## Celebrating the Romanov Tercentenary with Fabergé Imperial Presentation Gifts: A Review

by Roy Tomlin

Nearly four hundred years ago, the Romanov dynasty was founded in 1613 when a sixteen-year-old boy was chosen to reunite and lead Russia after years of political chaos and war known as "The Time of Troubles". In 1913, lavish festivities commemorating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Romanov rule were the last great spectacle in Imperial Russia exalting Emperor Nicholas II and the principles of autocracy, evoking memories of Russia's glorious past, and popularizing the House of Romanov. The Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty ordered numerous Tercentenary-themed items from the House of Fabergé for distribution as gifts during the 1913 Jubilee. It was one of Fabergé's last large-scale commissions from the Imperial Russian Court prior to the austerity of World War I and the tumult of revolution.

Preparations for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary began in 1910 with the establishment of The Committee on the Organization of the Celebration of the Tercentenary of the Romanov *Dynasty* headed by former Minister of the Interior, Alexander Bulygin.<sup>1</sup> The committee was responsible for organizing the official program of events and approving souvenirs. The festivities incorporated the legacy of the dynasty's founder, Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich (1613-1645), and fostered the bond between Emperor Nicholas II and his subjects. Historian Orlando Figes contends the Jubilee was meant to reinvent the past, to recount the epic of the 'popular Tsar', so as to invest the monarchy with a mythical historical legitimacy and an image of enduring permanence at this anxious time when its right to rule was being challenged by Russia's emerging democracy".<sup>2</sup> Comprised of representatives from government ministries and the Holy Synod, the Tercentenary Committee debated when the Jubilee should officially begin. The Holy Synod's position that July 11, the day of Tsar Mikhail's coronation, was the most appropriate date, was rejected. Instead, Bulygin's group chose March 6 (February 21 o.s.), the day Mikhail Romanov was formally elected tsar by the Assembly of the Land, known as the Zemskii Sobor. According to Bulygin, this date had "the broadest, truly state and all-Russian character".3



St. Petersburg Tercentenary Decorations (Courtesy <u>Wik</u>i)

The celebrations opened with a cannon salute from the Peter and Paul Fortress on the morning of the appointed day. Buildings in St. Petersburg were decorated with bunting, heraldic emblems, and portraits of Romanov rulers for the occasion. At noon, Emperor Nicholas II, the Tsesarevich Alexei, the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and Nicholas II's four daughters rode in a formal carriage procession along the Nevsky Prospekt from the Winter Palace to the Kazan Cathedral. A *Te Deum* was performed in celebration of the dynasty with nearly 5,000 guests in attendance followed by a formal reception hosted by the Imperial family at the Winter Palace.<sup>4</sup> Highlights attended by members of the Romanov family prior to the conclusion of the St. Petersburg festivities on February 24, 1913, included a gala performance of Mikhail Glinka's opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, recounting the legend of Ivan Susanin whose heroism prevented Tsar Mikhail's assassination, and a luxurious ball hosted by the capital's aristocracy at the Assembly Hall of the Nobility.<sup>5</sup>

From May 15 - 27, 1913, extensive Tercentenary celebrations resumed throughout Russia with the Romanovs in attendance:

- The Imperial family traveled by train from Tsarskoye Selo to Nizhny Novgorod, stopping in Vladimir along the way. In Nizhny Novgorod, the Emperor and his family visited the town and attended a *Te Deum* in the local church. The Tsesarevich received a Fabergé model of a paddle steamer from local dignitaries (discussed below).
- The Imperial family and their retinue boarded the *Mezhen* and three other steamboats for a journey along the Volga River visiting a number of Russian

towns associated with Tsar Mikhail and retracing his journey from Kostroma to Moscow for his coronation.<sup>6</sup>



Imperial Family in Yaroslavl during River Journey (Courtesy Wiki)

