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The Russian Naval Museum, Lakewood, New Jersey

The Russian Naval Museum (Russkii Morskoi Muzei imeni Admirala Stepana Osipovicha Makarova) of Lakewood, New Jersey, is a virtually unknown repository of materials dealing with the naval and military history of imperial Russia. Established in 1966, the museum is owned and operated by the Association of Russian Imperial Naval Officers in America (Obshchestvo Ofitserov Rossiiskago Imperatorskago Flota v Amerike).¹ This organization of émigré naval officers was founded in 1923 and later became affiliated with the worldwide émigré naval organization Vsezarubezhnoe Morskoe Obedinenie in Paris. At the time of its founding, the association established its own historical commission under the auspices of which the bulk of the present museum holdings were collected and organized. In 1958 the work of the historical commission was augmented by a new body, the American Society for Russian Naval History (Amerikanskoe Obshchestvo Russkoi Morskoi Istorii), incorporated as a nonprofit organization in affiliation with but independent of the parent association.

Before 1966 the museum collections were housed in the association's quarters in New York City. In that year, however, the collections were relocated in the present museum building, where they are undergoing systematic reorganization under the careful guidance of their curator, Mr. George N. Taube, and his capable assistant, Mr. John J. Tchoulanovsky.

The collections of the Russian Naval Museum are organized in three divisions: museum, library, and archives. Of these, the museum is by far the largest. Its extensive holdings are divided into eighteen departments (*otdely*) including, among others, flags and pennants, paintings and portraits, documents and autographs, maps and plans, rare publications, valuable books and brochures, naval weaponry and clothing, commemorative medallions, and ship models. A full description of the museum's holdings would hardly be possible here, but several items deserve special mention. There is a complete gallery of portraits of the Russian rulers from Peter the Great to Nicholas II, many of which are rare and valuable. There are also portraits of almost all of the most important figures in Russian naval history beginning with Count F. M. Apraksin, who, with Peter the Great, is considered the founder of the Russian navy. The museum also contains a number of eighteenth

1. The museum is owned in conjunction with the American-Russian Welfare Society "Rodina" of Lakewood, to whose main building the museum is annexed.

and nineteenth-century engravings and lithographs depicting various person-ages and events in imperial Russian history. The museum has in addition a number of rare books, albums, and maps relating principally to Russian naval history and dating as far back as the late eighteenth century. For the later period the museum contains an extensive collection of photographs pertaining especially to the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, the Civil War, and the Russian emigration. The collection of commemorative medallions, struck on the occasion of significant events in Russian history from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, is probably unique in all the world.² Finally, the museum has a limited but extremely valuable collection of historical documents and autographs. These include a manuscript letter of Peter the Great to Prince Romodanovsky dated December 30, 1715, and an *ukaz* addressed to Brigadier Lefort bearing the tsar's signature under the date of December 1, 1718. There is also an incomplete manuscript letter of Count Apraksin sent November 14, 1709. In addition there are two letters in the hand of Catherine the Great consisting of an imperial rescript to Prince Alexei G. Orlov dated February 23, 1773, and remnants of a letter to Rear Admiral Prince Nassau-Siegen. Other documents from the era of Catherine include an *ukaz* to Pskov Governor Piel dated September 30, 1788, a letter to Baron Grimm of September 30, 1785, and a letter sent May 23, 1788, to the Elector of Trier announcing the birth of the Grand Duchess Ekaterina Pavlovna. A manuscript letter in French, dated October 17, 1796, and addressed to Eugene of Württemberg, bears the signature of Emperor Paul. Finally, there are several documents signed by Alexander I including an *ukaz* addressed to the Military Governor of Lithuania General Rimsky-Korsakov dated April 21, 1812, and citations to Prince Vorontsov and Peter Nadgoft in recognition of services rendered in connection with the Napoleonic wars. Autographs in the collections, in addition to those listed above, include the signatures of Nicholas I and Alexander II.

In 1967, as the result of a joint decision of the executive boards of the Association of Imperial Russian Naval Officers in America and the American-Russian Welfare Society "Rodina" of Lakewood, about half of the area in the museum was allotted to the latter for use by a group of veterans representing the Imperial Russian Army. This group thereupon undertook the display of portraits, paintings, documents, weapons, and other memorabilia relating to the history of the Russian army. In recent months this army collection has

2. An interesting recent addition to the museum is a fan presented as a memento by the delegates at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to Baroness Fredericks, who served at the congress as personal secretary to her father, Prince A. M. Gorchakov, minister of foreign affairs and head of the Russian delegation. The fan bears the signatures of all the leading representatives at Berlin, including Disraeli, Bismarck, Gorchakov, and others, and was donated by Captain D. J. Daragan of Helsinki.

rapidly increased in size and presently constitutes an impressive tribute to imperial Russia's military heritage.³

The library numbers over three thousand titles (about four thousand volumes). It is, of course, a rather specialized collection, being particularly strong in Russian military and naval history from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Yet the library contains a surprisingly large number of items of general interest. A brief description of the library holdings in each of its major subject categories will perhaps give an idea of the nature and extent of the collection:

1. *Rare and Valuable Editions.* Books in this category deal primarily with naval and military subjects. There are, however, some literary and historical works. Most of the books were published in the nineteenth century, but some date back to the eighteenth. Many are luxury items. The books are mostly in Russian, but other Western languages are also represented. There are about 550 items in all.

