

# The Ruthmere Record

THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC. • 302 E. BEARDSLEY AVENUE • ELKHART, INDIANA 46514

SPRING 2009

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## IMPERIAL RUSSIAN PORCELAIN EASTER EGGS FROM THE RAYMOND F. PIPER COLLECTION OPENS APRIL 1

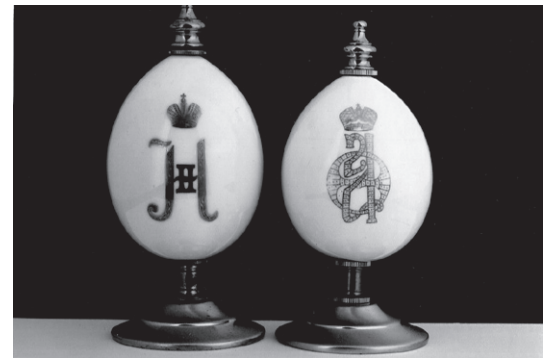
Ruthmere is proud to present an exhibition of more than five dozen Imperial Russian porcelain Easter eggs from the collection of Raymond F. Piper. These stunning treasures represent over 100 years of Romanov family history, from Nicholas I through Nicholas II and Alexandra. Each egg is unique and the majority are hand-painted. Some feature delicate floral motifs, others show bold ciphers emblazoned on dramatically glazed backgrounds. Some portray intricate religious portraits of Christ, the Saints, and the Madonna and Child.

Russian porcelain Easter eggs offer insights into Russian Orthodox Easter traditions and the life of the imperial families. The Easter egg symbolizes the resurrection of life that is the central theme of the Christian Easter celebration. The custom of exchanging eggs at Easter was brought from Byzantium to Russia with the introduction of Christianity. As early as the 15th and 16th centuries painted eggs were sold during Passion Week (the week preceding Easter). Some were boiled goose or chicken eggs, others were made of wood; many were gilded or painted red, the color that signifies the passion of Christ. An Easter kiss was exchanged along with the egg, although those of high rank did not always accept the traditional kiss from those of lesser rank.

Over time, the preparation and exchange of Easter eggs became more elaborate. Before the advent of porcelain in Europe in the 18th century, eggs were made of wood, lacquered papier-mâché, precious metals and semi-precious stones, and luxurious textiles such as velvet and embroidered silk.

As European manufacture of hard-paste porcelains developed during the 18th century, so did the manufacture of Russian

*continued on page 2*



*Easter eggs with the ciphers of Emperor Nicholas II and Empress Alexandra Fedorovna*



*Easter egg with an image of St. George slaying the dragon, c. 1840s, period of Nicholas I, Rococo Revival style*



*Easter eggs with anemones, iris, and clematis, c. 1900, period of Nicholas II*

### Membership Levels

#### Individual - \$35

3 issues of The Ruthmere Record, one free tour for 2, and information regarding all upcoming Ruthmere events.

#### Family - \$50

3 issues of The Ruthmere Record, one complimentary family tour, and invitation to the children's summer party.

#### Patron - \$100

3 issues of The Ruthmere Record, listing in newsletters, one complimentary tour for 4 plus information regarding all upcoming Ruthmere events.

#### Bronze Patron - \$250

3 issues of The Ruthmere Record, listing in newsletters, one complimentary tour for 8 plus information regarding all upcoming events.

#### Silver Patron - \$500

Same as Bronze Patron above plus one complimentary tour for 12.

Special membership opportunities are available at higher levels. Please contact Laurel Spencer Forsythe at (574) 264-0330.

**All memberships include a 10% discount in the Museum Shop.**

## RUTHMERE BECOMES GREEN

As Ruthmere moves into spring, we find ourselves looking for new ways to become green. One important way is to send our newsletter by email, thereby saving the significant use of paper and postage that go into our mailings. With this in mind we are asking our readers to send us their email addresses. We may also use your email address to send reminders of upcoming events programs, bringing about another saving in cards and postage. Please be assured that we will not share email addresses with anyone. The best way to send us your email address is to log onto ruthmere.org, go to the "contact" section and send us an email.



