

Unique 19th Century Gentleman's Sterling Silver Saint Petersburg-made Flatware Set in Original Monogrammed Traveling Case.

Still complete and ready to serve!

No gentleman of quality in nineteenth century Russia would have embarked upon a long journey anywhere (but particularly into Western Europe) without taking along his own travel set of silverware - as well as a servant (or two) to keep it clean after its use. With profuse St. Petersburg hallmarks, the pieces in this case undoubtedly started out in the workshops supplying one of the higher-end jewelers located along the Nevsky Prospekt, St. Petersburg's "Fifth Avenue" when it came to the more important issues of life such as fashion and style.

The presence of the monogram "FF" in Latin letters on the cover was not completely "un-Russian" for its time. While Agatha Christie may have written an English mystery that featured a Russian murderess with a Cyrillic monogrammed cigarette case, the fact is that in a society whose leaders spoke French or English at home more frequently than their own "native" tongue, marking one's belongings - at least one's luggage - with Latin letters was far more prevalent than we can imagine today.

Each of the pieces in this set is of the same pattern although there is a thirteen year difference between two of the dated hallmarks, which leaves us with a choice of possible theories. Since it is still not uncommon for parents today to give their daughters silver flatware for birthdays and on other special occasions almost from birth, it is not impossible to think that this could have been a set that was completed just prior to a young woman's wedding. An alternate, although more prosaic explanation, could be that the pattern here was so popular in its time that when a customer wanted to buy a travel set, the jeweler simply assembled it from pieces that were already in his stock. Frankly, we prefer the dowry theory. (Were the famous Russian detective, Erast Petrovitch Fandorin, a real person and not just a literary creation, it might be possible to imagine that this set could have belonged to a member of his family in the 19th century.)

The dimensions and the hallmarks of each of the parts of the set are as follows:

Dinner Fork: 21cm long, 27mm wide at the widest point. Hallmarked "1860", "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg; assayer's mark of "EB" (for Eduard Brandenburg) and Silversmith's mark of "AU" (Adam Yuden) Weight: 76.4 grams.

Teaspoon: 15cm long, 3cm at the widest point. Hallmarked "1873", "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg; the assayers mark of "PK" (of an unknown artisan) and silversmith's mark of "SF" (Samuel Zacharias Filander) Weight: 23.9 grams.

Spoon: 22cm long, 5cm wide at the widest point. Hallmarked "1873", "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg; assayer's mark of "PK" (again, of an unknown artisan) and the unknown silversmith's mark of "EE" Weight: 83.2 grams

Knife: 27cm long, 3cm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 11cm in length and the steel blade (imported from the German cutlery firm of J. A. Henckels in Solingen) is 16cm long and 27mm at its widest point. The handle is hallmarked in two places: once with a tiny "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg and once with an equally tiny but unfortunately illegible silversmith's mark. Weight: technically 100.8 grams, but that includes the blade, its tang, and whatever ballast material that firmly fills the silver handle.

Corkscrew: 10cm overall length; the "scabbard" is 7cm long, 2cm wide at the widest point. The scabbard is hallmarked once with an "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg and once with a silversmith's mark that is unfortunately illegible. The corkscrew is obviously made of silver (the ringed top) and steel (the screw), but is completely unmarked. Weight: 25.8 + grams for the "scabbard" by itself (Who knew that they were already making collapsible corkscrews over a hundred years ago?)

Condiment Holder: 7cm long, 5cm at the widest point, 2cm high (3cm if measured to the top of the screw). Hallmarked "84" and the symbol for St. Petersburg on the bottom of the holder and on the inside of both lids; also stamped with the silversmith's mark of "KB" (Karl Berlin) in three places. The salt and pepper chambers are gold plated on the inside. Weight: 97.6 grams

Travel Case: 5cm high, 15cm wide, and 30cm long. Both bronze hasps attached to the lid are original although the matching catches once attached to the bottom of the case have disappeared and were replaced with perfectly placed tiny screws that function precisely with the hasps. The purple velvet and satin lining has not discolored over the decades (nor has it stained - a tribute to the servant who had to clean and maintain the set for the master or the mistress while traveling!). Interestingly, the form under the velvet in the base that holds everything in place was carved out of wood and the wood has shrunk microscopically - just enough so that the condiment container no longer completely rests in the oval carved for it under the velvet covering.

This traveling set was obviously used from time to time but shows no more wear than what you would expect to see on a well maintained set of family silver brought out only a few times a year for holiday meals. The only real signs of wear on this ensemble are the marks on the outside of the case (that stand in silent testimony to the fact that it has performed its protective function successfully over all the decades) and the darkening of the knife blade, which is about par for virtually all pre-stainless knife blades.

This beautiful set is still ready to help you master the challenges of cross country dining (or picnicking in this day and age) -whether you are heading to Biarritz, the Crimea, or even just to grandmother's house!

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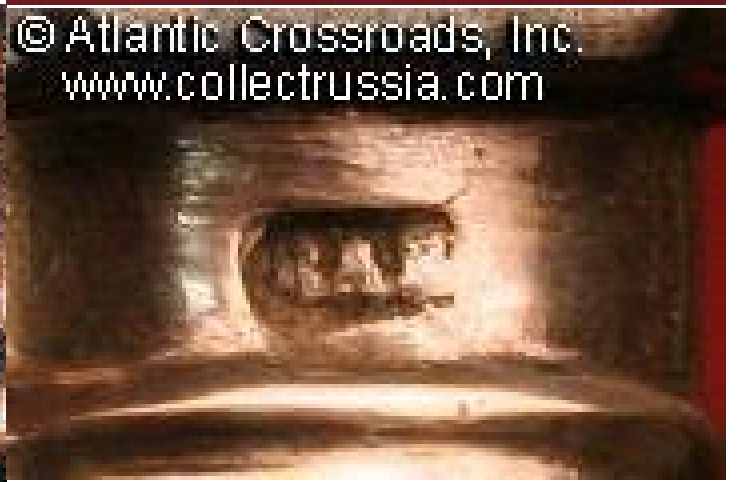
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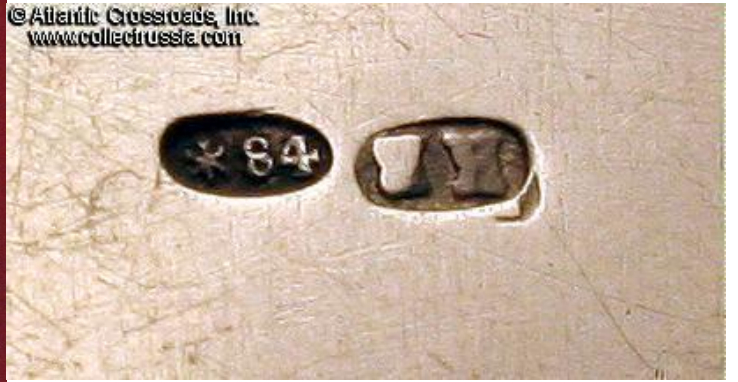
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