

Windows on Russian Life: Fabergé's Hardstone Figures

by

Tim Adams

Christel McCanless

Annemiek Wintraecken

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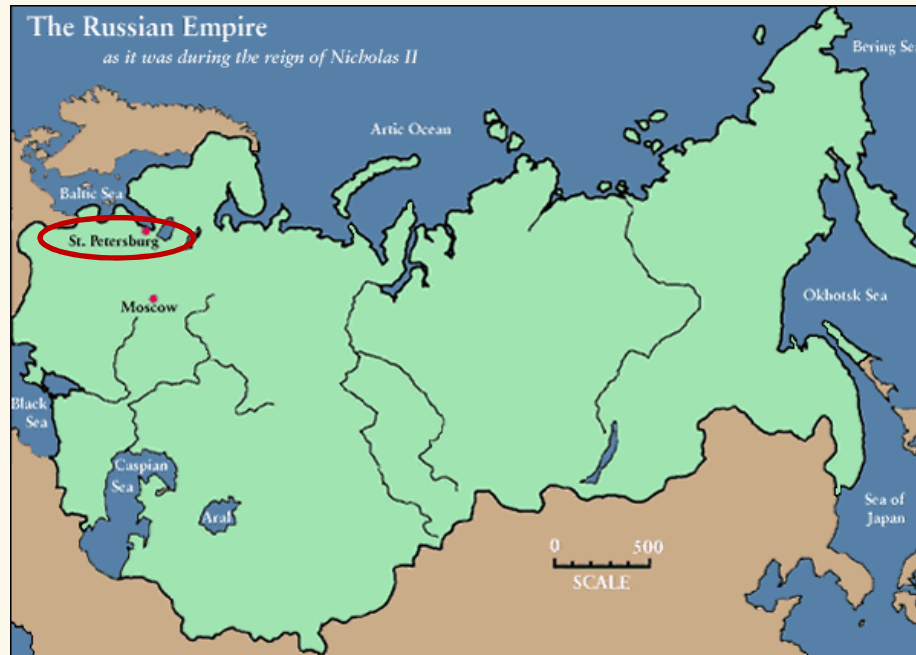


Fabergé Hardstone
Figure of a House Boy
(Dvornik), 1908
(bon-cadeau.ru)



Russian Types, Photograph by
J. Monstein, Moscow
(Library of Nineteenth-Century
Photography)

Russia in 1900



Russia's Land Mass
6.6 Million Square Miles (17.1 Million km²)
(Wikispaces)



Fabergé Shop, #24 Bolshaya
Morskaya, St. Petersburg
(Tillander-Godenhielm, 2008, I-42)

- Population: 128 million, 102 million peasants, former serfs freed by the 1861 Emancipation Act, working in agriculture, moving from the country to the city
- 1.8 million are nobility

In St. Petersburg Fabergé firm moves into larger quarters:

- 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 (1868-1918) in his 6th year of rule:

- Avid collector of a new Fabergé genre
- Majority of his *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



Two Cossacks and
Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky
(Library of Congress)

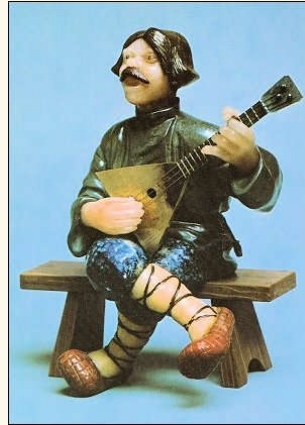


Self Portrait on the
Korolistkali River, 1912
(Wiki)

Hardstone Figures Appear in the West



Fabergé Ukrainian Peasant and Balalaika-playing Peasant
(Courtesy Sotheby's; Postcard, Victoria and Albert Museum)



1935 London Exhibition to Aid the Russian
Red Cross - Agathon Fabergé, son of
Fabergé, and Henry C. Bainbridge
(Tillander-Godenhielm, 2008, III-172)

