

Fabulous Fabergé Eggs

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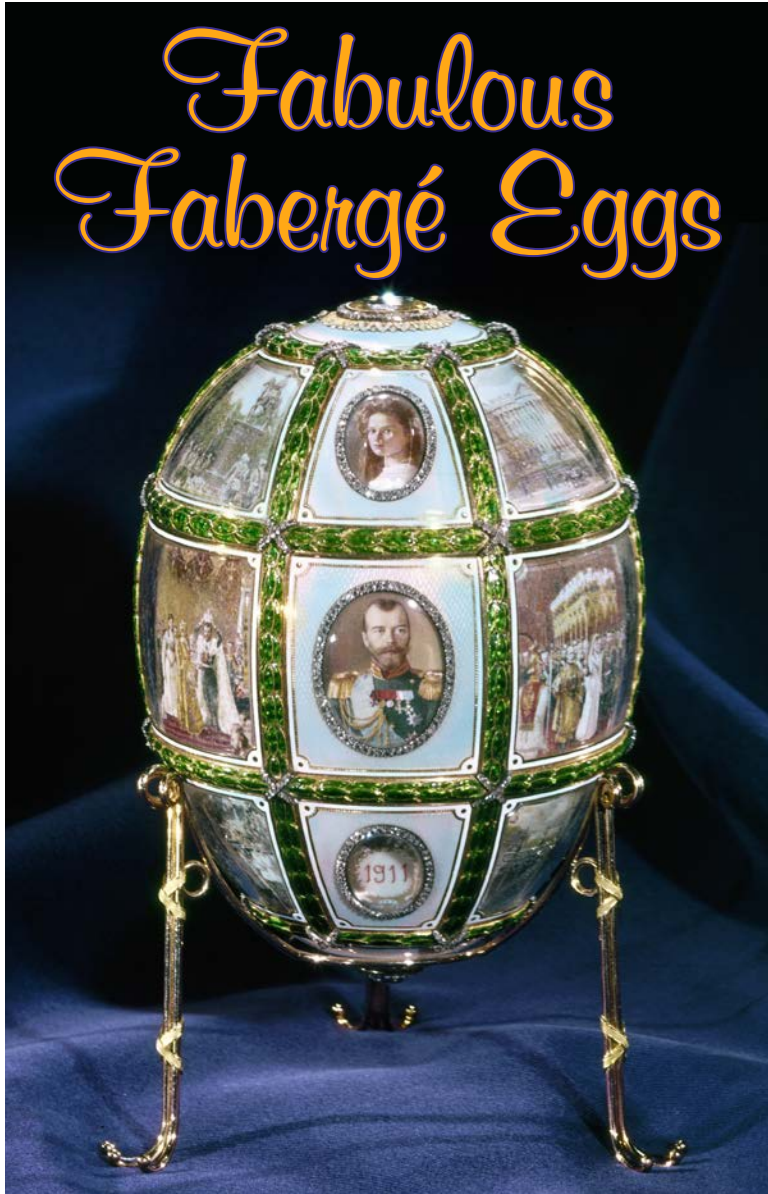
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Title page: The Fifteenth Anniversary Egg has been compared to a tiny, exquisite family album. Czar Nicholas II presented it to his wife, Czarina Alexandra, on Easter 1911.

Page 3: Compared to later eggs, the Hen Egg was small, only 2.5 inches (6.3 cm) long. It's the only Fabergé egg as small as an actual chicken egg.

Back cover: This 2012 jeweled egg was not designed by Carl Fabergé. Instead, it features his portrait in honor of him.

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Correlation

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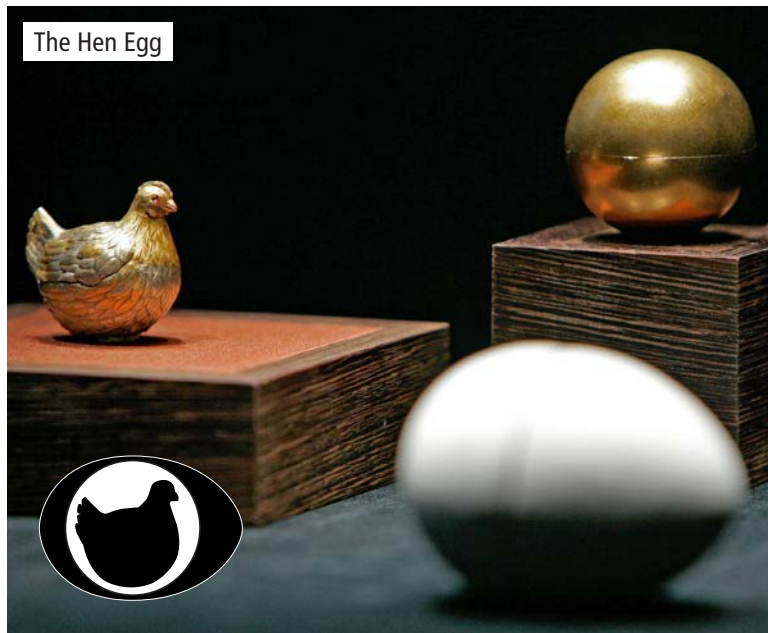


