



HOTEL VERA (STEPNOV'S HOUSE)

and

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

[www.hotelvera.ru](http://www.hotelvera.ru)

Our guests frequently ask us how to find a nice route to places of interest from the Hotel, what is the history of the house, neighborhood, etc. We have tried to answer some of these questions and outline picturesque routes to the heart of St. Petersburg historical center known as the “**Golden Triangle**” two sides bordered by two rivers – the **Neva** and the **Fontanka**, and on the third side by a major and very well known City street - **Nevsky** prospect.

Hotel Vera occupies about 2/3 of the renovated 1903 Art Nouveau building, known as **Stepnov’s House**, which has been entered into the St. Petersburg Registry of Architectural Masterpieces. The building is located in the area called “**Peski**” (Sands) – due to the soil composition here which is remarkable for a city built mostly on marsh. In this area were located two settlements of the elite Imperial Guard regiments: **Kavalergardsky** (Cavalry) and **Preobrazensky** (Infantry). The settlements were essentially self-contained, with barracks, non-commissioned officers’ family housing, shops, bakeries, riding schools, churches, hospitals, etc.

In the safety of this neighborhood, to the north and to the west, residential palaces of the nobility were located since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Less glamorous people settled to the east and to the south. This area was heavily built up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with so-called “income houses” – big and well-crafted apartment houses that became quite a success both architecturally and commercially.

There are a few interesting streets which lead to the **Golden Triangle**: to the west, towards **Fontanka**, they are **Nekrasova** (Nekrasova), **Tchaikovskogo** (Чайковского), **Kirochnaya** (Kirochnaya), **Furshtatskaya** (Furshtatskaya), **Shpalernaya** (Shpalernaya), **Pestelya** (Pestelya), and to the north, to Neva, these are **Suvorovsky** (Suvorovsky), **Tavricheskaya** (Чайковского), **Potemkinskaya** (Потемкинская) and **Liteiny** (Литейный). One can select a route to the **Golden Triangle** on the attached map. This route can take as little as 20-25 minutes (**Nekrasova** street) or 70-80 minutes (**Suvorovsky**, **Tavricheskaya**, **Shpalernaya**, etc.).

The most interesting routes lead to the **Panteleimonovsky** bridge which opens a remarkable view on the Church on Spilled Blood, Mikhailovsky Castle, Summer Gardens, etc. There is also a nice walk on the right bank of Fontanka that can lead from Neva by **Panteleimonovsky** and **Belinsky** bridges to **Nevsky** at **Anichkov** bridge.

## History of Suvorovsky prospect

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century this was a common suburban street leading to the **Neva** river. Later, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the street was chosen for a daily “Elephant Walk” to the river, by the elephants living and performing in the “Elephant Yard – Слоновый Двор”. Currently, the Oktyabrsky Hotel sits on this place. The Elephant Walk was quite an event which attracted many on-lookers, and from this a verb «слоняться» was derived that in direct translation is “elephanting”, meaning “fooling around”.

At the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, the street was, unsurprisingly, named **Peschanaya** (Sand Street), and in 1802-1830 it became **Konnogvardejskaya** (in honor of Cavalry Guards). Since 1830 till 1900 it was called **Slonovaya** (Elephant) Street. It became **Suvorovsky** in 1900 to commemorate 100 years since the death of Russian Field Marshall Suvorov.

The area around **Suvorovsky** prospect became quite popular among architects and owners of “income houses”. The City population and wealth were growing rapidly in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which provided incentive to build multi-story apartment houses. The period coincided with the advancement of Art Nouveau style, better known as Modern in Russia, and as a result most of the “income houses” were built with fashionable and very creative interior and exterior décor, employing the best craftsmen and materials.