- In Kostroma, the town where Mikhail Romanov was informed he had been elected tsar, the crowds were jubilant with the arrival of Nicholas II. Prime Minister Vladimir Kokovstov recalled, "The Emperor and his family were surrounded by a massive crowd of people. Unrestrained expressions of joy rang out, and as if from their own warmth their hearts melted".<sup>7</sup> While in Kostroma the Imperial family visited the Ipatiev Monastery where Mikhail Romanov accepted the crown at the invitation of the *Zemskii Sobor*. Outside the monastery, the Emperor was greeted with the icon of the Feodorov Mother of God, used to bless Tsar Mikhail in 1613.<sup>8</sup> The Imperial family also toured a new Romanov Museum created as part of the Tercentenary celebrations and attended the ground breaking ceremony for the "Romanov Dynasty Memorial".<sup>9</sup>
- After completing the river journey, the celebrations culminated in Moscow with the arrival of the Imperial train on May 24, 1913. After a formal procession to the Kremlin, Nicholas II visited Tsar Mikhail's tomb in the Archangel Cathedral.<sup>10</sup> The following day, the Imperial family paraded along the Kremlin's Red Porch to the Cathedral of the Assumption for a *Te Deum* service.<sup>11</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Moscow's aristocracy hosted a dinner at the Assembly Hall of the Nobility, and the celebrations officially closed on May 27, 1913.



May 15, 1913 - Imperial Family at the Te Deum Service in Moscow (Courtesy <u>Wik</u>i)

For these elaborate ceremonies, numerous souvenirs and keepsakes were commissioned:

- Approximately 1.5 million commemorative rubles were minted<sup>12</sup>, 1.5 million bronze Tercentenary medals were produced<sup>13</sup>, and table medals of gold, silver, and bronze were struck<sup>14</sup>, all featuring the portraits of Emperor Nicholas II and Tsar Mikhail.
- Distinctive silver and enamel crosses were made for members of the clergy who served on February 21, 1913, the start of the Jubilee.<sup>15</sup>
- The Imperial Porcelain Factory manufactured bisque plaques featuring the portraits and ciphers of Emperor Nicholas II and Tsar Mikhail, the cap of Monomakh, the Imperial eagle and the dates *1613* and *1913*.<sup>16</sup>
- Official photographs and postcards of the Imperial family were released and Tercentenary books published.
- The emperor's image was allowed to be used on commonplace items such as calendars, cups, plates, handkerchiefs, and other bric-a-brac. Nicholas II's image was also printed on postage for the first time creating problems when postal workers refused to defile the sovereign's image with a postmark.<sup>17</sup>

## **Fabergé Imperial Presentation Pieces**

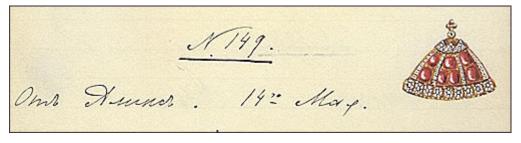
The Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty commissioned special mementoes for the 300th anniversary. Jewelry firms such as Fabergé, Hahn, Bolin, Morozov, and Tillander created jeweled presentation gifts which were bestowed at the discretion of the Emperor to members of the Imperial court, Russian citizens, and foreign dignitaries.

Tercentenary jewelry frequently incorporated one or more of the following:

- Cap of Monomakh (the ancient Muscovite crown used at the coronation of Tsar Mikhail),

- Dates 1613 and 1913,
- Romanov heraldic griffin, and the
- Double-headed eagles in the Byzantine style.

The cap of Monomakh appears to be the imperial symbol utilized most often based on the review of extant Fabergé objects and published original sketches. The extent to which it was used is expressed by Fabergé designer Alma Pihl's statement, 'I got completely fed up with having to integrate that fur hat into my designs' (Tillander-Godenhielm, Ulla, *The Russian Imperial Award System 1894-1917*, published in 2005, 194). Except for the dates *1613* and *1913*, these motifs were not exclusive to the Tercentenary. For example, Nicholas II's jewelry album contains a drawing of a cap of Monomakh cufflink from a set given to him by his wife seventeen years earlier for his 1896 coronation.



Nicholas II 1896 Cufflinks (von Solodkoff, *The Jewel Album of Tsar Nicholas II*, 1997, #149 and pp. 73 and 177)

A design sketch (dated May 22, 1913) from the Holmström's design albums coincides with the dates of the tercentenary activities throughout Russia, but it does not have the *1613-1913* dates. The sketch denotes one brooch with aquamarines and two with amethysts were made. In the opinion of the author, the gold, circular brooch with three aquamarines housed in its original, blue leather Imperial presentation case may be the aquamarine pin.