### DISCOVER THE REWARDS OF MEMBERSHIP

Please fill out this form and mail or fax it to:  
 Ruthmere Museum Membership  
 302 East Beardsley Avenue  
 Elkhart, IN 46514  
 Telephone: (574) 264-0330  
 Fax: (574) 266-0474

- Individual (\$35)    Family (\$50)    Patron (\$100)  
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Name(s) as you would like to be listed in publications \_\_\_\_\_

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Enclosed is a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please make check payable to Ruthmere Museum

Please charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my:  
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Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (Required for Credit Card) \_\_\_\_\_

This is a gift membership for:

Name(s) as you would like to be listed in publications \_\_\_\_\_

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Matching gift form enclosed. Membership contributions to Ruthmere Museum may be matched by your employer. Ask if your company participates in the matching gift program.

Memorial In memory of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Memorials are available anytime at Ruthmere.

### THIS EXHIBITION IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

**BARNES & THORNBURG LLP**  
 b t l a w . c o m



PLUMBING & HEATING

### "Imperial Russian Porcelain Easter Eggs" continued from page 1

porcelain Easter eggs. In 1793, Catherine the Great received 373 Easter eggs of various sizes that were painted and elaborately decorated. Numbers of Easter eggs created by porcelain factories increased dramatically through the mid-19th century, when more than 5,000 porcelain eggs were ordered for presentation to the imperial families. By the late-19th century Tsar Alexander III continued to order more than 5,000 eggs from the Imperial factory, including those decorated with paintings, his monogram and that of the Empress.

During the years of WWI, elaborately decorated presentation Easter eggs were replaced by simpler and smaller eggs embellished only with imperial monograms, usually on a white ground. Transfer-printed eggs were produced in large quantities as gifts for soldiers. Special white eggs with a red cross were presented as gifts to wounded soldiers. In 1915 the Imperial Porcelain Factory reported making large quantities of small Easter eggs with the monograms of the Tsar, the Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, and the Tsarevich Alexis Nikolaievich. A number of eggs made in 1915 and 1916 featured the monograms of the pious Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fedorovna and the Dowager Empress Marie Fedorovna. During the war years, as soldiers fell in battle, the significance of the resurrection took on even greater importance.

Source: Dr. Tamara V. Kudriavtseva, "The Feast of Feasts—the Russian Orthodox Easter" in *Imperial Easter Eggs, exhibition catalogue from the Christiansborg Palace, Copenhagen, 1994.*



# BOBBY GOES TO WAR—MERRIECOURT, SEPTEMBER, 1939 PART ONE

By ROBERT BEARDSLEY, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Merriecourt was a small private school for young boys in Berlin, Connecticut, where I was enrolled on and off for two years from the summer of 1939 through most of 1940.

All told there were never more than ten or twelve of us there at any one time.

In April of 1938 at the age of 4 years and 7 months, I had arrived in Elkhart, Indiana, for the first time from the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, orphanage known as The Home for Little Wanderers. But the strain of a rambunctious little boy was soon more than my new mother's delicate nerves could tolerate. My arrival further complicated some unresolved relationship issues between my parents, and I had to be sent away. This was not altogether a bad thing. The Home had been filled with little boys my age, and I was used to groups where my cheerful and aggressive ways made me popular. A group of one at 2233 Greenleaf Boulevard in Elkhart, despite the splendor and the good food and the attentive nanny, was not the potting soil I needed.

Merriecourt was. "Uncle" John and "Aunt" Ruth Kingsbury, a big-hearted and loving couple in their late forties, took in kids and ran us like a large family, into which I immediately fit quite comfortably. Besides, my maternal grandparents, Eugene and Mable Buchanan, lived "just over the hill" in Darien, Connecticut. They came often to visit. They came a good deal more often than my parents, who showed up once during my time at Merriecourt, the day they took me there. When Gramps and Grammy tooled up the drive in their emerald green 1935 Buick roadster with the rumble seat in the back for us kids to pile into, I was very popular indeed. He always brought me bananas, for some

reason, and once amazed me with red bananas. "I bet you've never seen RED bananas before!" Well, I hadn't. Neither had the other kids, who were equally amazed, I mean with the car and all.

In August of 1939, as Winston Churchill's "Gathering Storm" was about to break over Europe, my parents were in London along with many other Americans suddenly trying to get passage home. Hyde Park was filled with anti-aircraft guns, and England was going on a wartime footing very fast. Some Americans, trying to get out, started to panic. Frustrated, Walter finally booked on the Athenia, a Cunard ship, but wisely switched at the last minute to the rusty old President Roosevelt, that was American and therefore neutral and safe from u-boat attack. They had a long, harrowing, and non-luxurious voyage back home. My parents were lucky to have a small third-class cabin to themselves. The ship was overbooked by almost 50%, the overflow bedded in the corridors like troopships would be later in the war.

