

Fabergé Symposium Summaries, St. Petersburg, 2016

Compiled by Riana Benko (Slovenia)

From October 6-8, 2016, it was my delight and pleasure to participate for a second time in a series of three annual Fabergé Museum conferences held in 2014-2016 in St. Petersburg, Russia. Below are my brief summaries and cell phone pictures of the many interesting and varied presentations which were offered to Fabergé enthusiasts, museum curators, and scholars.



Mikhail Ovchinnikov, First Deputy Director of the Fabergé Museum, opened the Fifth International Academic Conference dedicated to the 170th anniversary of the birth of Carl Fabergé. The event was attended by circa 200 individuals with attendees from Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Slovenia, United Kingdom, and the United States. The main conference theme was the presentation of the newly-found archival documents, photos, postcards, etc., that allow a new look and conclusions for the interpretation of the Fabergé's work. Another theme which stood out was the large volume of the state gifts from the Tsar's Court as well as the numerous gifts presented by the Imperial Family to royal relatives in England, Germany, or Denmark.

Day 1 - October 6, 2016 -- Section 1. Fabergé Firm and the House of Romanov

[] Supplementary resources added with links to provide additional information.

Igor Filimonov, Alexander Krechmer: *Significant Events for the House of Romanov in Commemorative Publications and Fabergé's Works (Based on Materials from a Private Collection)*



The first session began with a presentation of photos, documents, post cards and other materials published as commemorative publications for significant (either historical or personal) events for the House of Romanov which inspired Fabergé's work. For example, the 1896 Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II, unveiling of the Alexander III statue, a Yalta visit by Nicholas II in the newly-built yacht, *The Standart*, the opening of the exhibition park planted with orange trees, Romanov women working as Sisters of Charity in World War I, medals which Nicholas II and his son received, etc. Filimonov suggested the 1911 "Bay tree" Fabergé egg represents orange trees and not laurels. Dr. Valentin Skurlov strongly opposed this idea.

Galina Korneva, Tatiana Cheboksarova: *Coronation Jewels in 1896*



The researchers presented documents connected with the 1896 Coronation of Tsar Nicholas II and the gifts made for the immediate and extended Imperial Family, as well as for the Imperial Court, noble men and women, officers, and others. The final cost of the coronation was 6,971,000 rubles (equivalent to circa \$154 million in 2015 values). Fabergé, heavily involved in making gifts for the Imperial Coronation, made jewelry for 16 ladies in the Imperial Family: Nicholas II's gift to Alexandra Feodorovna (yellow rose brooch, no. 4 above, 12,250 rubles equivalent to circa \$270,000 in 2015), Maria Feodorovna, Maria Pavlovna, Xenia Alexandrovna, Anastasia Mikhailovna, etc. There were commissions for Vladimir Alexandrovich, brother of Nicholas II, and other of the nobility (12 cigarette boxes, snuff boxes, medals, and more). Illustrated above (no. 3) is an original Fabergé invoice from that time. The total

amount on Fabergé invoices for the coronation gifts was 66,892 rubles (equivalent to circa \$1.48 million in 2015 values).

Igor Zimin: *Items by Fabergé in the Home Environment of the Imperial Family*



Archival documents and photos show conventional small, but useful and decorative items made by the Fabergé firm displayed on tables, shelves, cabinets for use by members of the Imperial Family. Illustration no. 1 is Nicholas II's desk. The Fabergé objects include bells for servants, thermometers, candlesticks, knives to open letters, icons, frames, vases with lapidary flowers and hardstone animals. Similar photographs exist from the Alexander Palace and Winter Palace, including the well-known vitrine displaying ten Imperial Fabergé Easter eggs in Alexandra's quarters in the Winter Palace. Professor Zimin wondered why some Fabergé eggs were displayed in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, since the family lived most of the time in Tsarskoe Selo.