Holmström Aquamarine Brooch (Wartski, *Fabergé and the Russian Jewellers*, 2006, 47 and 60)

Items from the Tercentenary made of gold or silver should bear the 1908-1917 Russian hallmarks. Without a *documented provenance* or a *dated original design*, presentation gifts without the dates *1613* and *1913* are more difficult to ascribe to the Tercentenary with absolute certainty.

Fully understanding Fabergé's Tercentenary production for the Imperial Cabinet in its entirety is challenging since most of the stock books, designs, and other records from the firm's various workshops have not been located and may have been destroyed. The ledgers of the Imperial Cabinet provide insight into the numbers, costs, and recipients of Imperial presentation items, but unfortunately the descriptions of these gifts are often terse, lacking precise details of Fabergé's creative designs. Fortunately, two extant volumes of Albert Holmström's design albums, covering the period of March 6, 1909, to March 20, 1915, were discovered (Snowman, A. Kenneth, Fabergé: Lost and Found, 1993, 12). They are filled with illustrations and detailed descriptions of 316 Tercentenary items produced for the Imperial Cabinet by this particular workshop, and confirm Holmström's workshop began producing objects for the celebrations as early as 1909. The albums also contain information regarding items which could not be located during the literature search for this essay: three styles of bracelets - 20 made, two styles of necklaces - 5 made, and two styles of châtelaines or chains with decorative links often attached to a pocket watch - 4 made (Tillander-Godenhielm, 194).

The output of three leading Fabergé workshops - Albert Holmström, who succeeded his father August Holmström in 1903 with the same workmaster mark, Alfred Thielemann, and August Hollming - included brooches, pendants, rings, cufflinks, tie pins, and cigarette cases for the celebrations. Examples of these Tercentenary Imperial Presentation objects and a few other commemorative gifts are discussed in some detail below.

**Brooches**: According to the London Fabergé shop manager, Henry Bainbridge, designs for many of Fabergé's Tercentenary brooches were based on drawings made by Empress Alexandra Feodorovna which "were sent to Fabergé for elaboration" (Bainbridge, Henry Charles, *Peter Carl Fabergé: Goldsmith and Jeweller to the Russian Imperial court, His Life and Work*, 1949, 56). Traditionally, brooches were presented as gifts to ladies of the court and other prominent women; however, the Imperial Cabinet awarded them to men as well. Dr. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm explained to the author, the brooch was a symbol of the Emperor's appreciation, not necessarily something the recipient was meant to wear. Male recipients had the options of passing the gift on to their wife, or selling it back to the Imperial Cabinet in exchange for money, a common practice in Imperial Russia.

Research conducted by Dr. Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm in the Holmström design albums identified seven models of Tercentenary brooches - 171 made (Tillander-Godenhielm, 194). Von Habsburg found 43 brooches decorated with the cap of Monomakh were given to "Moscow theatre actors" (von Habsburg, and Lopato, *Fabergé: Imperial* 

*Jeweler*, 1993, 27-29). Four Imperial Presentation brooches were found from the St. Petersburg workshop of Albert Holmström, Fabergé's chief jewelry maker. Two of them share the same general design - circular gold brooches with filigree scrollwork, a gemset cap of Monomakh, and the dates *1613* and *1913*, only differing in the stones chosen for decoration.

The brooches have sequential inventory numbers 4594 and 4595, indicating they entered upon completion the Faberge retail stock at the same time. From an extant drawing in the Holmström design albums, it is known a similar brooch was sketched in watercolor on February 24, 1913. The sapphire brooch #4594, was given to Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden (1883-1956), lady-in-waiting to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, presumably during the tercentenary celebrations in early 1913. The aquamarine brooch was presented to actress Maria Vedrinskaia (1877-1947) of the Imperial Theaters on July 2, 1914. At this time, it is not fully understood if the Imperial Cabinet continued presenting "tercentenary jewelry" as late as 1914, or whether the brooch was a gift for reasons not associated with the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and it was just a utilization of leftover stock from the prior year's celebrations.

Finding and matching design sketches with the actual objects has been one of the rewards of this review.



