

Windows into Russian Life: Fabergé's Hardstone Figures

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Overview of Russia in 1900

- Russia's land mass consists of 6.6 million square miles (17.1 million km²)
- Population: 128 million of which 102 million are peasants (former serfs freed by the 1861 Emancipation Act) working in agriculture, moving from the country to the city
- 1.8 million are nobility

Strong Hierarchies in Russian Society

- Upper classes: Royalty, nobility, higher clergy (13%)
- Middle classes: Merchants, bureaucrats, professionals (2%)
- Working classes: Factory workers, artisans, soldier, policemen, sailors (5%)
- Peasants: Landed and landless farmers (80%)

Fabergé Firm

- Move into larger quarters at #24 Bolshaya Morskaya, St. Petersburg, with a main trade counter, a large safe, and Fabergé family living quarters on the top floor

- Principal jewelry workshops under one roof: Holmström, Hollming, Perkhin until 1903, Wigström after 1903, Thielemann, Armfelt after 1916

Emperor Nicholas II in 1908, His Sixth Year on the Throne

- Avid collector of a new Fabergé genre of Russian Types hardstone carvings purchased from April 1908 - February 1916
- 1909-1915 Commission granted by Nicholas II to photographer and chemist, Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky (1863-1944), to document Russia and its people in colored images

Nicholas II, Collector of *Russian Types* of Fabergé Hardstone Figures



Emperor Nicholas II (1868-1918)
(Wiki)



Seeds Collection - The Famous Group of Ten
([Fabergé](#), 1846-1920 ... 1977, 84)

- Sir William Seeds (1882-1973), British diplomat, and Ambassador to both Russia and Brazil

Top Row: Policeman*, Carpenter, Merchant*, House Boy, Nobleman,

Second Row: Ukrainian Peasant, Soldier of the Emperor's [Preobrazhensky](#) Regiment,

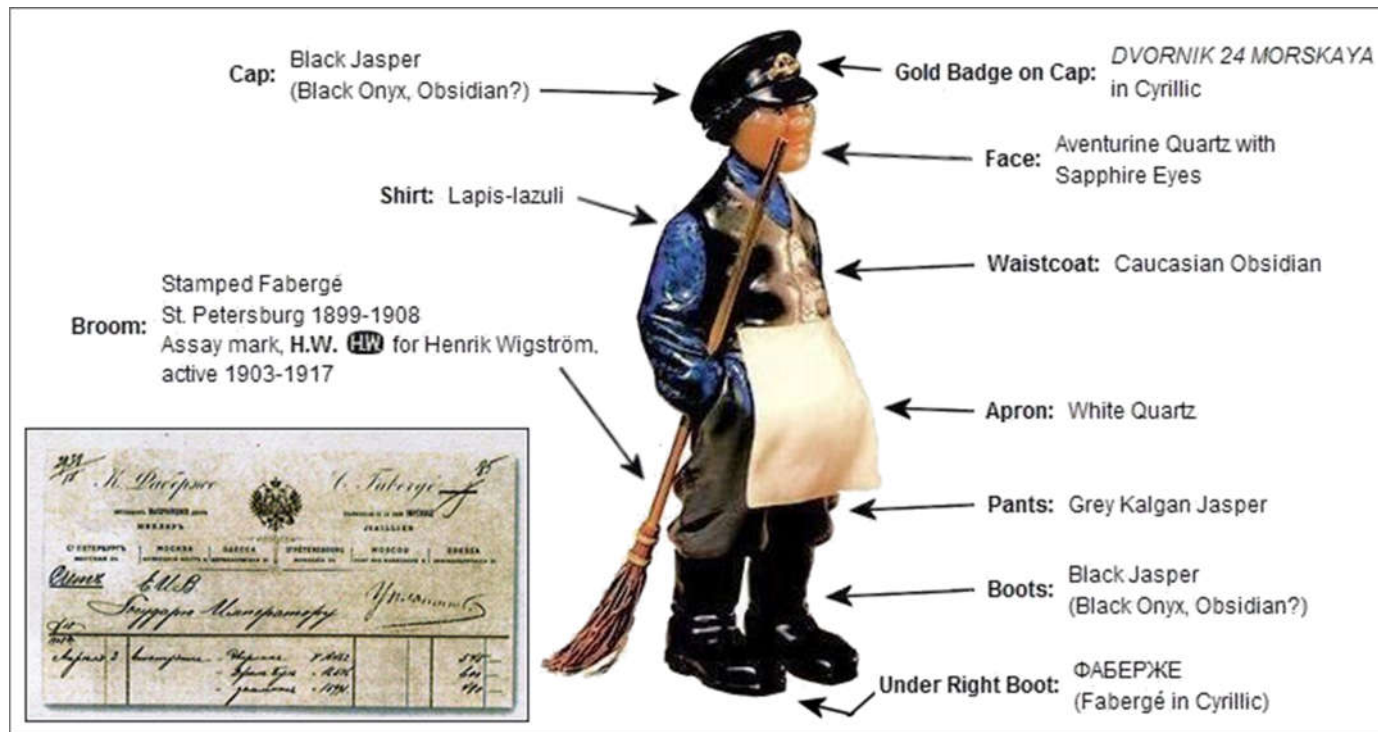
Peasant Playing Balalaika, Peasant with a Shovel, Coachman

*Not owned by Emperor Nicholas II, who owned 20 figures.

Fabergé scholar, A. Kenneth Snowman (1919-2002), describes the genius of Fabergé in stone carvings.

- Unerring instinct for the RIGHT MATERIAL and meticulous TREATMENT OF DETAIL
- Vigorous SENSE OF MOVEMENT, and perhaps, above all,
- An obvious AFFECTION FOR and SYMPATHY WITH THE SUBJECT

Painstakingly carved pieces of stone of a suitable color and texture, each playing their appointed part, were carefully - and invisibly - fitted together ... (*Art of Carl Fabergé*, 1953, 65)



Invoice (House Boy, Red John Bull, Carpenter), August 8, 1908, No. F16462, 545 Rubles to Nicholas II
(Fabergé Invoice Research Published by Dr. Valentin Skurlov in 2009)

Body Guards from the Emperor Nicholas II Collection



Kamer-Kazak Alexei Alexeievich Kudinov,
Personal Body Guard (1878-1915) to Dowager
Maria Feodorovna, 7.5 in. | 19 cm
(Courtesy State Pavlovsk Museum, Russia)



Portrait Figure of Kamer-Kazak N.N.Pustynnikov
(1857-1918),
Personal Body Guard to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna
(Photographs Walter Hill, Courtesy Stair Galleries, Hudson, New York)

Provenance: 1912 Purchased by Nicholas II. Soles of the boots are engraved "Fabergé, 1912. N.N. Pustynnikov, Kamer-Kazak since 1894" in Cyrillic

Emperor's hardstone figures traded after the 1918 Russian Revolution by dealers: Armand Hammer, Agathon Fabergé, Wartski, etc.

1934 Hammer Galleries, New York, sold the figure for \$2,250 to Mrs. George H. Davis of Manhattan and Rhinebeck, New York

2013 During a 15-minute auction 79 years later at Stair Galleries figure sold for \$5,980,000 to London jeweler Wartski. (Pre-sale estimate \$500,000 - 800,000)

Our research has uncovered ca. 50 Russian folkloristic hardstone figures, many of which require extensive further study.