Karen Kettering: *Fabergé and Portrait Diamonds*



The author began by stating the wording *portrait diamond* is a slightly confusing term; it designates a portrait miniature covered by an unusual sort of flat diamond. This kind of jewelry was very popular in the 18th century in Europe and not only in the Russian Imperial Court. Portrait diamonds were of enormous importance also for the Fabergé firm, in particular for the Imperial Easter eggs - the 1897 Coronation Egg, the 1893 Caucasus Egg (with the portrait of George Alexandrovich, brother of Nicholas II, given to his mother Maria Feodorovna), or the 1895 Rosebud Egg with the portrait of Nicholas II, (given to his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna, as her first Imperial Fabergé egg). [Kettering, Karen, "Under a Diamond Glass: Portrait Diamonds, Fabergé, and the McFerrin Collection" in *Fabergé - The McFerrin Collection: The Opulence Continues*, 2016, 11-15]

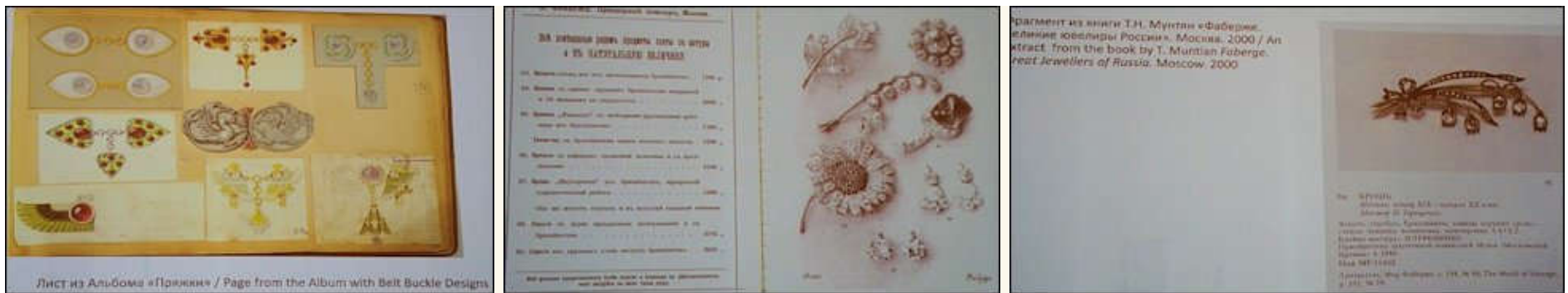
Natalia Serapina: *Fabergé in the Imperial and Grand-Ducal Art Collections of the Romanovs (1917-1927)*. Based on *Materials from the St. Petersburg Central State Archive of Literature and Arts* (no photographs available)

Author studied 163 documents which have been preserved. They detail Fabergé objects in a Xenia Alexandrovna contract for 41 Fabergé 41 items, including small lapidary animals, clocks, umbrella handles, mirrors, rock crystal

vases with the lapidary flowers, thermometers, etc. Unfortunately, additional documents from the Gatchina Palace, Winter Palace, as well as Xenia Alexandrovna's palace are lost, because they were either destroyed or burned. A few documents from the Gatchina Palace are extant, but it seems the objects have disappeared, probably stolen or sold outside of the Russia.

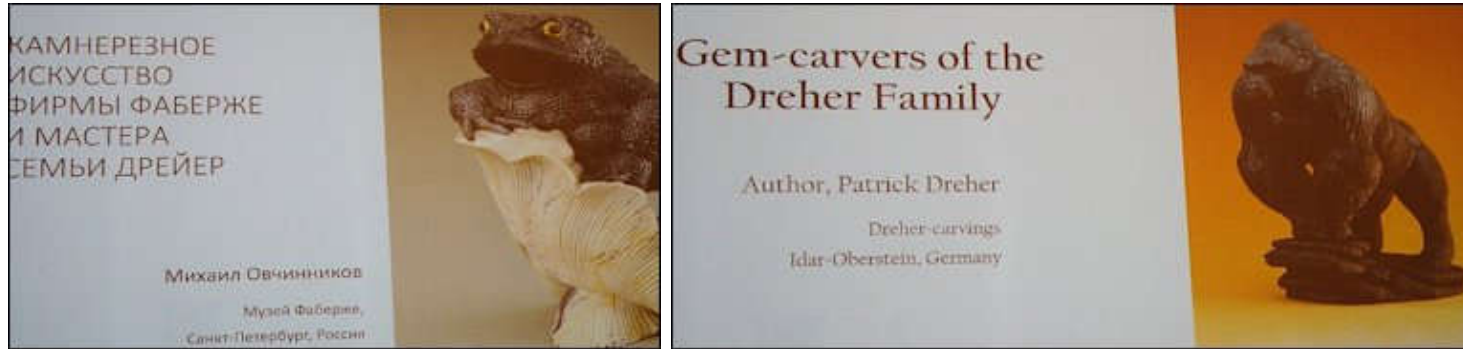
Section 2. Fabergé Style

Elena Korneichuk: *Drawings and Documents as Sources for Studying the House of Fabergé*