Holmström Design Sketch (February 24, 1913) and Sapphire Tercentenary Brooch #4594 (Courtesy <u>Wartski</u>)



Aquamarine Tercentenary Brooch # 4595 (Odom, What Became of Peter's Dream? 2003, 40-41)



Actress Maria Vedrinskaia, Recipient of the Brooch - Hillwood Museum Collection, Washington, DC. (Courtesy <u>KinoTeatr.ru</u>)

The rubies and rose diamond design sketch shown below (dated May 22, 1913) matches the golden/blue brooches in design (dated February 24, 1913). Both dates fall within the two official celebration time periods (February 21-24 in St. Petersburg) and (May 15-27, 1913 throughout all of Russia) suggesting a continuation of the design and production phase incorporating the Romanov Tercentenary theme after the official events had ended.



Holmström Design Sketch - May 22, 1913 Matching Brooch Not Yet Found. (Snowman, Lost and Found, 1993, 136-7)

A lozenge-shaped brooch with a sapphire mounted double headed eagle and the inventory number 3785 matches the original design (dated February 9, 1913) which denotes nine brooches and fifteen pendants of this style were produced.



Holmström Design Sketch and Lozenge-shaped Brooch #3785 (Christie's New York, *Russian Works of Art*, October 17, 1996, Lot 89, \$13,800)

Small gold and silver brooch "of lobed and square form", with a double-headed eagle encircled by rose-cut diamonds, diamond set corners, decorative scrolls, and the dates *1613* and *1913* is in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. It is odd to have a green glass paste in the eagle's chest, suggesting the original stone was replaced. A similar design for this brooch with a red stone is in the Holmström albums.





Holmström Design Sketch (Tillander-Godenhielm, Russian Imperial Award System, 2005, 199)

Gold and Silver Brooch (von Habsburg and Lopato, *Fabergé: Imperial Jeweler*, 1993, p. 263, Item 116)

**Pendants** were given to ladies of the court and other entitled designees. Six different models (Tillander-Godenhielm, 194) were found in the Holmström design albums - 113 made. Pendants from the two leading Fabergé jewelry workshops, Albert Holmström and Alfred Thielemann, were identified. Snowman (*Fabergé: Lost and Found*, 126) illustrates a design sketch and a completed Holmström semi-circular pendant with a chased gold, amethyst-set, double-headed eagle flanked by scrollwork and the dates *1613* and *1913*. The cap of Monomakh is suspended below the eagle with amethysts. Two variations on the design sketch are illustrated below.



Pendants in Holmström Design Sketch and Examples (Courtesy Wartski, Christie's London and <u>Fabergé Museum</u>)

From the Alfred Thielemann workshop a two-colored gold pendant in the form of a jeweled cap of Monomakh with three suspended purpurine eggs with diamond-set mounts (without the dates) is in the Woolf Family Collection. Pink gold was used to simulate the mink border of the crown. Although lacking the *1613-1913* dates, the pendant bears the 1908-1917 Russian hallmark, and was probably made for the Romanov 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



Thielemann Pendant (Wartski, Carl Fabergé: A Private Collection, 2012, 168, Item 142)

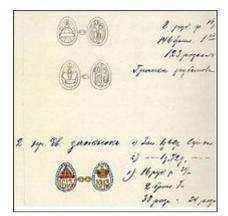
**Rings** are scarce, since only six Tercentenary Fabergé rings were made according to the Imperial Cabinet's ledgers. Between November 1913 and February 1914, they were presented to the engineers Komarskii and Nargorskii, the nobleman A. Bartan, the civil servant A. Melnikov and the officers Kirpichev and Bauchisartiskii.



Tercentenary Rings (Christie's New York #4180; Bonham's London, *Russian Sale*, November 26, 2007, Lot 227; Sotheby's London, #4177)

The three rings identified in auction catalogs all share the same design and workmaster, Alfred Thielemann. Each ring's central feature is a diamond-set, double-headed eagle, the dates *1613* and *1913* on the two sides. Two of the rings have inventory numbers - 4180 (Christie's New York, *Russian Works of Art*, April 11, 2003, Lot 126, \$50,190) and 4177 (Sotheby's London, *Russian Art*, May 29-30, 2012, Lot 402, £21,250).

