



# NAPOLEON BY MIGNOT

Text: James H. Hillestad Photos: James H. Hillestad and David W. Coulter

## The Toy Soldier Museum's James H. Hillestad collects CBG Mignot displays featuring Napoleon



Diorama box portraying Napoleon crowning himself as Emperor.

### NAPOLEON RETURNS TO PARIS

In the hope of symbolizing the unity of France, King Louis-Philippe ordered that the remains of Napoleon be brought from St. Helena to Paris for a state funeral Dec. 15, 1840.

Upon arrival in the French capital, the remains were placed in a magnificent imperial hearse. Pulled by 16 black horses adorned with white plumes and covered in caparisons of gold, the hearse passed beneath the Arc de Triomphe to Les Invalides, where the remains were interred in St. Jerome's Chapel.

The elaborate hearse was 32-feet high and 32-feet long. Its base was decorated with eagles, laurel crowns and the imperial "N." The coffin was held up by 12 statues representing Napoleon's victories. On the coffin were placed the imperial crown, scepter and the hand of justice.

The hearse was escorted by mounted officers, grooms dressed in imperial livery, and marines from La Belle Poule, the frigate which had brought Napoleon's remains from St. Helena. As the hearse traveled down the Champs-Élysées, the gray December mist lifted and the "sun of Austerlitz" appeared.

For the first time in a quarter-century, "Vive l'Empereur" could be heard being shouted by veterans of the Imperial Guard. Rising ghost-like in the chill winter air, Napoleon celebrated immortality.

The diorama box replicating the procession is 34 inches long. It was made by Mignot as a limited edition five years ago. Only four were shipped to the United States. ■

### ABOUT THE WRITER

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



Mignot's model of Napoleon's Coronation Coach is nearly 2 feet long.

French Emperor Napoleon I reigns in stupendous displays made by CBG Mignot that are on exhibit at The Toy Soldier Museum in the United States.

They include Napoleon's Coronation Coach in all its splendor drawn by a team of eight horses. The set comes in a 24-inch long presentation box.

One of the many diorama boxes produced in France by Mignot depicts Napoleon's Coronation at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris Dec. 2, 1804. The ceremony was designed to dazzle the world with its magnificence and excitement.

Pope Pius VII, who had incurred Napoleon's displeasure, was relegated to a spectator's role. Napoleon did not wish to prostrate

himself before the power of the Catholic Church as the anointing rite required. Instead he chose to crown himself.

Napoleon's petulant sisters bitterly protested about his wife, Josephine, being accorded imperial rank. Napoleon had to threaten them with exile to induce them to comply with his wish that they hold the train of Josephine's imperial mantle. When Josephine began to climb stairs leading to the throne, she staggered. It's believed Napoleon's sisters had given the mantle a vicious tug before they let it fall!

Mignot captured the historic event in its limited edition millennium diorama. All of the personages are identified in this spectacular 22-inch by 10-inch display.



Photo by David W. Coulter

Mignot diorama box depicting the elaborate hearse that carried Napoleon's remains during the 1840 state funeral in Paris.