From illustrations in an album "Belt Buckle Designs" by Fabergé it is evident the firm had 16 different models of buckles, which were mostly produced in the Moscow branch. Sketches of other designs were shown from published sources. The lilies of the valley brooch (no. 3 above) is located in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Mikhail Ovchinnikov, Patrick Dreher: *Lapidary Art of Fabergé Firm and the Gem-carvers of the Dreher Family*



Today it is difficult to identify all the masters who carved Fabergé's lapidary animals because hardstone carvings are usually not hallmarked and signed by the workmaster, unless the gold components are marked. Well-known original collections (Nicholas II, King Edward VII) are attributed to specific Fabergé ateliers. Patrick Dreher of Idar-Oberstein, Germany, presented himself as a 5th generation carver whose ancestors (the 2nd generation) worked for Fabergé. He outlined the process of making gemstone carved animals, which starts with a sketch and finishes with a carved product. Production is quite demanding, since the material used is very expensive. For some carvings it takes around 350 hours to complete one animal. Dreher in his 28-year career has discarded only two objects.

Section 3. Fabergé and His Jeweler Contemporaries

(Compiler regrets there are no details on the following three presentations.)

Natalia Sapfirova: *Fabergé and Marshak*

Lennart Booij: *Fabergé and Lalique, a Russian-Dutch Connection*

Maria Osipova: *Fabergé and Bolin*

Section 4. History of Collections

Viktor Garanin: *300 Years of the Alexander Fersman Mineralogical Museum. Past, Present, and Future*



The Fersman Museum (no. 1 above) was founded by Peter the Great in 1714 to appeal to a wider audience. He enlarged the collection with objects from his extensive travels. By 1745, the collection included more than 3000 minerals, fossils, gems and rocks. One of the most important directors of the museum was Mihail Vasiljevič Lomonosov (1711-1765), who created the first catalog of stones which they still have today. Another driving force behind the museum was Alexander Fersman (1883-1945). The museum was moved from St. Petersburg to Moscow in 1934. Today its collection includes more than 135,000 items of natural crystals, geodes, druses, and many other kinds of mineral treasures. The author concluded his presentation by stating that in some Russian museums (in Moscow and also in the Fersman) there are a lot of imitations/replicas/fakes of old masters, and also of Fabergé. Some replicas are so perfectly made, they too are masterpieces.

Marie E. Betteley: *Fabergé in the Royal Thai Collection*



The presenter's parents, Roy A. Betteley, director of Hillwood Museum, and his wife Paulette, were part of a small group traveling to Bangkok in June 1983 to see for the first (and still the only time) the Fabergé objects in the Thai Royal Fabergé Collection. In 1891, Tsesarevich Nicholas during his world tour met King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). He presented Fabergé gifts to his host. Additionally, representatives of the Fabergé firm regularly visited the Far East selling to the Thai Court. At least 72 Fabergé items, many of them with Siamese symbols, are still in use today. The Royal Collection includes Buddha statues, brooches, medals, medallions, bells, various boxes (one with the image of their palaces), perfume bottles, etc. [*Fabergé in the Court of Siam* by Christel Ludewig McCanless and Annemiek Wintraecken, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Winter 13-14](#)]

Jennifer McFerrin-Bohner, Dorothy McFerrin: *A Look Inside the McFerrin Collection*