**Cufflinks** were presented to eligible gentlemen. Two pairs of jeweled cufflinks from the Holmström design sketches (dated April 6, 1913) with the required identifiers appear in Snowman, *Lost and Found*, 1993, 132. A pair of links matching the Holmström sketches was given to Emperor Nicholas II at Easter 1913 by his wife Alexandra.



Holmström Design Sketch, Dated April 6, 1913 (Courtesy Wartski)

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'From Aliks - Easter 1913' (von Solodkoff, Jewel Album of Nicholas II, pp. 73 and 183, #303)

Dr. Tillander-Godenhielm stated after her study of the Holmström design books only three sets were made. Two additional pairs of Holmström cufflinks were discovered in the literature search and discussed with Dr. Tillander-Godenhielm and Kieran McCarthy of Wartski. They suggested the Holmström albums are an excellent resource for the types of items made between 1909 and 1915, but they are not a comprehensive record of every item created by the workshop. Two sets discovered in this study are:



Tercentenary Cufflinks (Christie's New York, *Russian Works of Art*, October 17, 1996, Lot 99, \$18,400)

Pair of gold and white enamel cufflinks, each with a diamond-set, double-headed eagle flanked by two sapphires. The lozenge-shaped end bar of each cufflink is comprised of the dates *1613* and *1913*, flanked by two sapphires. (Christie's New York, *Russian Works of Art*, October 17, 1996, Lot 99, \$18,400)



Romanov Griffin Cufflinks (Wartski, *Fabergé and the Russian Jewellers, 2006,* 47 and 52. Photograph Courtesy John Atzbach)

Pair of cufflinks with openwork, chased gold, Romanov griffins, each holding a diamond-set shield in a gold, circular frame within a square border set with diamonds and four sapphires, but without the *1613* and *1913* dates is extant. A design for a Romanov griffin 'within an identical gold mount' is in the Holmström albums (dated February 12, 1913). This supports the suggestion not all of Holmström's creations are listed in the design albums, but are the cufflinks Tercentenary commemorative pieces without the dates even though they fit into the time period and the provenance is known? The cufflinks were purchased by the Imperial Cabinet on February 28, 1913, for 350 rubles, and presented to Dimitri Dimitrievich Marshalov, secretary of the Court Office of His Imperial Excellency Grand Duke Georgii Maximilianovich Romanovskii, Duke of Leuchtenburg, and are now in a private collection.

**Tie Pins** as gifts to gentleman were jeweled pins used to fix in place wide silk ties with broad knots during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Imperial Cabinet ledgers list 135 Tercentenary tie pins with the cap of Monomakh (von Habsburg and Lopato, 1993, 27-29). Only one was found - a gold tie pin made in the August Hollming workshop consisting of a gem-set cap of Monomakh enclosed in a circular frame with the dates *1613* and *1913* underneath the crown.



Tercentenary Tie Pin (von Habsburg, Fabergé: Imperial Craftsman and His World, 2000, 260, Item 650)

**Cigarette Cases** were a popular object from the House of Fabergé, since smoking was a fashionable pastime during the Romanov era. The two cases from August Hollming's workshop illustrated below present a conundrum - not yet solved - in this study. A silver gilt, steel blue-gray guilloché enameled cigarette case, the cover applied with a jeweled cap of Monomakh, and a strawberry-red guilloché case applied with a gem-set cap of Monomakh in an original leather presentation box presented to the Head of the Forests of Poland by Nicholas II during the Tercentenary. Are they Tercentenary gifts?



Cigarette Cases with the Monomakh Crown (Traina, *The Fabergé Case*, 1998, 57, 61)

Not only did the Imperial family bestow magnificent Fabergé gifts, family members also received them during the Tercentenary celebrations. The most stunning of these from the Henrik Wigström workshop is the Imperial Romanov Tercentenary Egg given to Empress Alexandra Feodorovna by Emperor Nicholas II at Easter on April 14, 1913.



1913 Imperial Romanov Tercentenary Egg (Muntian, *Fabergé Easter Presents*, 2003, 60)

The egg is an incredible testament to the longevity of the Romanov dynasty, decorated with Vasilii Zuiev's watercolor portraits of all 18 rulers. The gold, silver, and white enameled egg is accentuated with symbols of autocratic power such as the Imperial crown, double-headed eagles, and the cap of Monomakh, and is supported by a three-sided imperial eagle on a gold, enamel and purpurine base.