Bainbridge, manager of the London Fabergé branch (1906-1917), relates the reaction to the *Musician, Carved Siberian Stones*, by Fabergé:

“This attracted much attention and surprise. Being far removed from anything which was to be expected from Fabergé, many who saw it went so far as to say that some mistake had been made in the catalogue, and that to attribute it to the Russian goldsmith was nonsense.” (*Connoisseur*, April 1938, 200)

Original Collections (Nicholas II and Emmanuel Nobel) at Auction in 2013-14



Nicholas II Collection: 1912
Henrik Wigström Design Sketch
(Tillander-Godenhielm, 2000,
back cover)



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)





Boot Marks Used in Authentication and Medals
(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)



Emanuel Nobel Collection: Bourgeoise with Red Bundle (Meshchanka) with a Cachalong Face and Sapphire Eyes
(Courtesy Bonhams)

Provenance:

- 1913 Purchased by Emmanuel Nobel (1859-1932), Swedish-Russian oil baron, whose pieces stayed in the extended family, and come up for auction infrequently in modern times
- 1981 Christie's Geneva, sold for SFr 75,000, and a year later sold for SFr 40,000. Seller lost on his investment
- 1982 Purchased at Wartski by private collectors, and thence by descent
- 2014 Bonhams London, \$2,039,683 including commission, to Wartski (Pre-sale estimate \$500,000 - 840,000)

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



Emperor Nicholas II (1868-1918)
(Wiki)



Seeds Collection
(*Fabergé at Wartski: The Famous Group of Ten ...* 1973, 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 Preobrazhenky Regiment,

Peasant Playing Balalaika, Peasant with a Shovel, Coachman

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

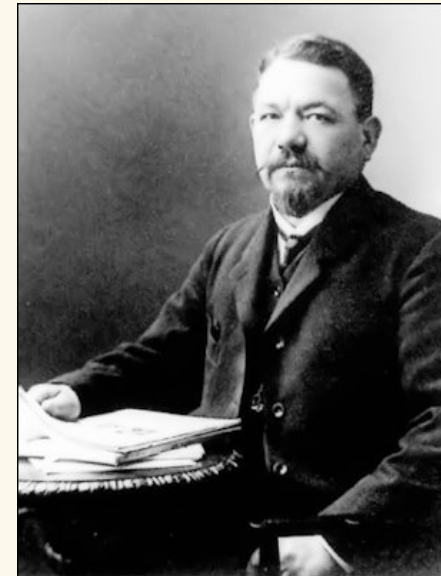
Techniques and Materials Used in Creating the Fabergé Hardstone Figures



Modeler Boris Froedman-Cluzel (1878-1959) in His Studio
(Skurlov, 2009, 132)

Modelers/gemstone carvers:

- P.M. Derbychev (d. 1914)
- P.M. Kremlev (1888-died after 1937), head Fabergé shop from 1915 on
- G. Savitskii (1887-1949)



Henrik Wigström (1862-1923),
Workmaster Active 1903-1917
(Tillander-Godenhielm, 2011, 111)

- **Drawing - wax model - individual stones carved** (Karl Woerffel shop acquired by Fabergé in 1915), **fitted, glued, polished, marks added by Wigström studio.**

Searching for Models

- By Tradition Houseboy (Dvornik) Modeled after Fabergé's Houseboy



Fabergé Shop, #24 Bolshaya Morskaya, St. Petersburg
(Tillander-Godenhjelm, 2008, I-42)



