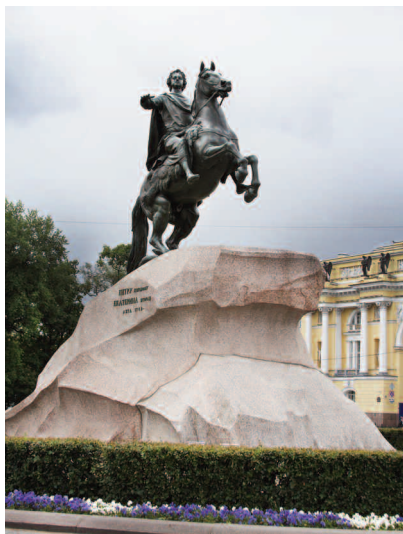


THE BRONZE HORSEMAN MONUMENT: A HISTORY OF PEDESTAL

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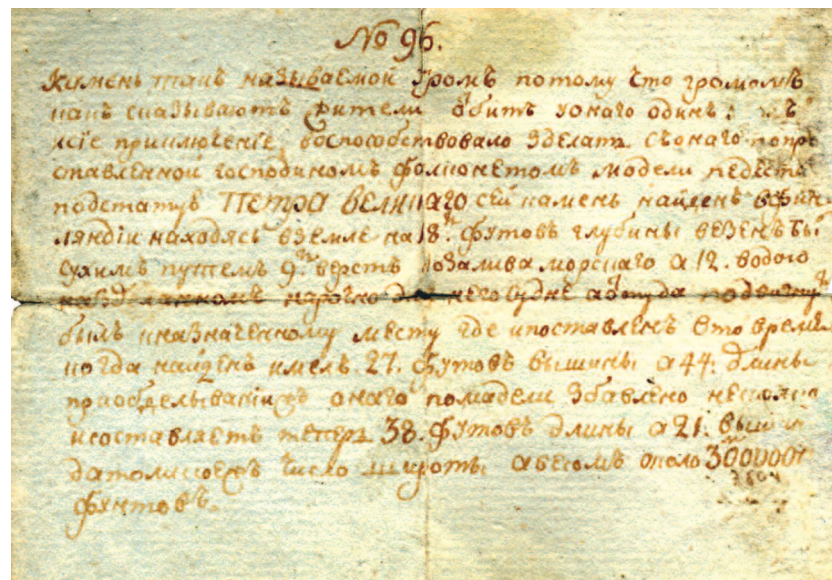
1. The "Bronze Horseman", equestrian statue of Peter the Great, St.-Petersburg. Photo: Valeriy F. Smolkin.

The Vernadsky Geological Museum hosted a Exhibition dedicated to the history pedestal of Peter the Great monument known as "Bronze Horseman". It was opened on Senate Square of the St.-Petersburg in 1782.

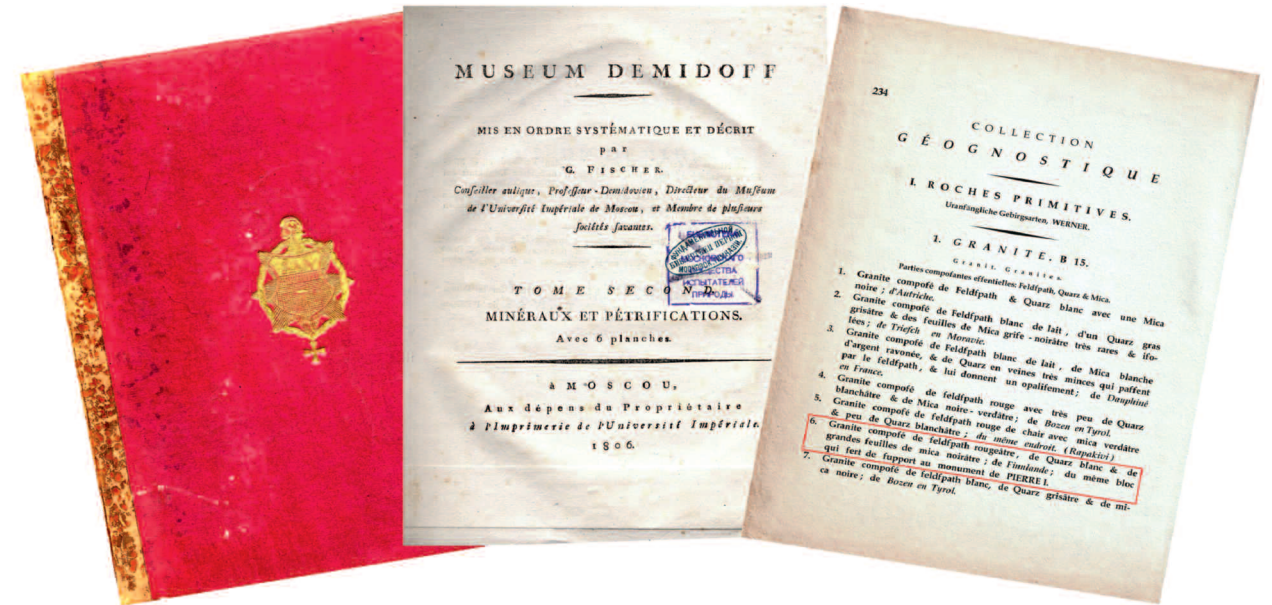
The statue is now one of the symbols of Saint Petersburg. The Empress Catherine the Great taking the throne in 1762 and wishing to provide spiritual support to her early actions using Peter the Great's name ordered to construct a magnificent monument to the famous French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet (1716–1791) (Fig. 1). The sculptor prepared a sketch of the future monument in Paris. According to his idea, Peter I was to climb on horse onto the rock, a symbol of defeated difficulties. With his gaze, with the movement of his hand and with his whole figure, he is directed towards the future of Russia. In Petersburg, Falconet decided to use for the pedestal a "wild mountain" – large boulder of granite.