Most commonly the façade apartments were large, 150+ sq. meters, with the main entrance from the main stairway and with a service entrance from a secondary stairway. This defined a standard layout: entrance hall next to the main entrances with the doors to the private offices of the owner (many of them were professionals: lawyers, doctors, accountants) and common rooms, long hallways with the entrances to the bedrooms and a single bathroom next to the end, opening into the kitchen. In the kitchen, there was usually a door to a maid’s room and a door to the service entrance from a secondary stairway. Two apartments on the same stairway landing usually had a doorway between halls in both of them, which allowed to combine two apartments into one with an area of 300+ sq. meters.

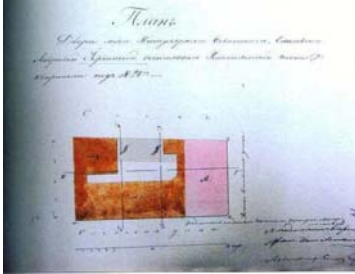
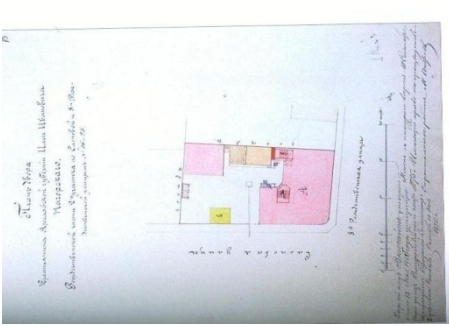

Common folks rented apartments further into the courts, and to provide more rentals, the architects frequently designed houses with 2-3 inner communicating courts, sometimes as “narrow as wells”. The farther from the façade of the building, the smaller the size and the poorer the quality of the apartments. In the 2d court, the apartments could be as small as 45 sq. meters without service entrances or bathrooms.

Wood was the main source for heating water and premises, and the art of building fireplaces reached its peak in the 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Frequently, old fireplaces were moved out from leveled wooden houses and into the newly built ones, so from time to time one may run into a museum quality masterpiece. The stairways were also heated by fireplaces, and **dvorniks** (court and house janitors), who were obliged to do it every day during the cold time of the year. They were also obliged to keep the courts in perfect order, as well as public walkways and the streets in front of the house. Each block had a designated policeman who would watch for the order and fine the owners of the buildings for lapses in territory upkeep in front of their houses. The fines were very stiff, and after 3d fine the owners would be put in jail.

The leading architectural styles of that time presented on **Suvorovsky** were Eclectics, Art Nouveau, or a combination of both. The Soviet period is mostly characterized by so called **Stalinist** architecture (## 2, 12, 50, 6), with a bit of neo-classicism and some hi-tech in recent years.


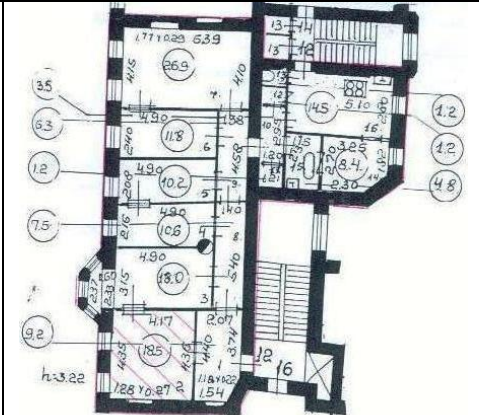

## History of the land plot of the present Hotel Vera building (Stepnov's House)

Plans of the lot on the corner of Suvorovsky Prospect (Slonovaya Str. before 1899) and 8<sup>th</sup> Sovetskaya (8<sup>th</sup> Rozdestvenskaya before 1917) Streets  
There are no archive data prior to 1848