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A late nineteenth-century wood engraving of Alexander III (a.k.a. Alexander Romanov) and his wife, Maria

The Great Easter Egg Hunt

Alexander III, the **czar** (ZAR) of **Russia**, wanted to give his wife, the **czarina** (zar-EE-nuh), a special gift for Easter. He asked a goldsmith named Carl Fabergé to make a wonderful Easter egg.

The egg was delivered on Easter in 1885. It was made of gold with a glassy white shell that opened like a box. Czarina Maria opened the shell and discovered a golden yolk. Inside the yolk was a carved hen made of gold, and inside the hen were a gold crown and a tiny ruby egg.

Czarina Maria loved it!

So, the Romanov family began a **tradition**. Each year, Czar Alexander asked Fabergé to make a new Easter egg for his wife. After Alexander's death in 1894, his son Nicholas gave both his mother and his wife an Easter egg each year.

Today, the fifty Fabergé **Imperial** Eggs given to the czarinas are famous for their history. They tell the story of the Romanov family, who ruled Russia for three hundred years. They also tell the tale of the period when they were made, from 1885 to 1917. It was a time of great change that included the Russian **Revolution** and the First World War.



The Memory of Azov Egg was made in 1891 following a trip that Nicholas and his younger brother made to the Far East. *Azov* refers to the name of the ship on which they made the voyage, the *Pamiat Azova*.



The 1913 Winter Egg is studded with 1,660 diamonds. The surprise inside—the miniature basket of flowers—is studded with 1,378 more.

The eggs are also famously expensive. One, called the *Winter Egg*, sold in 2002 for \$9.6 million.

Above all, the eggs are some of the world's most famous—and **exquisite**—works of art. They owe their existence to Carl Fabergé.

Who Was Fabergé?

Peter Carl Fabergé was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1846. He worked in his father's jewelry shop as a child. When he grew up, he became a goldsmith and studied in many cities in Europe. The ancient treasures he saw in museums and churches inspired him to create beautiful things.

At that time, most people thought the worth of an object was equal to the weight of the gold and gems it contained. Fabergé thought differently. He believed that creativity and **craftsmanship** were as important as gold, silver, and gems. He used this idea when he took over his father's business in 1872. The Fabergé factory became known for creating beautiful objects such as decorated boxes, carved animals, and jewelry.

Fabergé was a great craftsman and also a smart businessman. He helped repair and **appraise** the czar's treasures for free. This brought Fabergé's work to the czar's attention. In time, Fabergé became Goldsmith to the Imperial Court. He made jewelry and gifts for the royal family and for the czar to give to others, but none of these creations became as famous as his Easter eggs.



How the Eggs Were Made

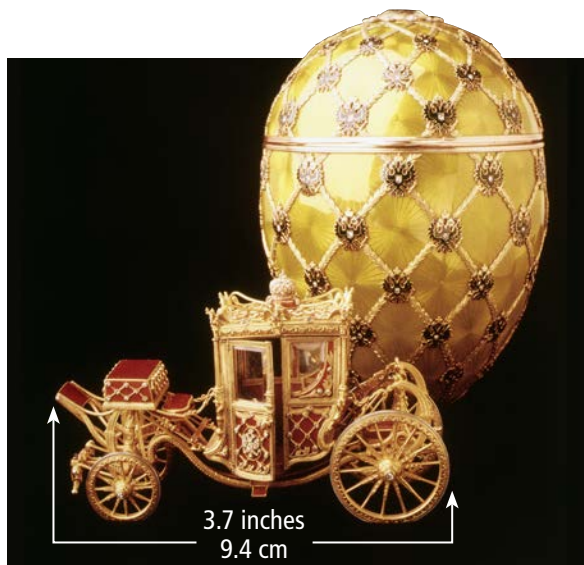
The Fabergé eggs are known for their creative designs. Each egg is unique, and each one has a surprise inside. They are made of metals such as gold and silver or of rock crystal. Some eggs contain thousands of diamonds and other gems.