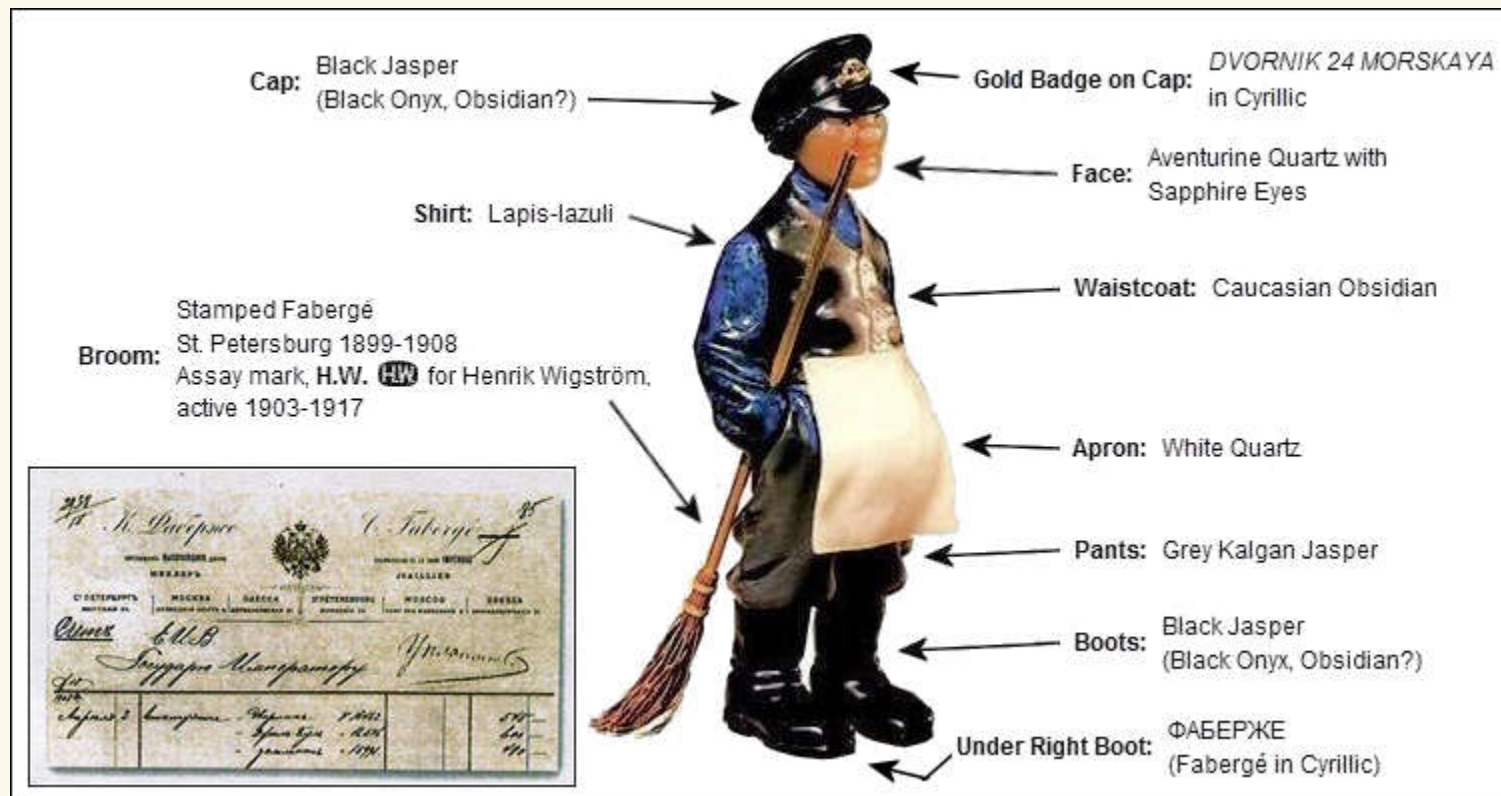
House Servant
(Photograph by J. Monstein)

A Closer Look at the House Boy (Dvornik) - Height 5 in. | 12.7 cm

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

- Unerring instinct for the **RIGHT MATERIAL**
- 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)



In 1986, Dr. Alexander von Solodkoff described the end result:

“The different parts were assembled so perfectly that the joints are invisible to the naked eye and frequently cannot even be detected with the needle. Attention was paid to the natural grain of a stone ... ”

Eyes are sapphires and a few of them rose-diamonds. (von Habsburg, *Fabergé*, 1987, 84)