 <p>1. План дачи жены титулярного советника Андрея Норданского с показанием существующего здания с пристройкой и архитектурной пристройкой. Архитектурной помощник Кулаков. 1848 г. ЦНА СГБ.</p>	 <p>2. План дачи крестьянина Ярославской губернии И.И. Нагорского. 1875 г. ЦНА СГБ.</p>	 <p>3. План дачи И.И. Степнова. 1903 г. ЦНА СГБ.</p>
<p>1848, owner Mrs. E.A.Iordansky, wife of a mid-level civil servant, applied for an addition permit. Addition had never been constructed. The house has no number yet, it's location is "block # 28". Houses were known by owner's name.</p>	<p>1875, owner "peasant" – as he is called in the official documents – I.I.Nagorsky, applied for service structure construction permit. The house already has its present numeration 25/16. Nagorsky had been of a peasant origin, born in Yaroslavskaia Guberniia (county), thus he was referred to as a "peasant".</p>	<p>1903 -2009, owner "peasant" P.P. Stepnov. Stepnov was in fact was a rich merchant; his initials are on his "coat of arms" in the fencing on the house roof edge. The lot plan has not changed since 1903, year of the house construction.</p>

### Evolution of the apartment # 12, Suvorovsky 25/16, Hotel Vera.

The present apartment numbers look as if they were assigned without any meaningful pattern.  
To our great surprise it turned out that the numeration has been original.

		
<p>Original floor plan, 1903-1917, enfilade of four rooms, kitchen with a pantry (entrance from the service stairway), bathroom and two WC's. All rooms have fireplaces.</p>	<p>Communal apartment, 1917-2008, seven rooms (one made out of kitchen pantry) with a corridor, kitchen, bathroom and WC. The plan, made in late 1980's shows one heating stove, which remained from early twenties.</p>	<p>Hotel Vera, 2009, six rooms (two deluxe, two standard, one classic and one mini-suite), all with individual bathrooms. No fireplaces survived on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor...</p>



**Suvorovsky 25, Hotel Vera**

Stepnov's House, owner P.P. Stepnov, architector I.P. Gorlyansky. Art Nouveau with elements of Eclectics, built in 1903. Entered into the City Registry of Architectural Masterpieces. Remarkable façade, yet to be restored, and original interior décor (fireplaces, stained glass windows, moulded ceilings and walls ornaments, stairway railings, hardwood floors). Much of it has been lost, but many elements were restored during remodeling. The original apartment building is slowly being converted into a hotel. See a more detailed description and photographs further down.

**Suvorovsky prospect**



**Suvorovsky 21, "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 26, "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 30, "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 48, "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 34, Kaschenko "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 51, Sizov "Income" house**



**Suvorovsky 41, Ekarev Mansion**



**Suvorovsky 4, Rauhfus clinics**



**Suvorovsky 50**



**Suvorovsky 61**



**Suvorovsky 12**



**Suvorovsky 2**



Moving North from Hotel Vera along **Suvorovsky** we pass on the left # 32, Nikolaevsky General Staff Academy, built in 1909 by A.I. von Gogen. Here, on the left, begins **Tavrichesky** Street, which is a treasure of Art Nouveau architectural masterpieces. Much of the Street has been built up by the best known architects of that time: Khrenov and Lidval. Khrenov and his wife owned houses ## 3, 5, 17.

The house # 35/1 is well known in the art history of the period as the gathering place of the best of Russian cultural elite of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They met every Wednesday in the last floor apartment rented by Ivanov. The place was known as "tower" and indeed the living room was in the corner tower of the building. Names of many of the participants are well known beyond Russia: Bulgakov, Block, Bakst, Gumilev, Dobuzinsky, Somov, etc.

**Tavrichesky and Kirochnaya streets**



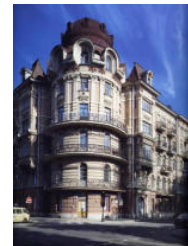
**Tavricheskaya 17, Khrenov "Income" house**



**Tavricheskaya 3, "Income" house**



**Tavricheskaya 5, M-me Khrenov "Income" house**



**Tavricheskaya 35, Dernov house, «Tower»**



**Tavricheskaya** crosses **Kirochnaya**, where on the left corner in # 43 is located Suvorov's Museum, built in 1904 by A.I. von Gogen in so called Russian Modern style. This style is very common of the buildings on **Kirochnaya**, **Liteiny** and **Pestelya**. Imposing building # 41, architect R.A. Gedike, belongs to the Medical Post-Graduate Academy.  
On Kirochnaya one will see Classical architecture next to Modern and Eclectica.



