

Late 19th Century, early 20th Century Silver Serving set in its original velvet and silk lined fitted storage case.

A complete selection of nine monogrammed sterling silver serving pieces for serving dessert or light refreshments.

Each serving piece has a handle made of silver and a "business end" made of silverplated and gilded steel. All but one of the pieces is stamped with the oval Russian hallmark for silver introduced in 1908, specifically, the mark coded for silversmiths working in St. Petersburg: a kokoshnik head looking right, the Greek letter alpha, and the number "84". The number indicated the silver content, in this case 875 out of 1000 parts silver. It is of interest that each piece is also marked "900", the Western European mark for sterling silver (900/1000). There are two possible reasons for the dual markings. The Russian manufacturer may have had his eye on possible export sales, and so premarked his silver pieces with the western content number. He may have had his eye on better domestic sales to upperclass Russians who would have been familiar with the number from buying souvenirs while gambling at Monte Carlo or taking the cure at Baden-Baden. (Frankly, since "900" was not a legal metal content designation in the Russian Empire, an ethically challenged St. Petersburg jeweler could have tried stamping it on any white metal that he pleased.)

Each of these pieces is of identical pattern and hand engraved (with typical circa 1900 Russian flourish!) with the Cyrillic letters "A N". (As you can see from our photographs, these two letters can also be read as the Latin letters for "A H".) The steel components were silver plated and then gilded.

The overall condition of the set is excellent. Its component pieces were obviously used from time to time over the years but they show no more overall wear than what you would see on a nicely maintained set of family silver. The silver handles are truly in excellent condition. In every case, the gold plating on the steel portions has thinned and the underlying silver plating shows minor wear. Only the bowl of the Salad Spoon shows significant loss to the plating; this might be correctable by having a jeweler replating it. (Stainless steel for use in dinnerware was really not perfected before the outbreak of the First World War.)

As stated, each serving piece is marked with the Western European "900" stamp and a Russian silver hallmark, the sole exception being the Sugar Shovel (noted below). The dimensions of the pieces in the set are as follows:

Cake Knife: Overall 30cm long, 28mm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 128mm in length and the steel component is 17cm long. Weight: 143.3 grams.

Olive/Pickle Fork: Overall 15cm long, 17mm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 79mm in length and the steel component is 69mm long. Weight: 21.2 grams. One tine has a slight kink about 1cm from the tip.

Ice Cream Server: Overall 24cm long, 7mm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 115mm in length and the steel component is 12cm long. Weight: 107.0 grams.

Pie or Cake Server: Overall 27cm long, 6cm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 113mm in length and the steel component is 16cm long. Weight: 110.8 grams.

Two Petit Four Servers: one is 17cm long overall, 3cm wide at the widest point; the other is 17cm long overall, 3cm wide at its widest point. The silver handles are both approximately 93mm in length with steel components that measure 78mm. Weights: 44.8grams and 46.4grams. One of the two has an almost unnoticeable kink on one side about 4mm from the tip.

Sugar Shovel or Relish Scoop: Overall 17cm long, 30mm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 92mm in length and the steel component is 81mm long. Marked only with the Western European "900" with no Russian silver hallmark. Weight: 43.2 grams. Please note: this piece is completely identical in design and construction to the others - we have observed that sometimes pieces did come through from jewelers without everything being marked.

Two Piece Salad Serving Set:

Serving Fork: Overall 24cm long, 4cm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 114mm in length and the steel component is 120mm long. Weight: 115.2 grams.

Serving Spoon: Overall 23cm long, 5cm wide at the widest point. The silver handle is 115mm in length and the steel component is 117mm long. Weight: 103.4 grams.

Please note: in each case, the weights given include not just the silver but everything - the steel portions, the silver components plus whatever ballast material it took to fill the silver handles and give them a good heft. Only forks and spoons in silverware sets were ever fashioned of solid silver, any utensil fashioned of both silver and steel invariably had a hollow cast handle.

Storage Case: 13 ½" wide, 2 5/8" high, and 19 ½" long. The case still does its job but it does show its age. The groove across the lid is something of a mystery; it is too precise to be any sort of a split from warping, so it must be a deliberate design element; perhaps there once was a narrow wooden inlay that filled it. Two small screws have been added on the back corners of the case for strength. The part of the case that shows the most wear is the bottom which is obviously out of view.

With careful maintenance, this set is still capable of rendering good service, almost a hundred years after it was assembled in pre-Revolutionary Saint Petersburg. Very elegant then, still elegant today.

\$3,500.00



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