2. *Reference Books.* The volumes in this category are principally naval reference works of a technical nature. There are also, however, several general reference sources—for example, part of the *Polnoe sobranie zakonov*. Also included are dictionaries, manuals, textbooks, and various pedagogical works. The total number of volumes in this category exceeds five hundred. Most of the books were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and are mainly in Russian.

3. *General Works.* This category numbers about two thousand items and is widely variegated. Books on naval history predominate, but belles-lettres, memoir literature, and historical works are also included. The vast majority of the books deal with Russia. Most of the works date from the end of the empire period, but there are a few Soviet publications.

4. *Periodicals.* This category consists almost exclusively of military and naval journals. Files of the official naval publication *Morskoi sbornik* (St. Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad) are nearly complete for 1855-1924. There are also files of relatively rare émigré serials, such as *Morskoi sbornik* (Bizerte, 1921-23), *Morskoi zhurnal* (Prague, 1922-39), *Zarubezhnyi morskoi sbornik* (Pilsen, 1928-31), and *Chasovoi* (Paris, 1929-).

5. *Special Collections.* This category includes the eighty-four volumes published under the rubric of the Zarubezhnaia Morskaia Biblioteka by Vsezarubezhnoe Morskoe Obedinenie in Paris. They consist of memoirs, fiction, and secondary works relating to Russian naval history. Also in this category is a complete set of the association's own publication, *Morskaia zapiski* (New York, 1943-65).⁴

3. The army collection is under the care of Mr. V. P. Seletsky. Persons interested in information about the collection should contact Mr. V. V. Pojidaeff, Director of Public Relations, American-Russian Welfare Society "Rodina," R.D. No. 2, Alexander Avenue, Lakewood, New Jersey 08701.

4. Published irregularly over a period of twenty-two years, *Morskaia zapiski* contains numerous articles of great historical interest. Few libraries, however, have complete files of this valuable source. A limited number of copies of an author-title index of the journal

In general, since the holdings of the library are not reported in any of the standard reference sources, students of Russian military and naval history should check with the curator before concluding that any given volume is not available in the United States.⁵

Of perhaps the greatest interest to scholars are the archives. Unfortunately they are also the most difficult to describe precisely. As presently constituted the archives are divided into twenty departments (*otdely*). Of these, the first seven pertain to the business of the association and are of little interest to scholars. Departments 8 and 9 consist of original manuscripts, illustrations, and correspondence submitted to the association's journal *Morskiiia zapiski* and fifteenth anniversary publication *S beregov Ameriki* (New York, 1939). Department 10 is entitled Documents, Letters, Papers, and Manuscripts and was assembled "from the private and family archives of individual persons." This extensive category fills several file drawers and is arranged alphabetically by the name of the contributor. In general these materials have information on educational and naval affairs, life in emigration, the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and the Revolution and Civil War in Russia.⁶ Department 11 is called Miscellaneous Historical Materials and has both original materials and copies. This important category is arranged in twelve subdepartments (*podotdely*) containing materials dealing with the Romanov dynasty, Russian naval history (subdivided chronologically), naval voyages, the history of military-educational institutions, the history of individual ships, naval biographies, the naval emigration, Russian military history (army and air force), military biographies, classified official publications, and miscellaneous materials. Departments 12–15 contain materials concerning the history and experiences of the Russian naval emigration. Department 16 consists of an extensive collection of clippings from newspapers and journals on a wide variety of topics. Department 17, entitled Naval Bibliography, includes indexes, catalogues, and lists of materials on various naval subjects. Departments 18 and 19 consist of an extensive collection of graphic materials (portraits and paintings, albums, and photographs), many of which are unique and valuable.

(*Morskiiia zapiski: Sistematischeskii i alfavitnyi ukazateli*), covering the period 1943–63, are available on request from Curator Taube.

5. Library books do not circulate. Persons wishing to use the collection must either come to the museum or make arrangements for photoduplication.

6. Additional information on this important archival department must await the curator's reorganization. In his own research, however, dealing with the Civil War in North Russia, 1918–20, the author has found this department fruitful indeed, and has turned up, for example, the letters and papers of the assistant chief of the Murmansk Military Port, 1919–20, and the papers and materials of the captain of the (White) Onega Lake Flotilla, 1919–20. It is therefore recommended that anyone working in Russian military or naval history, especially of the period 1900–1921, look into the holdings of the archives in this department.

Department 20 of the archives holds materials and correspondence relative to the library and archives themselves and is of no particular interest to scholars.

The Russian Naval Museum and the Association of Imperial Russian Naval Officers in America welcome visitors and scholars. Facilities for study at the museum are rather limited, and arrangements for use of the collections must be made by prior consultation with the curator. In an effort to facilitate research, however, the association has recently acquired a duplicating machine, and materials may be reproduced at the discretion of the curator. At present the museum is not staffed on a full-time basis and there are no regular hours. Therefore, persons wishing to visit the museum should apply to the curator, Mr. George N. Taube, Jackson Mills Road, Box 38, R.D. No. 4, Freehold, New Jersey 07728.

In view of the advanced age of its membership, the Association of Imperial Russian Naval Officers is concerned about the future disposition of the museum collections. The association hopes that by drawing the attention of the academic community to the value and extent of the collections some interest will be aroused among the public in the maintenance and perpetuation of the Russian Naval Museum in years to come.