Houseboy: Waistcoat



Apron



Pants and Boots

Strong Hierarchies in Russian Society

- Population: 128 million
- 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%

Nobility (Upper Class)



2005 Auction: Charles R. Wood Collection (1914-2004), Realized over \$5.3 Million



Watercolor Painting of *Boyar and Family* by Sergei Solomko (1867-1928), Artist and Designer of Costumes for Court Balls (Wiki)



Nobleman (Boyar) with a Purpurine Coat Set a Record at \$1,808,000

Height 6 in. | 15.2 cm, ФАБЕРЖЕ under his right foot, sold on December 22, 1910, to Nicholas II for 950 rubles, stock number 21014.

- Boyar: Landowner with serfs, and served in a military and/or administrative function
- Rank and title of Boyar were abolished by Peter the Great in 1711
- Solomko was employed by the firm of Carl Fabergé as a miniature painter
- Nobleman's red coat of purpurine is not a hardstone gem, rather a vivid opaque matte-red soda glass favored by the Fabergé firm

Merchant (Middle Class)



Fabergé Kriestjanka, Kupets/Merchant, Meshchanka. Two Female Figures from the Original Nobel Collection.

(Courtesy Christie's, Wartski, Bonhams)

Family by Sergey Vasilyevich Ivanov (1864-1910), Russian Painter and Graphic Artist (State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)

Kriestjanka and Meshchanka -

- Cacholong, a soft porous opal, easily carved allowing the carver to create more realistic and interesting facial features and hands. Used after 1913 for the Nobel Collection replacing the earlier use of aventurine quartz, a harder stone
- Marked "C. Fabergé" and "1913" on the soles of their shoes

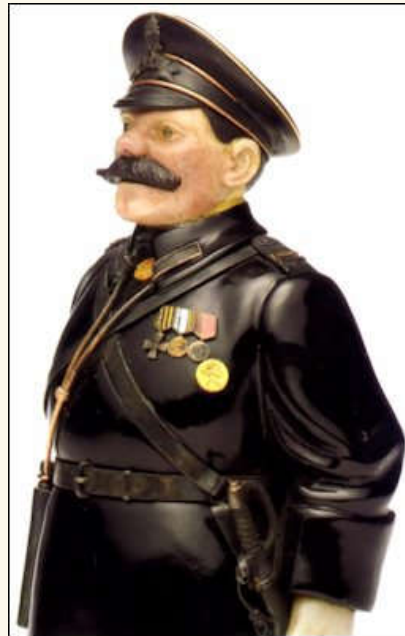
Kupets - not owned by Nicholas II

- Silver-gilt walking stick marked "H.W. 88" for Henrik Wigström
- Marked **ФАБЕРЖЕ** on sole of right boot

Policeman (Working Class) - Height 6 in. | 15.2 cm, ФАБЕРЖЕ under right boot, no known invoice, auction results: 1982 - \$75,000, 2005 - \$1,544,000.



Policeman (Gorodovoi) in Obsidian with "Police 251" and the St. Petersburg Coat-of-arms on His Hat
(Courtesy Sotheby's)



St. Petersburg Policeman,
Early 20th Century
(Wiki)

- Military scholars Daniel Brière and Erich Lenz shared their knowledge of Russian medals and badges.
- Hard stone policemen depicted by Fabergé served in the military before joining the police force. Two of his awards indicate he was a veteran of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), fought to recapture lands lost in the Crimean War, 1853-1856

Around His Neck:



Gold Medal for Zeal (Nicholas II)
(Medalirus.ru)

- Awarded for exceptional zeal in trade, industrial production, and social endeavors, as well as zealous military service, awarded to policemen from 1874-1917
- 1801 Established by Emperor Alexander I

On His Chest (medal bar, left):



Cross of St. George Medal
(Wikipedia)