The daughter/mother team shared in pictures and words their enthusiasm for the Artie and Dorothy McFerrin Collection of some 600 Fabergé and Russian decorative objects on view at the Museum of Natural Science in Houston, Texas. Included are three Fabergé Easter eggs – 1902 Roçaille, circa 1913 Nobel Ice, and the 1892 Imperial Diamond Trellis Eggs. In April 2017, the Diamond Trellis Egg and its Fabergé elephant automaton will be united at the museum for an exhibition. Last year, it was established that the [small white elephant](#) owned by the Royal Collection of Queen Elizabeth II, is almost certainly the "lost" surprise elephant. The McFerrin Collection contains many wonderful items by Fabergé and his contemporary jewelers -- frames for photographs, cigarette cases and snuff boxes, table clocks, jewelry, and two tiaras. Many of these objects were once owned by Emperor Alexander III, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, Emperor Nicholas II, Grand Duchess Olga and Xenia Alexandrovna, King George I of Greece, King Edward VII, and more. [*Diamond Trellis Egg (1892)*, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Fall 2015](#)]

Kieran McCarthy: *Voices from Fabergé. The Imperial Goldsmith's Adventure in Britain and the Newly Discovered Archive Gifted to the Fabergé Museum in St. Petersburg*



In the first public lecture McCarthy, director of Wartski, shared his exciting research findings of the London Fabergé branch (left above, location at 173 New Bond Street) based on recently discovered archival documents. The branch which opened in 1903 was managed by Henry C. Bainbridge (1873/74?-1954), who was also Carl Fabergé's biographer. The donation of the Bainbridge documents, photos, letters, memos, and diaries carefully recording transactions between St. Petersburg and London are displayed in three showcases at the Fabergé Museum. Fabergé's second son, Agathon Fabergé (1876-1940) was the main link with Bainbridge, who began his job in London in 1904.



Bainbridge Papers Weighing Approximately 12 kg Displayed during the Faberge Symposium

During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-06) Fabergé and his firm did not have enough commissions in Russia, so he turned to the stable and prosperous English market where he found an eager clientele in the British Royal Family

and its nobility. King Edward VII was a great collector of cigarette cases and lapidary animals, while the Queen Alexandra collected lapidary flowers in the rock crystal vases. Today, the Royal Collection of Queen Elizabeth II owns the largest number Fabergé objects passed down through the generations. [McCarthy's new book *Fabergé in London: The British Branch of the Imperial Russian Goldsmith* is to be published in late 2016/early 2017, further details in Publications.]

Day 2 - October 7, 2016 -- Section 5. Official and Private Gifts

Alexey Pomigalov: *Gifts for the Danish Royal Family in the Fabergé Museum's Collection*



It is documented that Empress Maria Feodorovna (1847-1928) lavished gifts on her Danish Royal relatives. She traveled to Denmark once or twice a year on her yacht, *Polar Star*, for family events, i.e., weddings, birthdays, and the birth of a child. The gifts were selected at least three or four months before the journey and included objects by Fabergé when not only private gifts but diplomatic gifts were needed. For one such journey, the Empress spent 50,000 rubles, which in today's value is circa \$800,000.

Valentin Skurlov, Tatiana Fabergé: *Cabinet Award Gifts (1881-1917) - Snuffboxes*



Snuffboxes were very popular and luxurious gifts between the royal families and Europe. Various occasions lent themselves to present snuffboxes to ambassadors upon their retirement from service and also to deserving officers-emeritus and noblemen. The Mikhail Perkhin workshop, active from 1886-1903, was a major maker of these boxes. Empress Maria Feodorovna bought 228 snuff boxes, many of them decorated with portraits of Alexander III, Nicholas II, and her grandson Alexei, heir to the throne, or with just with their initials. Fabergé made a few boxes with portraits of Maria Feodorovna (1847-1928), and Alexandra Feodorovna (1872-1918). One of the most expensive ones was given to German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) and is now in the McFerrin Collection in Houston, Texas. [Spotlight on the Bismarck Imperial Presentation Box, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Spring 2011](#)]

Alexander von Solodkoff: *Imperial Presents: Empress Alexandra and Her Hessen Relatives in Germany and England*



Archival records indicate Empress Alexandra Feodorovna gave many Fabergé gifts to her family and relatives in Germany during family reunions reunion, or sent them for Christmas, Easter, birthdays, births of children, and weddings. Gifts included large and small jewelry, picture frames, boxes of all sizes, umbrella handles, letter openers, and assorted decorative and useful objects made of precious and semi-precious metals and stones. Alexandra's correspondence with her sister Princess Irène von Hesse and by Rhine has been studied in detail. The stand with 50 Fabergé pendant eggs (no. 5 above) was possibly given by the Russian Empress Alexandra to her sister. [Exhibition catalog: *Fabergé, Geschenke der Zarenfamilie*, 2016, 116-118]