The egg's interior contains a rotating, steel globe covered with dark blue enamel and gold representing maps of the Russian Empire in *1613* and *1913*. Seized during the Russian Revolution, it was never sold to the West, and is in the collection of Moscow's Kremlin Armoury Museum.



Tsesarevich Alexei Paddle Steamer (Forbes and Tromeur-Brenner, *Fabergé: The Forbes Collection*, 1999, 251)

During the Imperial family's visit to Nizhny-Novgorod on May 17, 1913, Tsesarevich Alexei was presented a model of a river **paddle steamer** by the Volga Shipbuilders crafted in the Henrik Wigström workshop. The vessel measuring the 28 ½ inches is made of silver, silver-gilt, and enamel, has two tiers of cabins with colored, glass windows, and Fabergé's attention to detail is evident in the addition of lifeboats, life

jackets, silver tables and stools, and an oxidized silver chimney. A mechanism plays two musical tunes, *God Save the Tsar* and *The Volga River Song*. Originally, battery controlled lightning illuminated the ships windows. A blue enameled plaque over the paddle wheel is decorated with the Imperial eagle, the year *1913*, and is inscribed *To the Heir, the Tsarevich Alexei Nicholaevich [sic] from the Volga Shipbuilders*. The paddle steamer has had many owners, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the famous Fabergé collector Malcolm Forbes.



Alexei Paddle Steamer Detail (Courtesy <u>Christie's</u>)

**Tercentenary Badges** were a hereditary award 'for those who expressed their personal, faithful congratulations' to Their Majesties (Patrikeev and Bojnovich, 341). A design from the Henrik Wigström workshop illustrates a Fabergé Tercentenary badge made up of a wreath of oak and laurel branches tied with a ribbon bearing the dates *1613* and *1913*. A crowned Romanov griffin framed by lion's heads sits upon the wreath. The Fabergé design is for a privately commissioned badge, since the original badges awarded by the Emperor were manufactured by the firm of Kortmann.





Wigström Sketch for Tercentenary Badge (Tillander-Godenhielm, *et al.*, *Golden Years of Fabergé*, 2000, 46)

Tercentenary Badge by Kortmann (Courtesy Wiki)

Finally, two **silver plates** made by Fabergé workmaster Antii Nevalainen were discovered in the collection of the Museum of Art, Middlebury College in Vermont. Presented to Grand Duchess Marie Georgievna (1876-1940) and her daughter Princess Ksenia Georgievna (1903-1965), the larger plate (16.1 cm. in diameter) bears the engraved inscription, *To Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Marie Georgievna* 

on the day of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rule of the House of Romanov from faithful officials of the Court 1613-1913. The second plate (13.1 cm.) has an identical inscription addressed to Her Highness Princess Ksenia Georgievna.



Marie Georgievna Romanov Tercentenary Plate (Odom, What Became of Peter's Dream? p. 87, Item 15)



Grand Duchess Marie Georgievna and Daughters Ksenia and Nina (Courtesy <u>Alexander Palace Time</u> <u>Machine</u>)



Ksenia Georgievna Romanov Plate (Both Plates Courtesy of Middlebury College Museum of Art)

Grand Duchess Marie Georgievna also had a second daughter, Princess Nina (1901-1974), so the possibility exists a Tercentenary plate was gifted to her as well.

Fabergé created a varied assortment of objects awarded by the Imperial court and personal gifts for the Romanov Tercentenary. Almost 100 years after this momentous historic event a very small percentage of them still exist and are described in this review - continued research within the ledgers of the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty and other archival documents may lead to further discoveries as well as the identities of the recipients of these anniversary gifts made by Fabergé. Given the substantial number of Fabergé objects made for this Jubilee, only a few remain, one can assume a significant number were probably destroyed in the chaos of the Russian Revolution, swept away like the dynasty they represented.

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## Notes

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- 6. King, 397-398.
- 7. Ibid., 399.
- 8. Wortman, 473.
- 9. The <u>memorial</u> was never completed due to the outbreak of World War I and the Russian Revolution.
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- 17. Figes, 13.