wide assortment of appropriate figures through the years, I decided to re-create a British flea market. The time frame is 1911 and the setting is Salisbury, Wiltshire, in the South of England.

The 54-mm figures are the painted metalwork of a number of makers dating back more than 30 years. Included are vendors of fruits and vegetables, tools and equipment, farm animals, books and antiques, pies and jams, and promotions for ocean voyages on the RMS Titanic. There is even a display of "Modern



Tools for every task draw the practical-minded.



Salisbury Fairgrounds diorama.

Marvels," heralding the dawn of the age of steam-driven engines. Just like a flea market, it is a

cornucopia of precious treasures and delightful junk. I hope TS&MF readers enjoy seeing it. ■



"Modern Marvels" offer a look into the future.



**ABOUT THE WRITER**

James H. Hillestad is a military historian and proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum in Cresco, Pa., USA.