

About the Stewart Collection at the Frazier History Museum

By Norman Joplin, Author and Historic Miniatures Expert

The Stewart Collection at the Frazier History Museum contains many exceptionally rare, unique, and famous toy soldiers and figures produced in a number of countries by the most well known toy manufacturers. The diversity of the collection, the uniqueness of its content, and the care and diligent way that it has been assembled, puts it near the top as toy soldier displays go.

The collection contains a comprehensive example of all kinds of materials used in the manufacture of toy soldiers, lead, Hollow Cast, Composition, paper, wood, plastic. It contains examples from the following countries: Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, the United States of America, Hong Kong, and Russia.

There are dioramas representing great periods of history, famous battles and conflicts, together with Coronation displays from the UK and France.

Every major and well known toy soldier company is represented in the collection. Many contained in their original boxes. Lucotte from the 19th century together with William Britains, Vertunni, and Courtenay from the 19th and 20th century, and in addition there are over 114 other manufacturers toy soldiers represented in the collection.

Vehicles, guns and related military equipment made to compliment Toy soldiers and sailors, along with rare ships, boats, submarines, and aircraft by such well known toy manufacturers as Bing, Marklin, and Carrette compliment their toy soldier counterparts. Military and civilian vehicles produced in Great Britain by William Britain, Limited and Tin Plate vehicles by Hausser, Tipp and Elastolin produced in pre-World War two Germany, further enhance the comprehensiveness of the collection.

Figures of a non-military nature are also very well represented: sporting figures, race horses and jockeys show the connection between toys, Kentucky, and the Kentucky Derby. North American Indians and cowboys, character and famous cartoon figures, and civilian figures (including an example of the world famous Britains Village Idiot) said to have been made at the request of Her Royal Highness Queen Mary after visiting the 1923 British Industries Fair in London. She later commented, "How spectacular the display of farm and village is, but why no *Weary Willie*?" (AKA the Village Idiot). Britains were not slow to react and produced the figure the following year, but because of the dubious nature of the subject matter, the item was hastily withdrawn, hence a short production run deemed it to be the rarest of civilian or non-military items and commands a high price when becoming available for sale on the second hand toy market.

As a whole the 13,000 figures in the Charles Stewart Toy Soldier and historic miniatures collection represent Social history through the eyes of the children who played with these toys. They are now classed as antiques and collector's items. The preservation and display of these items in this world class collection, affords an opportunity for the public to view and enjoy what is undoubtedly the number one collection of its kind in the USA on public display, and highly ranked as perhaps number two overall worldwide.

The acquisition of toy soldiers for this collection is ongoing and recent additions include what is probably the rarest of all sets, the Britains set #132 a large British Army display set, thought to be the only boxed example to exist.

Many Museums, Military Museums, and Institutions worldwide have small or medium size collections of old/antique Toys Soldiers and related items. For example, ships, boats and aircraft are either on display to the public, viewable upon request, some are not displayed and are held in storage, others are displayed on a rotating basis, with the latter being the norm. The quantities, uniqueness, diversity, rarities, and examples from famous collectors and collections varies in all museums; and it is not possible give accu-

displayed on a rotating basis, with the latter being the norm. The quantities, uniqueness, diversity, rarities, and examples from famous collectors and collections varies in all museums; and it is not possible give accurate numbers, but suffice to say that these collections have not all been taken into consideration during my research as the significance of these collections is minor compared to the **Charles Stewart Toy Soldier Collection** displayed at the Frazier Museum Louisville Kentucky. On Line and Internet Museums are not covered in this document.

Norman Joplin

Author, editor, and auction house consultant, Norman Joplin is a British Citizen who has been granted permanent residence status in the United States based on his exceptional ability in a specialist field of knowledge in connection with the Social History of toy figures as viewed through the eyes of children's toys during the period 1893 to 1966.

