

Miniature figures of soldiers have existed for centuries, but the first real attempt at coming up with an organized rule system to play with them was when H.G. Wells published Little Wars around the turn of the century. In the 80 years that have passed since then miniature wargaming has grown in leaps and bounds to encompass almost any time period of history and include games of the future or the imagination.

¶ Miniatures intended for wargaming have evolved along a different course from miniatures intended purely for display. Wargaming miniatures are meant to be used, and therefore fragile materials, although they may look nice, can't be used. The other thing that has influenced wargaming miniatures is the fact that gaming itself is a social interaction. Traditions and customs have grown up as to how miniatures should be mounted, painted, and used.

Wargaming miniatures have evolved into two main types. The first is the more traditional miniatures used in wargames. The scales that they come in can range from 1/2400, as in the case of naval miniatures, to about 1/35. Although the miniatures are sometimes made of plastic lead seems to be the most popular material to make miniatures out of because of its weight and durability. The most popular scale tends to be 15mm or 1/134.

In general wargames work by the player moving his figures a prescribed distance and then resolving combat by rolling dice and consulting tables. This is a very simplified version of how a wargame works, but it is pretty standard for all games.

The second type of miniatures are those used in role-playing games, the most popular of which is Dungeons and Dragons. Role-playing games are mainly played in a person's imagination with a referee, or gamemaster, describing a situation and the player giving their reactions to it. In role-playing games miniatures are used to give a more visual aspect to the game, instead of just imagining their character they can actually see themselves in miniature. Figures used for role-playing games are almost always 25mm(1/64) scale.

In Bowling Green there is a unique opportunity to look at the culture of wargamers and their folkcraft of miniatures. This opportunity is made possible by the hobby shop in town, Asgard Hobbies and Games.

Asgard was opened in June of 1983 by Bruce Simmons and Wayne Brown. They both had been wargamers for several years, and they early on decided that they wanted to run more than just a hobby shop. Asgard is almost like a club house. In the basement there is a gigantic table which is used solely for wargaming, and upstairs there are several rooms which are used by people to play weekly role-playing games. In addition to this there is often a table set up in the main area of the shop itself where there are paints and brushes and people are free to come by set, talk, and paint on the own figures or help someone else with theirs.

It was natural therefore that I chose Bruce Simmons as my primary informant for my research. Bruce has been wargaming for more than ten years, and has been painting miniatures even longer than that. In my interviews with

Bruce I tried to find out some more about the social atmosphere of gaming. I also asked about the techniques of painting miniatures, and how people learn to paint from others instead of out of a text.

My interviews with Bruce led me to decide on my other informant Bill Helm. Bill has only been painting miniature for about a year, but he has already gained a reputation as one of the best painters around. He has also painted a lot for other people.

To bits of folklore that I noticed that were common to both informants was the idea that better painted figures "fight" better, and how learning to paint is almost a totally oral tradition. Both said that figures a person puts a lot of time into perform better in games than figures which were sloppily done. And although there are a multitude of texts on how to paint figures almost nobody uses them preferring to learn from others.

In watching people paint the miniatures I noticed there was a constant social interaction as people suggested to each other how a figure might be painted easier or better. In playing wargames people come to identify with their troops to the point that best friends will trade insults when they oppose each other. I hope that some of the photos contained in this project show this.

I hope that in my interviews and photos that I have been able to show that painting wargames miniatures is a folk craft of the culture of wargamers. It has traditions, customs, and even legends.