

Peter Carl Faberge

The Man

The Faberge family originated in France, but the Protestant family fled after the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685. Eventually, some family members settled in Russia. Peter Carl Faberge was born in 1846. His education and goldsmith apprenticeship were in Germany. After establishing himself independently in 1866, Carl continued to refine his skills. By age 24, Faberge had inherited his father's jewelry workshop in St. Petersburg, Russia. For ten years as head of the business, Carl continued to produce goods similar to other jewelry makers. He also volunteered his time to the Hermitage, a treasury which stored all of the precious objects of the Russian czars, including gold artifacts and ancient treasures. All of these pieces Carl helped catalog, appraise and repair. He reorganized the business with the help of his able brother Agathon and forever changed the face of jewelry and art. In 1882 Carl's younger brother Agathon, a trained jeweler full of ideas, appeared on the scene. The two made copies ancient Russian treasures and sold them. Eric Kollin, a Finnish craftsman, helped the Faberge brothers make a number of pieces which they decided to feature at a fair in Moscow. Czar, Alexander III, and his wife, Czarina Maria were in attendance and made a purchase at the Faberge exhibit. There, Carl Faberge was presented with a gold medal honoring him as "...having opened a new era in jewelry art." Until that time, many felt the value of jewelry was intrinsic, based upon the precious metals and stones. Faberge felt that the artistic creativity and fine craftsmanship of jewelry made it art that transcended bullion value.

The Workshop

The House of Faberge was staffed with some of the finest goldsmiths and jewelers available. Interestingly enough, Peter Carl Faberge did not actually create any of the famous eggs that bear his name. The business was divided into several small workshops, each with its own specialty. In addition to the fabulous easter eggs, the workshop also produced table silver, jewelry, European-style trinkets, and Russian-style

carvings. The two master jewelers most responsible for the Faberge eggs were Michael Evlampievich Perchin and Henrik Wigström. Born in 1860, Perchin became the leading workmaster in the House of Faberge in 1886 and supervised production of the eggs until 1903. Those eggs he was responsible for have his MP (MP- Michael Perchin) markings. All signed eggs made after 1903 bear Henrik Wigstrom's HW mark. Of course, not all eggs



were stamped, so other goldsmiths may have supervised production of some of the eggs.

The Eggs

The most important feast of the Russian Orthodox church calendar is Easter. It is celebrated with the exchanging of eggs and three kisses. The Faberge eggs began in 1884 with an Easter egg made for the czar that became a gift for his wife, Czarina Maria. The egg reminded the empress of her homeland, and so from then on it was agreed that Faberge