Fabergé did not make the eggs by himself. He hired hundreds of craftsmen and craftswomen to work in his factory. A single egg might take over a year for designers, goldsmiths, jewelers, stonecutters, and **miniature** makers to create. Fabergé approved the designs and all of the work.

Many of the eggs have beautiful enamel on the outside. Enameling is the process of applying powdered glass over metal, then heating it to make a glassy surface. Fabergé created more than one hundred colors of enamel to make his unique designs. Some items were coated with many layers of different enamels that made beautiful colors and patterns. The secret to Fabergé's enameling process is now lost.

Do You Know?

Enameling is also used to give a smooth, easy-to-clean finish to cookware. Enamel is hard, resists scratches, and does not burn. Different colors of enamel come from the addition of various minerals to the glass.



The golden hue of the 1897 Coronation Egg matches the robe that Alexandra wore to her coronation. The miniature coach includes actual shock absorbers and a tiny folding step-stair!

Coaches and Portraits

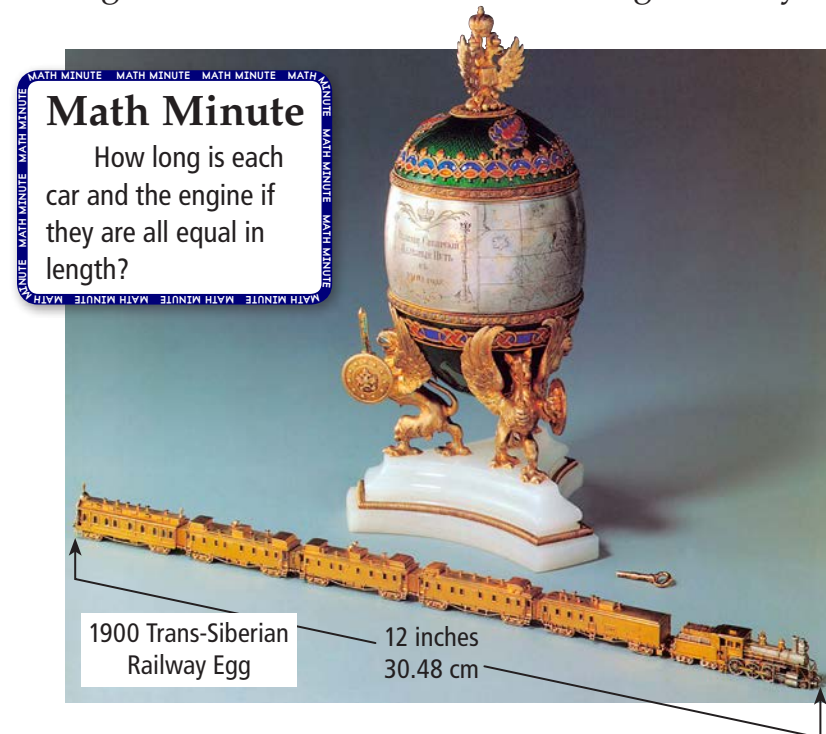
The Fabergé Imperial Eggs were created especially for the Romanov family. Many of them represent events that were important to the czars. For example, Fabergé celebrated the **coronation** of Nicholas II and Alexandra with the Coronation Egg. Inside the golden egg is a miniature of the coach that brought Alexandra to the coronation. Every detail of the coach, from the moving wheels to the crystal windows, is perfect.

Many of the eggs contain **portraits** of the Romanov family. The blue and gold Czarevich Egg contains a portrait of Nicholas and Alexandra's son, Alexei. Fabergé made the egg after Alexei almost died in 1911. More than two thousand diamonds surround the portrait.

Peacocks, Roosters, and Trains

The Fabergé eggs are also known for their playful designs. Six of the eggs have windup figures inside. The Peacock Egg contains a miniature peacock that walks and opens and closes its tail. The Cockerel Egg has a tiny rooster that flaps its wings, opens its beak, and crows.

Fabergé created a special egg in 1900 in honor of the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which runs across Russia. The silver egg has a map of the railway on the outside and a model train inside with five tiny cars made of gold. The engine runs when it is wound with a golden key.





Czar Nicholas II of Russia and his family in 1914, three years before the Russian Revolution

The End

The Romanov family tradition came to a sad end. After the Russian Revolution began in 1917, the czar was overthrown and the family left St. Petersburg. The new leaders feared that the czar might return to power, so Czar Nicholas II and his family were killed the next year. The czar's mother, Maria, fled the country, taking at least one of the eggs with her.