The Germans torpedoed the Athenia days after the British entered the war. Later in life, when I was living in Kennebunk, I met a man by the name of David Morgan, husband of an artist friend, Lou Kohl Morgan. As a little boy he had been on that sailing of the Athenia with his parents. They were among the lucky ones who made it to a lifeboat and were saved. The Athenia went down in 20 minutes, 250 miles off the northwest coast of Ireland. Over 300 Americans were on board.

Back at Merriecourt, the last of summer 1939 was spent berry picking, taking long country walks, and playing softball in the lower field with Uncle

John after supper. We sat on the wooden kitchen steps singing songs and playing games like "one potato, two potatoes, three potatoes, four. . ." We enjoyed the simple pursuits of life that young kids enjoy everywhere. In Merriecourt's workshop that year I made a wooden stepstool for my mother's linen closet that I now have in my library here in Ft. Lauderdale 68 years later. We were all in bed "cozy and tosh" by 8:30 every night and sound asleep by 9:00. One evening in the last light of day I remember Aunt Ruth coming to my bed and gently awakening me to say, "Look, Bobby, a rainbow!" It was the first one I had ever seen.

One of the joys of Merriecourt was an old upright piano with a spin down stool in the sunroom off the back hall, where we kids entered and left the house. Nobody dared use the front door. The room contained a few books, some maps, lots of games, some floor lamps, and a Gothic-style Philco radio with an orange crescent dial and dark brown octagonal Bakelite knobs. I had started piano lessons the year before at age five. At Merriecourt, under the stern tutelage of Miss Robb, I was learning fast and loved playing loud. (Miss Robb owned a dark blue 1935 Chevrolet two-seater with oak spokes in its wheels and an oak steering wheel. She called her car "Mert" and often took me for rides in "him." It really was a neat car, although I remember it rode like a tank. Miss Robb and I were buddies.)

My favorite song in those days was "On the Road to Mandalay." I had all the kids singing it, with Uncle John and Aunt Ruth and Mary joining in. Saturday mornings we gathered around the radio in the schoolroom to listen to

*continued on page 6*

# WHY YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, CULTURAL EDUCATION, AND LIFELONG LEARNING

## *Our Mission*

The Ruthmere Foundation, Inc. inspires the imagination and promotes excellence in fine arts, architecture and historic preservation to advocate life-long learning and the entrepreneurial spirit.

## *Our Vision*

The Ruthmere Foundation, Inc. will be recognized as a learning center for architectural, decorative and fine arts and will be positioned at the heart of the community's cultural and historical identity.

Membership support enables us to deliver high quality cultural programming for all audiences. Especially at this time, when cultural organizations like Ruthmere are challenged due to the economic recession, your financial support is particularly significant. Membership offers benefits, of course, such as free tours, invitations to previews, programs, and other special privileges, but the best reason for becoming a member is that it your investment in Ruthmere helps to strengthen our community.

Ruthmere's collections include works of art that rival those held in much larger museums found in our nation's major cities, yet they are easily accessible to area residents. Your membership contribution helps to fund work in preservation, education and care of the collection. Through your gift to Ruthmere, you choose to make a significant contribution to the cultural life of our community, to celebrate its entrepreneurial roots, and to lay the foundation for its promising future.

The Ruthmere Foundation, Inc. recently acquired the 1848 Havilah Beardsley House at 102 E. Beardsley—the home of the community's founder and his family. Your gift helps to make possible the ongoing restoration of Elkhart's oldest house and to provide a community center that is accessible to all. This project will prove to be a key part of the development of a new cultural corridor for the city that will stretch from its current downtown revitalization, particularly the redevelopment of the Lerner Theater arts and entertainment district, to the Wellfield Botanic Gardens on North Main. Please let me know if you'd like a personal tour of the Havilah Beardsley House to see what work has been done and what is planned.

Should you have any questions about Ruthmere membership or any other aspect of the current operations of The Ruthmere Foundation, Inc. please contact me at (574-264-0330) or email [lforsythe@ruthmere.org](mailto:lforsythe@ruthmere.org).