- The Cross of St. George medal has four classes. The policeman's is a 4th class silver cross from the Russo-Turkish War, 1877-1878
- 1807 Established by Emperor Alexander I to reward "undaunted courage" by the lower ranks of the military (soldiers, sailors, and non-commissioned personnel)

On His Chest (medal bar, middle):

- Light bronze medal for active participation in battles on the Bulgarian and Caucasian fronts of the Russo-Turkish War



Turkish War (1877-1878) Medal with Ribbon
(collectrussia.com | anythinganywhere.com)

On His Chest (medal bar, right):

Hanging from The Order of St. Anne Ribbon, two possibilities exist -



Silver Medal for Zeal

or



Medal for Blameless
Service in the Police

- (Lower right below medal bar): Undecipherable gold circular award is possibly a type of commemorative, unofficial award given for special events, or for favors.

Sailor (Working Class) - White onyx, a mere $4\frac{5}{8}$ in. | 11.6 cm

- 1891 Steamship *Foros* owned by Russian tea millionaire Alexander G. Kuznetsov built in Scotland
- After 1899 Grand Duke Michael Aleksandrovich (1878-1918) inherited the vessel, now named *Zarnitsa* (Summer Lighting) from his late brother, Grand Duke George Aleksandrovich (1871-1899), both siblings of Nicholas II



Zarnitsa 239 ft. | 73 m. long and 30 ft. | 10 m. wide
(Photographs Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)



Natasha Wulfert with Grand Duke
Michael Aleksandrovich (Foreground)



Fabergé Sailor

- McCanless with Adams and Wintraecken, "The *Zarnitsa* Sailor and His Place in History" in von Habsburg, *Fabergé Revealed at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*, 2011, 102-109

- 1907-1912 Grand Duke Michael Aleksandrovich had an affair with a woman below his station - Natasha Wulfert, married a second time, a son is born in 1907, the lovers married in Vienna without permission of the Emperor on October 16, 1912. The Imperial family's reaction about the morganatic union -

Maria Feodorovna, Dowager Empress : "Unspeakably awful in every way."

Emperor Nicholas II: "[Mikhail] broke his word - his word of honor."

- October 14, 1913 Natasha becomes Countess Brassow after her marriage, buys a Fabergé sailor with the word *Zarnitsa* engraved on his cap for £53 from the London Fabergé branch - date of the sale is two days before their first wedding anniversary commemorating a year of sailing on their yacht
- Sailor's travels
 - St. Petersburg to London back to St. Petersburg
 - 1937 Hammer Galleries New York to Mrs. Lillian Thomas Pratt (1876-1947), Fredericksburg, Virginia
 - 1947 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond



Peasants (80% of the Russian population)

- ... for the Russian peasant the realities of existence were harsh. A poverty-stricken village was a permanent fixture of the Russian countryside and stood out in sharp contrast to the splendors of Tsarskoe Selo. (Allshouse, *Photographs for the Tsar*, 1980, 1)
- Between April 1908 - April 1910 Nicholas II acquired four Fabergé peasant figures costing from 480 to 850 rubles:



Carpenter (Plotnik) ФАБЕРЖЕ
under His Right Boot, Axe in
Silver Marked "H.W. 91" for
Wigström
(Courtesy Sotheby's)



Peasant with Shovel
(Zemlekop, Navvy)
ФАБЕРЖЕ
under Right Boot,
Shovel Marked
(Courtesy Christie's)



Peasant by William
Carrick (1827-1878),
Scottish-Russian
Photographer, Capturing
the Lives of Peasants
(Courtesy *Daily Mail*, UK)



Ukrainian Peasant
(Maloros, Historical Name for a Ukrainian)
ФАБЕРЖЕ under Left Boot
2005 Auction: \$1,068,800
(Courtesy Sotheby's)



Traditional Ukrainian Attire
(Courtesy Ukrainian Museum Archive, Cleveland, Ohio)



Working Class Russians Listening to
Balalaika Player
(Photograph by Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky)



Balalaika Player, ФАБЕРЖЕ "H.W. 88"
on the Instrument, 1925 Armoury
Museum Acquired from Palace Property
(Courtesy Christie's)



Balalaika & Lapti Shoes
(Wiki)

- Balalaika - Lute family - Central Asia, 19th century folk instrument still popular today
- Inexpensive Lapti shoes made of birch or linden bark worn by peasants in Russian villages until the early 20th century. Made by men, frayed in a week or two, faster in the rain.

