George Washington to Queen Elizabeth.
Toy Egyptian soliders have been found in the tombs of the pharoas, and Roman and ancient Greek examples have cropped up too. But it wasn't until the late 18th century that they became toys for ordinary children.

This happened round Nuremburg,

Germany, when ortisans used excess tin to make two-dimensional, "flat" soldiers for their children. The first to see the commercial potential was Johann Gottfeied Hilpert, who marketed tiny flat versions of the armies of Frederick

the Great.

The flats, made of an alloy of tin, lead and antimony, developed into a three-di-mensional "round" soldier perfected by French and German firms. But the breakthrough came in the 1890s when an English firm, Britains, invented a means of making hollow-cast soldiers that could

of maning tentowers somer's that could be sold for a penny apiece.
"They took the world's nurseries by storm," Johnson says.
Britains produced a variety of basic soldier models which were hand-painted in the uniforms of every British Army unit. Whenever a new conflict broke out. Britains would issue a new set featuring the combatants. It also marketed an English village scene in 1923 which led King George V to ask: "But where is the



The detail of a toy soldier can be seen in this hand-held miniature.

"village idiot" was sold for 15 years until

it was removed for reasons of poor taste.

Britains stopped making lead-based soldiers in the 1960s due to the cost and

soldiers in the 1960s due to the cost and pressure over the use of lead. Athough Johnson notes, "I never heard of a kid having problems, short of wallowing a Bengal Lancer,"

The German industry was wiped out in World War II, and American figures never amounted to much, except for the dime store models which dominated the low end of the market. low end of the market.

It was the end of production of high-quality pieces that spurred the collecting market, so that individual pieces now sell at auction for as much as several

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