Very truly yours,

Laurel Spencer Forsythe  
Executive Director

## NOTES FROM AN OAKEN AERIE...

MARILOU RITCHIE, ARCHIVIST AND LIBRARIAN

A new writers' group, Confluence, is enjoying the ambience of the library. Once a month, usually the third Saturday at 2 p.m., about eight individuals with an interest in writing of some kind meet to talk and share this interest. Some of them are actively writing; some are published authors; others just enjoy literature or are seeking an incentive to write. The purpose of the group is to support one another's efforts in a pleasant environment. You can learn more about Conflu-

ence and discover the dates that it meets by visiting [ruthmere.org](http://ruthmere.org).

A recent gift from board Vice President George Freese to the Arts Reference Library is a beautiful, big volume of *One Hundred Masterpieces from the Collection of Dr. Walter A. Compton*. This book is a very complete look at a fine collection of Japanese swords and fittings that was once housed in Elkhart. In addition to this book the ARL also owns the two-volume catalog that Christie's published prior to

the 1992 sale of the collection after Dr. Compton's death. These publications are of interest to Ruthmere because of Dr. Compton's association with Miles and the Beardsleys.

Meanwhile the library is still open for business on Wednesday from 10:00am to 3:00pm and on Thursday from 1:00 to 3:00pm. We look forward to your visit.



# LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY LEADERSHIP CIRCLE MEMBERS

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Carol Emens  
Samantha Fox  
Robert & Joanne Franklin  
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Dot Hansen  
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Phil & Carole Staal  
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Peg Trobaugh  
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Jeanne Wells  
Marilynn Wilson

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC.  
302 EAST BEARDSLEY AVENUE  
ELKHART, INDIANA 46514  
574.264.0330  
WWW.RUTHMERE.ORG

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Elkhart, IN  
Permit No. 151

## APRIL

- 1: Opening Day (Russian Imperial Porcelain Presentation Easter Eggs exhibition opens)
- 5: Free Family Sunday 1-4PM
- 12: Easter Sunday (Closed)
- 18: Confluence: The Writers' Group 2 PM

## MAY

- 3: Free Family Sunday 1-4PM
- 16: Confluence: The Writers' Group 2 PM

## JUNE

Coffee on the Piazza Starts every Saturday from 9:30- noon through September

- 6: Children's Summer Garden Party (1-3PM)
- 7: Free Family Sunday 1-4PM
- 20: Confluence: The Writers' Group 2 PM

## VISIT RUTHMERE.ORG FOR UPDATED INFORMATION

Would you like to hear an "Elkhart History Minute" or listen to a longer version of our new podcast series, *Where the Rivers Meet?* Visit [Ruthmere.org](http://Ruthmere.org) and click on the icon at the lower left of the home page to hear some fun and clever narratives about early Elkhart

history, including a recent interview with board President Robert Beardsley. And, you can see photographs and read about developments in the restoration of the Havilah Beardsley House on our blog. Visit the Havilah Beardsley House section, then click on "restoration." A

new area for educators features the curriculum-based PowerPoint presentation *Exploring Elkhart's Roots with Ruthmere*. Plus, there is always up-to-date program and special event information in the calendar and news section. Visit [Ruthmere.org](http://Ruthmere.org) and then visit us!

### *"Bobby Goes to War" continued from page 3*

Walter Damrosch's "Music Appreciation Hour." There I first heard Prokofiev's symphonic composition *Peter and the Wolf*, which the composer had written in 1936 for the education and amusement of his children. Damrosch first explained at length, in mellow, mellifluous and German-accented tones, that the oboe was the duck, the cat the clarinet, Grandfather the bassoons, Peter the strings, the bird the flute, and the big

bad wolf the French horns! We all got goose bumps when we finally heard it, but the good professor certainly took his time getting around to it.

In any case, on the soft and lovely evening of September 1, 1939, I was banging away at something or other on the piano when Mary, cook and nanny to us all, rushed in from the kitchen with tears in her eyes. "Bobby! The radio!" I spun around on my stool as the orange

dial lit up, and soon these words came out: "This morning German army troops suddenly and without provocation invaded a border guard on the west border of Poland. It is expected that Whitehall will declare that a State of War exists between Great Britain and Germany within hours." (to be continued in the next issue of the Ruthmere Record)

