

Alexandrite Chronological Backstory

" History is philosophy teaching by example, and also warning; its two eyes are geography and chronology."

James A. Garfield. US general & politician (1831 - 1881)



According to a widely popular but controversial story, alexandrite was discovered by the Finnish mineralogist Nils Gustaf Nordenskjöld, (1792 -1866) on the tsaravitch Alexander's sixteenth birthday on April 17, 1834 and named alexandrite in honor of the future Tsar of the Russian Empire.

History and mystery, fiction and reality, still the story of alexandrite is forever linked to the last of the Russian Tsars. More than any other gemstone, alexandrite has captured and captivated the interest of collectors and connoisseurs since its discovery in the Ural mountains almost 200 years ago. And despite its short history, this remarkable and very scarce gemstone has already been ascribed with a variety of magical properties, stories and a noble history.

1723

Tatishchev Vasily Nikitich (1686 -1750), Russian statesman, historian and ethnographer, writes a letter to the Berg-Collegium (Mining Board) about the necessity of building a new plant on the river Iset and starting construction of Ekaterinburg (Yekaterinburg) Iron Works which became the foundation of Ekaterinburg (named after Saint Catherine, the namesake of Tsar Peter the Great's wife Catherine).

1726

See Alexandrite Tsarstone collectors guide, Chronological History of Alexandrite, <http://www.alexandrite.net/viewpage.html?id=ALXS-002-00003> (Chronological history timeline, depicting the history of the alexandrite gemstone and its roots) (as of).

Ekaterinburg stone-cutting and lapidary workshops are opened which become the Imperial Ekaterinburg lapidary factory in the 1750s and eventually serve two main mining areas centred around Ekaterinburg: the Mursinka/Nerchinsk mines one hundred and twenty miles to the north and the Tokovaya Mines, approximately ninety miles to the east on the Tokovaya River, Ural Mountains.

1745

Gold deposits are found in the Urals for the first time.

1790

Abraham Gottlob Werner (1750 - 1817), German geologist, described the mineral chrysoberyl, discovered the year before, and named it from the Greek words meaning golden and beryl.

1829

Diamonds are discovered in the Urals by Count Polier.

1831

Kokovin Yakov Vasilevich (1787- 1840), Director of the Ekaterinburg Lapidary Works, opens the famous Izumrudnye Kopi (Emerald Pits) on the river Tokovaya, where a local peasant charcoal burner Maxim Stefanovich Kogevnikov (1799 - 1865) unearthed a cluster of beautiful green crystals (emeralds) from between the roots of a fallen tree.

1833

A greenish crystal, with the strange ability to change color and appear red under candlelight is found in the mica schists of the Tokovaya river, Ural Mountains.

1834

Count Lev Alekseevich Perovskii (1792-1856), Vice-President of the Appanage Department, presents the color-changing stone under the name of Alexandrite to honor Tsarevitch Alexander, the future Tsar Alexander II, on his sixteenth birthday.

1840

The largest Alexandrite crystal cluster to date was found in Izumrudnye Kopi and ended up in Count Lev Alekseevich Perovskii's collection. The cluster consists of twenty-two dark green crystals of various sizes. There are mica scales and pale green opaque beryl prisms between them. The specimen measures 25 x 14 x 11 centimetres and weighs 5724 grams.

1842

Nils Gustaf Nordenskjöld (1792 -1866), Finnish mineralogist, publishes his scientific description of the color changing chrysoberyl variety under the name of alexandrite.

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1856

Prince Petr Arkadievich Kochubei (1825 - 1892) purchases Perovskii's mineralogical collection, including the largest Alexandrite crystal cluster, which is now part of Fersman mineralogical museum collection and today known as "Kochubei's Druse".

1861

Eliphas Levi (born Alphonse Louis Constant) (1810 -1875), French author and magician, connects duality of color of alexandrite with a duality of human blood - venous and arterial and calling alexandrite "the favorite charm of our time which clears and strengthens the blood vessels" in his sequel *La Clef des Grandes Mysteres* (The Key to the Great Mysteries).

1881

Tsar Alexander II (1818 - 1881) dies when a bomb is thrown at his carriage by the revolutionary terrorist Grinevitsky and Alexandrite becomes the de facto symbol of Russian monarchists, representing both its association with the Tsar by name and the imperial theme by its red and green colors.

1884

Nikolai Semyonovich Leskov (1831 - 1895), "the most Russian of all Russian writers", writes a short story, "The Alexandrite. Mysterious interpretation of a true fact" dedicated to the beauty and drama of the imperial stone.

1894

The last Tsar to reign over Russia, Nicholas II, takes the throne on the death of his father, Alexander III.

1909

The first synthetic color-change corundum was grown and used as an alexandrite imitation. The color change in alexandrite-like synthetic sapphire is bluish purple changing to reddish purple.

1912

Alexandrite is included as a birthstone on the American National Association of Jewelers list.

1916

Jan Czochralski developed the crystal pulling method for synthesising rubies, which was later to be later used to grow alexandrite.

1918

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Tsar Nicholas II (1868 -1918), last crowned Emperor of Russia was executed with his family by Bolsheviks in the Ipatiev House, Ekaterinburg, just forty-five miles from the first find of the gemstone named after his grandfather Alexander II.

1922

Alexander Evgenievich Fersman (1883-1945), the noted Russian gemmologist, reports that 2,000 kilograms of alexandrite in comparison to 20,000 kilograms of rough emeralds were mined in Izumrudnye Kopi since 1834.

1952

A variation of the birthstones list was approved by the American National Retail Jewelers Association, National Jewelers Association, and the American Gem Society and Alexandrite is offered as an alternative to pearl and therefore associated with the month of June.

1967

The largest uncut alexandrite of gem quality is discovered by the founder and chairman of Amsterdam Jewellers, Jules Roger Sauer, in Jaqueto district, Bahia (Brazil). The stone is named the Sauer Alexandrite, weighs 122,400 carats and is held in Souer's private collection at Amsterdam Sauer in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands (USA).

1973

Creative Crystals Inc., of San Ramon, California (USA) patent and manufacture synthetic alexandrite using the flux method.

1977

Allied Corporation, New Jersey, (USA) produce chromium-doped chrysoberyl, also known as Alexandrite. It is a four-level, low-gain, and broadly tuneable laser using the energy levels of trivalent chromium in the crystalline host. The synthetic alexandrite rods are produced by using Czochralski techniques.

1987

The first, and only major deposit, of alexandrite since Izumrudnye Kopi is discovered in Gerais, Hematita, (Brazil). The subsequent Alexandrite-rush lasts approximately four months during the spring and mid summer, and results in bloodshed and 260,000 carats of rough.

1992

The name allexite is used for a synthetic alexandrite manufactured by the Czochralski-grown method. A stone examined in 1992, and reported by GIA, shows a strong color change from reddish-purple under incandescent light to bluish-green in daylight or fluorescent light. This type of change is shown by the finest Brazilian alexandrite.

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1993

A new source of alexandrite is discovered in southern Tanzania, near the Mozambique border.

1994

Alexandrite is discovered in Chattisgarh, India.

2000

An alexandrite weighing over 500 grams, later called "Patriot", was found at the Malyshevskoye deposit's warehouse, amongst stored ore. After examination by experts from The Gokhran of Russia, the unique name of the stone was revoked due to many defects, which also influenced the gemstone's valuation.

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