Olga Krstich, Valentin Skurlov: *Russian Diplomacy and the East: Gifts by Fabergé from the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty*



Fabergé gifts were given by the Imperial Court to other countries - Turkey, Persia, Ethiopia, China, Siam, Afghanistan, and Japan. These countries in turn sent gifts to the Russian Imperial Court, mainly during the 1896 Coronation. During the reign of Nicholas II circa 1200 gifts were sent to these countries in the form of valuable medals or medallions as well as a variety of boxes and other useful objects. The price range of individual gifts was between 1,000 and 7,000 rubles, or in today's value between \$20,000 and \$150,000.

Dmitriy Krivoshei: *Russian Military Institutions' Commissions from Fabergé (1909-1916)*



Fifty Russian military institutions commissioned through the Imperial Cabinet gifts from Fabergé - trophies, medals, medallions, table clocks, cigarette cases, snuff boxes, cup holders, helmets, kovshes, etc. Military personnel and Cossacks (guards) received gifts on various occasions: birthdays, certain victories, courageous acts, retirements, injuries on duty, and more. One commission included 150 cigarette cases. During a five-year period around 90,000 rubles (circa \$1.2 million in today's values) was paid from the Emperor's fund. An individual gift could amount to 2,600 rubles (in today's value circa \$35,000).

Section 6. Fabergé Firm and Its Influence on Modern Jewelry

(Compiler regrets there are no details on the following four presentations)

Irina Perfilieva: *The House of Fabergé's Artistic Traditions in the Post-Modern Era*

Irina Toropova: *Amber - The Legacy of Carl Fabergé's Firm as Seen by Kaliningrad Artists*

Galina Gabriel: *Traditions and Experiments in Modern Jewelry Art of St. Petersburg*

Sofia Grigoryeva: *Traditions of Russian Enamel in the Works of St. Petersburg Jeweler Aleksey Dontsov*

Section 7. Carl Fabergé and His Firm. New Findings

Cynthia Coleman Sparke: *Fabergé's Monumental Kovshes with Bogatyr Themes*



Kovshes given away as protocol or state gifts funded by His Majesty's Imperial Cabinet are important pieces of Russian cultural heritage. Some of the objects are very large, made in silver, sometimes decorated with semi-precious and precious stones, are magnificently sculpted with warriors and horses conveying power, and in some cases, they carry an engraved inscription with historical data and a dedication. The Imperial Cabinet purchased

kovshes from different prominent suppliers and also from Fabergé's Moscow branch in preparation for extended official tours at home and abroad.

[This subject is treated extensively in a three parts - *Fabergé's Monumental Kovshes with Bogatyr Themes* by Cynthia Sparke and DeeAnn Hoff, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Winter 2015](#); *Fabergé's Monumental Kovshes with Bogatyr Themes, Part II* by Cynthia Coleman Sparke, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Summer and Fall 2016](#); *From Bogatyrs to Boyars* by DeeAnn Hoff, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Winter 2016](#)]

Ludmila Budrina: A Jasper Writing Set, the Empress' Thank You to the Jeweler Bourdier for an Easter Egg