For a long time, all efforts to find the right material were empty-handed. As a result, the readers of the *St.-Petersburg News* were called for help. Vishnyakov, the state peasant from the Orekhovka Village, a well-known supplier of rocks, responded to the announcement. He reported that there is a "suitable rock" in the Lakhti Forest, just 12 versts (12.8 km) from Petersburg. It is called a 'Thunderstone', because a piece was split from it during the thunderstorm. This was a glacial boulder, about 14 m long and more than 6 m wide, popping out of the surface for 3 m.

In honour of the grandiose event of transportation of the Thunderstone, which was called in Russia and abroad as a victory of the Russian technical mind, Catherine

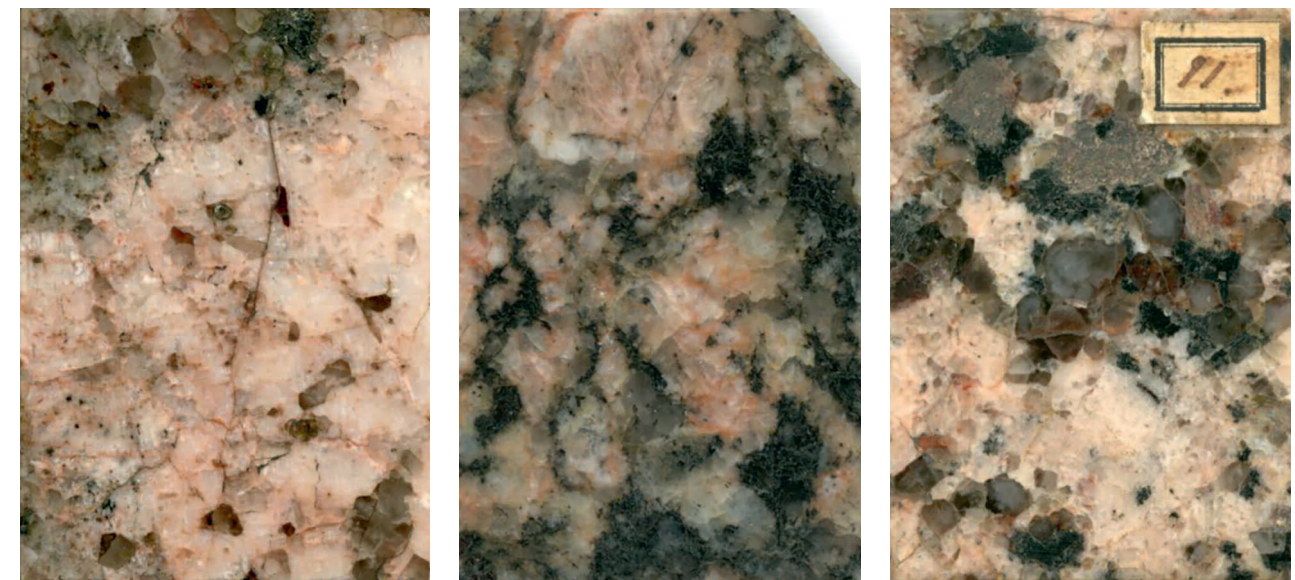


2. Antique label to slabs of Thunderstone chips. Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Russian Academy of Sciences, from collection of Pavel G. Demidov, 1803. Photo: Victoria V. Chernenko.



3. Catalogue of Demidov's collection – cover, front page and page 234 (*Museum Demidoff, tome 2. Minéraux et pétrifications, publié par le prof. Fischer, a Moscou, 1806*). Library of Moscow Society of Naturalists. Photo: Victoria V. Chernenko.

4. Slabs of fragments of Thunderstone. Specimens: Vernadsky State Geological Museum, Russian Academy of Sciences, #IL-94, IL-96, IL-97, from collection of Pavel G. Demidov, 1803. Photo: Victoria V. Chernenko.



the Great ordered to mint a memorial medal with a portrait of the peasant and inscription: «Just as Boldly. January 20, 1770».

Our exhibition presented for the first time the results of geological and mineralogical studies performed in 2016 under the leadership of Dr. Andrey G. Bulakh in St.-Petersburg State University.

In his letter to Duc d'Aiguillon, Field Marshal and Peer of France, Falconet wrote about a Thunderstone: "...This boulder of beautiful and extremely strong granite with quite curious crystalline veins deserves a place in your cabinet. I will try to find a better peace and, if you permit, Monsieur, I will add it to your collection of natural history" (Falconet, 1769).

Small polished slabs from fragments of the Thunderstone deserved their place in the largest collections of natural history of that time. For example, four pieces with old