Museum and Private Collections of Fabergé's *Russian Types*

Dr. Alexander von Solodkoff divides the human figures of Fabergé into three groups:

- **PORTRAIT** sculptures
- **HISTORICAL AND LITERARY** characters
- **FOLKLORIC** genre figures (*Fabergé*, London, 1988, 85)

Portrait Sculptures - ca. 5 in. | 12.7 cm tall:



Chelsea Pensioner
Bought by King Edward
VII (1841-1910)
(Courtesy Royal Collection
of Queen Elizabeth II)



John Bull
Caricature of Great Britain.
Collection of Sir Charles
Clore (1904-1979), British
Businessman
(Courtesy Christie's)



John Bull
in Nephrite
(Courtesy Court of
Siam Royal Collection)



Zarnitsa Sailor
(Virginia Museum of
Fine Arts)



“Queen of Gypsy Romance Song” and Fabergé Varya Panina
(Wiki | Courtesy A La Vieille Russie, New York City)

- Varvara Vasilyeva Panina, her married name (1872-1911), Russian popular music star of the early 20th century with a distinguished contra-alto voice
- Daughter of a gypsy family, started singing at age 14 in a gypsy choir in Moscow, performed at the *Yar* restaurant known for gypsy concerts
- Moved to St. Petersburg in 1902 to sing with great success at the Nobility Assembly Hall and began touring
- One of the richest women in Russia making 10,000 rubles a year, and loved to spend it on diamonds
- Died of heart failure in 1911 before the age of 40. Some of her many recordings are still extant, even on the internet

Historical and Literary Characters



Fabergé Tweedledee and Tweedledum, 1914
(Courtesy Court of Siam Royal Collection)



Alice with Tweedledee and Tweedledum
by John Tenniel (1820-1914), British Illustrator

- English language nursery rhyme popularized by Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*
- Book published in 1871, due to its popularity translated into many languages
- 1949 Bainbridge suggested “half-a-dozen” more characters including Alice and the Mad Hatter exist

Folkloric Genre Figures



Fancy Cabmen (Likhach)

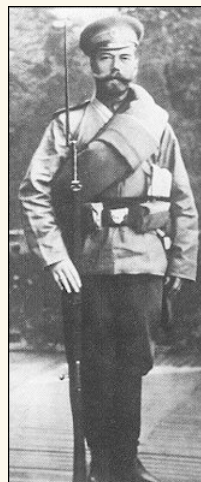
(Courtesy A La Vieille Russie, New York City, and Court of Siam Royal Collection)

- Likhach, well-dressed with a peacock feather on his cap and a good horse, gave short rides for a ruble on his buggy equipped with pneumatic tires in the 1900s
- Extensive Research: McCanless and Wintraecken, *Fabergé in the Court of Siam*, published in the *Fabergé Research Newsletter*, Winter 13-14

Fabergé Hardstone Figures in Russian Museums



2011 Exhibition at the Kremlin
Armoury Museum
(Wiki)



Nicholas II in New
Russian Infantry
Uniform Proposed
in 1909
(Zeepvat, *The
Camera and the
Tsars*, 2004, 138)

Moscow Fersman Mineralogical Museum



Soldier Lighting a Cigarette, 6 in. | 15 cm
“Fabergé 1915” on Boot Sole
(Finnish Stone Research Foundation,
Fabergé, 51, 53)

1925 Acquired from the Commission for the
Study of Natural Productive Forces

Moscow - Kremlin Armoury Museum Collection

- Imperial children had a wet nurse (mamka) from a village to nourish them with “Russian soul” in their milk