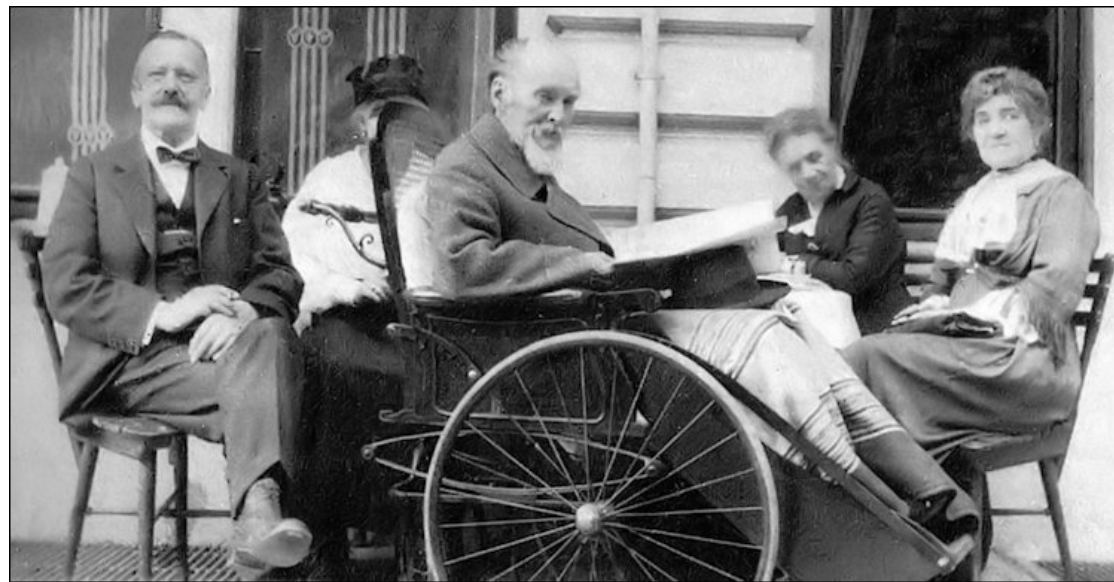
Researcher presented her findings about the French jeweler, Th. Bourdier, for whom she found some objects in Russia and much to her surprise, she located the lost jasper writing set in the Jimmy Carter Center in Atlanta, USA. Its history was happy news to the delighted curatorial staff, and future visitors!

Karina Pronitcheva: *Fabergé at the All-Russia Industrial and Art Exhibition 1896 in Nizhny Novgorod*



Fabergé's participation in Nizhny Novgorod exhibition was neither noticed nor mentioned in the Russian press, even though he won the State Emblem for his work. He was, however, mentioned in the foreign press, which highlighted an extremely beautifully-made diamond necklace, costing 7,500 rubles (in today's value almost \$17,000). In 1896, Fabergé received the Order of St. Stanislav, 2nd Class.

Becker Horst: *Peter Carl Fabergé and the Russian Revolution. His 1918 Emigration to Wiesbaden*



Carl Fabergé in Wheelchair with His Wife Auguste Fabergé (far right), Wiesbaden, 1918 (von Habsburg, Géza. *Fabergé*, 1986, 30)

During World War I the Fabergé firm made pots and grenades which turned into a steady business. During that time period his turnover was around 3 million rubles (in today's values circa \$35 million). The presenter found archival records about the last years of Fabergé's life in exile in Wiesbaden, Germany, where Carl Fabergé lived in a hotel,

and was acquainted with a small Russian community complete with an Orthodox church. [Fabergé's Records Found – Last Years of His Life, *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, [Summer and Fall 2016](#)]

The Eggs Race - Forbes vs. the Kremlin

by Christopher "Kip" Forbes

A second public lecture about Carl Fabergé and his *objets d'art* concluded the Fifth International Academic Conference. Kip Forbes, Vice Chairman, FORBES Inc. who, together with his father Malcolm Forbes, gathered the Forbes Magazine Collection of Fabergé (now a part of the Link of Times Collection housed in the Fabergé Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia) shared stories about how his father initiated the race for the most imperial eggs starting with the 1965 acquisition of the Orange Tree Egg.



1911 Orange Tree Egg



[New York Times](#), June 12,
1985 Announcing the Purchase
of the 1900 Cuckoo Egg



Malcolm Forbes and His Dozen Eggs
(Photographs Courtesy Christopher "Kip" Forbes)

Over the next two decades my father added a further 11 Imperial Eggs. At the time of his death in February 1990 he thought Forbes had an even dozen to the Kremlin's 10. With FORBES having been founded in September 1917 and the Soviet Government a month later, Malcolm reveled in winning the Eggs race and ran a series of ads with the tag line:

“Carl Fabergé knew his business. FORBES Magazine knows it business. Forbes: Capitalist Tool.”

After the collapse of the Soviet Government in 1991, further records became available which proved two Eggs were not imperial and one was the surprise for another. The following year on the occasion of FORBES Magazine's 75th Anniversary, Malcolm's heirs flew the last Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, to New York on the company's gold and dollar green Boeing 727. During the celebration at Radio City Music Hall, after their respective husbands' congratulatory speeches, Steve Forbes presented First Ladies Raisa Gorbachev and Nancy Reagan with gem-set Fabergé egg charms.