The new Russian government claimed the rest of the czar's belongings. Over the next years, they sold jewelry and other treasures, including many of the Easter eggs, to raise money. Armand Hammer, a famous American businessman, brought ten or more of the eggs to the United States. Other eggs simply disappeared.

What Happened to Fabergé

The new government also claimed Fabergé's factory. Carl fled to Europe with most of his family. He died in Switzerland in 1920. His sons tried without success to keep the business going.

Over time, other companies began to use the Fabergé name to sell products such as perfume. In 2007, a company bought the name. They hired Carl Fabergé's great-granddaughter Tatiana Fabergé to research the history of Fabergé. Another great-granddaughter, Sarah Fabergé, creates new egg designs.



Sarah Fabergé in 2004 beside the Trafalgar Egg, one she helped design

The Mystery of the Missing Eggs

Records from Russia give descriptions of all fifty Imperial Eggs that Fabergé made. The whereabouts of forty-three of the eggs are known, but seven eggs are missing.

The forty-three known Fabergé Imperial Eggs are now scattered around the world. Occasionally, one or more of the eggs is sold. In 2004, a Russian businessman bought nine eggs for around \$100 million. Other eggs belong to museums or individuals.

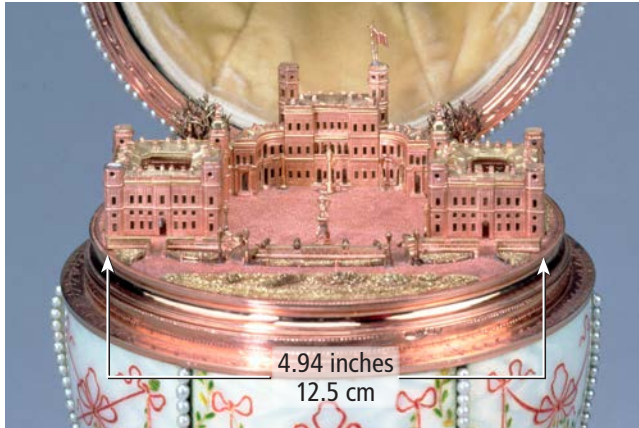


Nine eggs are thought to be in Russia or elsewhere in private collections, not on permanent display. One recently found egg has yet to find a home.



Blue Serpent Clock Egg

Prince Rainier of Monaco was given the Blue Serpent Clock Egg to celebrate twenty-five years on the throne. His wife, Princess Grace, loved the egg and kept it on her desk. When Princess Grace died in a car accident in 1982, Prince Rainier was heartbroken and sealed her study with the egg inside. No one saw the Blue Serpent Clock Egg again until 2008, when their son, Prince Albert, allowed it to be displayed.



The 1901 Gatchina Palace egg includes cannons, a flag, and a statue.

Many people dream of finding one of the missing eggs. The dream came true for a scrap metal dealer in the American Midwest, but at first he didn't know it. He bought a beautiful gold egg with three sapphires, rose-cut diamonds, and a clock inside for about \$14,000 at a flea market. At the time, he planned to resell the egg for its gold and make a small profit.

Instead, he made a fortune. The egg turned out to be the Third Imperial Egg, believed to be valued at more than \$30 million.

Alexander III gave the gold clock egg to Maria on Easter in 1887. In 2014 in London, the public saw that egg for the first time in 112 years.

So the next time you're at a yard sale, keep your eyes open. In the biggest Easter egg hunt in history, the next find could be yours!

Glossary

appraise (<i>v.</i>)	to judge the worth of someone or something after careful examination (p. 7)
coronation (<i>n.</i>)	the ceremony in which a new king or queen is crowned (p. 9)
craftsmanship (<i>n.</i>)	great skill in a craft or trade (p. 7)
czar (<i>n.</i>)	a male Russian ruler before the Russian Revolution in 1917 (p. 4)
czarina (<i>n.</i>)	a female Russian ruler before the Russian Revolution in 1917; a woman married to a czar (p. 4)
exquisite (<i>adj.</i>)	finely made; very beautiful or delicate (p. 6)
imperial (<i>adj.</i>)	having to do with royalty or an absolute ruler of an empire (p. 5)
miniature (<i>n.</i>)	a small-scale model (p. 8)
portraits (<i>n.</i>)	drawings, paintings, or photographs of a person (p. 9)
revolution (<i>n.</i>)	the removal of a government from power by force and its replacement with another (p. 5)
Russia (<i>n.</i>)	the largest country in the world, located in both Europe and Asia (p. 4)
tradition (<i>n.</i>)	a belief or custom that is passed down from year to year and generation to generation (p. 5)