

The Horse Tamers of the Anichkov Bridge in St. Petersburg

by Kristin Berkery



Anichkov Bridge in St. Petersburg, Russia. Photo by Potekhin

The Anichkov Bridge has spanned the Fontanka River in [St. Petersburg](#), Russia, for nearly 300 years. Named after Mikhail Anichkov, the designer of the original bridge, there have been four versions of the bridge built over the centuries.

The newest bridge was built in 1906, but its most famous features, the horse tamer statues, were created in the mid-1800s upon the order of [Tsar Nicholas I](#). The sculptor, Peter Clodt von Jürgensburg (known as Pyotr Karlovich Klodt in Russia), was commissioned in 1842 to create lifelike sculptures of men taming wild horses to symbolize mankind's struggle against the elements. Two were given as gifts to the King of [Naples](#) who had them installed at the gates of the Royal Palace, and two were given to the King of [Prussia](#), where they adorned the [Royal Palace](#) at [Berlin](#). (The Naples statues are still standing at the Royal Palace; the German statues can now be seen at [Heinrich von Kleist](#) Park in Berlin.) In 1849-50, four additional statues were created and placed on

the four corners of the Anichkov Bridge.

Interestingly, statues one and two, which were the first to be made, are shod while three and four are barefoot. You can view all four in the gallery below.



The quadriga on the Bolshoi in Moscow. Photo by Alexey Vikhrov

During the Siege of Leningrad in World War II, locals removed the statues and buried them in a nearby garden for safekeeping. They were restored in 1945 and have become an unofficial symbol of the city of St. Petersburg.

Tsar Nicholas I reportedly chose Clodt to sculpt the horses because he believed the artist “creates horses finer than any prize stallion does.” Clodt, who had a passion for horses, sculpted other well-known pieces, such as a [quadriga](#) above the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow; a memorial depicting Tsar Nicholas I on horseback that was cutting edge at the time because the horse was balanced on just two hooves; and two horse tamer statues that adorn the front of the riding stables at the Vlahernskoye-Kuzminki estate in [Moscow](#).



The Vlahernskoye-Kuzminki estate in Moscow featuring two horse tamer statues. Photo by Al Shipilin