

## EMERALD FROM THE VERNADSKY STATE GEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

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Figure 1. Sergey Grigorievich Stroganov  
(1794–1882).  
Unknown author.  
Museum of Earth of Lomonosov Moscow  
State University.

In 2012, Russia is celebrating a 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its victory over French army of Napoleon Bonaparte. Eighteen-year-old Sergey Grigorievich Stroganov (1794–1882) was a son of the Russian diplomat Baron Grigory Stroganov who was an ambassador to Sweden at a time. Sergey was a participant of the 1812 War and a hero of its main battle at Borodino. Sergey Stroganov then became a statesman, historian of the art, archaeologist, collector, patron of art, honorary member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in 1827 (Russian Academy of Sciences..., 2009). In 1811, the young man has just graduated from the Institute of Transport Engineers and has been drafted to a military service, becoming a warrant officer. He had a bright military career. In 1812, he became a lieutenant; in 1823, he was a colonel; in 1828, he was a Major General in a suite of His Imperial Majesty. He participated in the 1828–1829 Russo-Turkish War and in the 1853–1856 Crimean War. He was a temporary military governor of Riga (1831) and Minsk (1832).

Sergey Stroganov was in Paris with the Russian army after the 1813–1814 campaign. He spent more than one and half year in the capital of France, visiting its palaces and studying collections in the museums. He was especially interested in art and educational system. He used this experience during foundation (at his expense) of the free School of Drawing in Relation to Arts and Crafts in Moscow in 1825. Since 1860, it is called the Stroganov School, currently the Stroganov Moscow State Art-Industrial Academy. In 1826–1835, he was a member of the Committee for the Educational Institutions. From 1835 to 1847, he was a supervisor of the Moscow Educational District.

The name of Count Stroganov during this time is related to the history of one specimen from the mineralogical collection of the Vernadsky State Geological Museum, a former Museum of Natural History of the Moscow Imperial University.

In the *Mineral Wealth of Russia* Hall, the visitors are always attracted to the large emerald specimen (MN-42202. 15.0 x 8.5 x 6.0 cm in size, 1.316 kg in weight) from the Ural Emerald Mines. This is a parallel intergrowth of similar large prismatic crystals in fine phlogopite mica aggregate. The crystals in the intergrowth are irregularly coloured and fractured, reaching 4 cm in diameter. There are areas of transparent, jewellery-quality emerald zones.

The Emerald Mines of the Urals are an emerald deposit, discovered on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January (8<sup>th</sup> of February) 1831 by Yakov Vasilievich Kokovin, a commander of the Yekaterinburg Cutting Factory. He discovered it at the occurrence of the so-called bad aquamarines, which happened to be emeralds. The occurrence was found in 1830 by Maxim Kozhevnikov, a resin producer. From 1831 until 1862, the mines belonged to the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty and Department of the Regions.

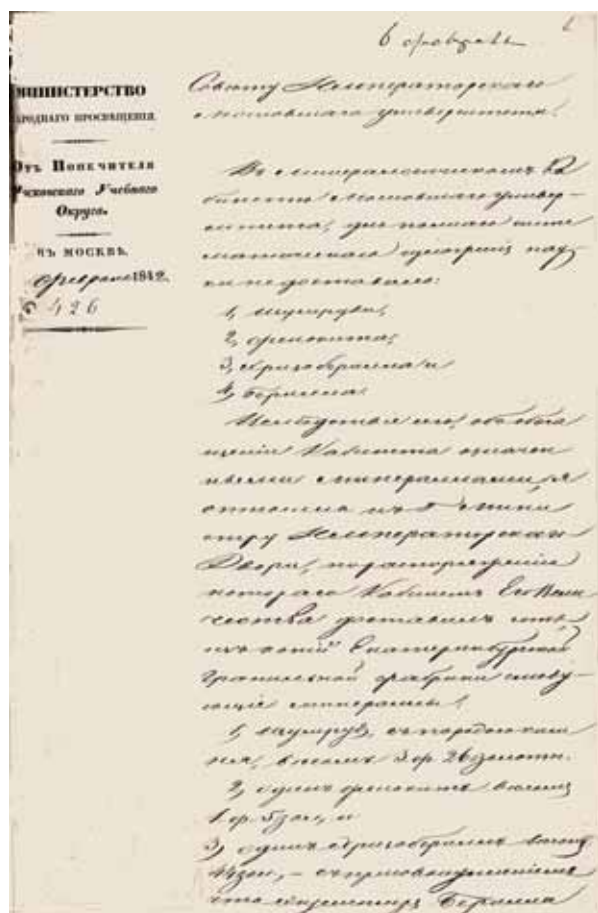


Figure 2. A letter of Sergey Stroganov. 1842 .

Figure 3. **Emerald.** 15 x 8.5 x 6 cm. Ural Emerald Mines, Urals, Russia. Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Russian Academy of Sciences, # MN-42202. Photo: Michael B. Leybov.



On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1842, Count Stroganov, the supervisor of the Moscow Educational District, has sent the following letter to the Council of the Moscow Imperial University:

*“For the systematic representation of the science in the Mineralogical Cabinet of the Moscow University, the following was insufficiently represented:*

1. Emerald,
2. Phenakite,
3. Chrysoberyl, and
4. Beryl.

*I wrote a letter to the Minister of the Imperial Court in relation to these minerals. He ordered to deliver the following minerals from the Yekaterinburg Cutting Factory:*

- 1) Emerald in rock, weighing 3 pounds and 26 zolotniks (1.338 kg)
- 2) One phenakite weighing 1 pound and 5 zolotniks, and
- 3) One chrysoberyl, weighing 44 zolotniks, with a special note that a beryl specimen [will be delivered later]” (Figure 2).

In the 1842 Moscow University Report, Professor Shchurovskiy, the head of the Mineralogical Cabinet, mentioned that all these minerals have been received by the cabinet: *“The cabinet was enriched in many minerals, <...> mainly gifted to the university. The latter part includes, first of all, minerals presented from the cabinet of His Majesty the Emperor (emerald, chrysoberyl and phenakite from the Urals Mountains)”* (A report on..., 1842, p. 51).

In 1858, Shchurovskiy compiled “A Catalogue of the Major and Minor Mineralogical Cabinets of the Moscow Imperial University”, describing this emerald specimen under №1110 as part of the Homeland Collection of the Major Mineralogical Cabinet. It is described in the first place among 11 emeralds from the Emerald Mines of the Urals: “*Emerald, an intergrowth of large crystals, poorly transparent and fractured, in dark-grey mica, weighing 3 pounds 8 ounces and 6 drachmas*”. It is specially emphasized that this is “*a rare specimen delivered from the cabinet of the Emperor*” (Shchurovskiy, 1858, p. 38). The weight of the specimen, mentioned in the Catalogue (1858) is 1 kg and 448 g. The difference in the weight of the specimen mentioned in the letter of Stroganov and in the Catalogue of Shchurovskiy can be explained by imprecise weighing of the specimens in the museum in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Count Stroganov was a financially independent person. He had European-style education and was not interested in career growth. He received his title after marrying in 1818 the Countess Natalia Stroganova, his third cousin. He had a reputation of an ideal supervisor, and the period of his administration over the district and the university is even called the Stroganov’s period (Petrov, 2000). The outstanding emerald specimen from the Urals’ Emerald Mines in the permanent collection of our museum is a memory about both the Stroganov’s period and the hero of the 1812 Patriotic War.

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