Wet Nurse by Alexey
Venetsianov (1780-1847)
(Wiki)



Mamka, Smallest Hardstone Figure by Fabergé
No Marks, Acquired from the Palace Estate in 1922
(Courtesy Kremlin Armoury Museum Collection)



8.75" | 22.2 cm

1.9" | 4.8 cm



Cossack from
Caucasia (Cherkess),
Largest Figure
ФАБЕРЖЕ 1915
(Booth, *Art of
Fabergé*, 1990, 151)

St. Petersburg - Pavlovsk State Museum

- 1956 Three Fabergé figures belonging to Emperor Nicholas II were added to the Pavlovsk Collection from the Central Museums Repository - a Cossack, a soldier and a body guard.
- Illustrations and information from the museum's *catalogue raisonné*, A. Guzanov (Vice-Director), R.R. Gafifulin (author), and T. Muntyan and M. Lopato (reviewers), *Fabergé Items of the Late 19th - Early 20th Century in the Collection of the State Museum Pavlovsk*, 2013.



Cossack from His Imperial Majesty's Own Escort, 6.8 in. | 17.3 cm

Sole of Right Boot "C. Fabergé", on Right Heel Stock Number 25014, Left Sole in English "1914".

Soldier of Life Guards Preobrazhensky Regiment - 7 in. | 17.7 cm

- Designer/modeler/carvers did not sign pieces so attributions are not easily made. Pieces fitted with gold or silver accents, i.e., walking sticks, beaks, feet etc., are stamped after 1903 with Henrik Wigström's initials **H.W.**, and hallmarks





Original Fabergé
Silk-lined Wooden
Presentation Case



Badge on Hat "*For Tashkisen 19th of December
1877*" Commemorating War against Ottoman
Empire



(1) Stock Number 24242 on
Bottom of Rifle Stock,
(2) Fabergé Stamp in the Case

(3) Rifle Stock Identification: Fabergé, 
α (alpha) for St. Petersburg, kokoshnik facing right for
St. Petersburg 1908-1917, gold value 72 (18 c. gold),
Assayer's stamp and **H.W.** 



Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and Tsesarevich Alexei Traveling with Body Guards during the 1913 Tercentenary Celebrations in Moscow
(Shelaeva, *Moscow in Old Photographs, Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, 2009, 38)



Kamer-Kazak Alexei Alexeievich Kudinov, Personal Body Guard (1878-1915) to Dowager Maria Feodorovna, 7.5 in. | 19 cm, Sole of Left Boot "Fabergé, Cossack Equerry since 1878", Sole of Right Boot "A.A. Kudinov 1912" in Cyrillic



St. Petersburg - The Link of Times Collection by Viktor Vekselberg



Woman Going to the Sauna (Baba) and Dancing Peasant (Dancing Mujik) - Height ca. 5 in. | 12 cm
(Tillander-Godenhielm, Ulla, 2011, 127; Courtesy A La Vieille Russie; Courtesy Museum Fabergé, St. Petersburg)

- Pair: 1937 Glass Negative in Possession of Agathon Fabergé (1876-1951)
- 1961 Sold at Auction to Wartski, London
- Lansdell K. Christie Collection (1903-1965), Long Island, NY
- A La Vieille Russie, New York
- Baba: 1996 Exhibited by A La Vieille Russie, New York
- Mujik: 1910 Purchased by Nicholas II
- By 1968 Forbes Magazine Collection, New York
- 2004 The Link of Times Collection, St. Petersburg

London branch manager Henry C. Bainbridge recalls in his 1949 monograph:

"Agathon Fabergé [in 1937 while he stayed with Bainbridge] told me of two figurines he possesses, a peasant and his wife, two of the finest made, he said, but from all accounts not more than thirty (30) of these Russian types were made in all."

- Our research has uncovered ca. 50 figures, many of which require further study



Nobel Collection: Painter, Kvass Seller, Milk and Cheese Woman
(Courtesy Christie's, Collage by Annemiek Wintraecken)