**Kirochnaya 1/20,  
Officers' Club**



**Kirochnaya 8, St. Anna  
Kirhe – gave name to  
Kirochnaya!**



**Kirochnaya 36, "Income" house  
Rat'kova-Roznova**



**Kirochnaya 35,  
Preobrazensky regiment  
hospital**

**Suvorovsky** flows into the large square called «**площадь Пролетарской Диктатуры**» - Dictatorship of Proletariat square, connected to the square named more appropriately in honor of one of St. Petersburg best architects «**Rastrelli Square**». It was B.C. Rastrelli who build in 1748-69 Smolny Cathedral and Monastery located right here on this square. The fabulous baroque building has the domes of a color pattern that melts into the St. Petersburg cloudy sky, and frequently when one approaches the Cathedral on **Suvorovsky** prospect or **Shpalernaya** street the golden crosses on top of the domes seem to float right in the sky. Next to the Monastery is **UK Consulate**.

To the South-East of the Monastery there is a Classical building of the «Institute of Noble Maidens», architect G. Quarengi, 1806-1808. The latter building and surrounding structures have been taken up by City Hall offices (dating back to 1917).



**Smolny Institute**



**Smolny Cathedral**



**Kikiny Palaty**

To the West of Smolny begins **Shpalernaya** street, and on its right is located one of the oldest stone buildings of the City, Kikiny Palaty – mansion built in 1714 for Admiralty senior official A.V. Kikin, who was in charge of Smolny Dvor (navy tarred ropes manufacture) located nearby on the place later taken up by the Smolny monastery. Kikin was not very lucky: in 1715 he was found guilty of corruption and sent to Moscow, and later found guilty of supporting the plot by Peter the Great's son Alexis to overthrow his father and executed. The house became the property of the State, and the site of the first Russian public museum of «rarities» collected by Peter the Great. In 1727, it was moved to the special «Kunstkamera» building on **Neva** across from Admiralty. The first Russian public Library, based on Peter's private collection, was housed here until it was moved to Academy of Science library.

**Shpalernaya** houses remarkable examples of baroque and classical architecture.

**Shpalernaya and Gagarinskaya streets**



**Shpalernaya 41,  
Kavalergardsky  
regiment barracks**



**Shpalernaya 47, Tavrichesky  
(Potemkin) Palace**



**Shpalernaya 18,  
Sheremet'ev Mansion  
Щереметева**



**Shpalernaya 35a,  
St. Mary's Church**



**Gagarinskaya 1/24, Serebryakova mansion**



**Gagarinskaya 3, Kushlev-Bezborodko mansion**



**Gagarinskaya 5, Stolypin Mansion**



**Gagarinskaya 8/4, Apartment house**



**Shpalernaya** is parallel to **Neva**, 50-100 meters away. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in Peter's tradition, the mansions on **Shpalernaya** were connected to **Neva** by channels. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century these channels were filled and built over. The **Central Water Station** was built between **Shpalernaya** and **Neva** in 1858, and still supplies water to most of the central City districts. On the photo on the left you see the **Main Water Tower** and **Water Museum**.

Between **Kirochnaya**, **Shpalernaya**, **Tavrichesky** and, on the West, **Potemkinskaya** streets, there is the **Tavrichesky Garden**, started by Potemkin as a park next to his **Tavrichesky Palace**.

### Potemkinskaya and Furshtatskaya streets



**Potemkinskaya 9/62, Matavkin (S.S. Botkin) mansion**



**Potemkinskaya 1/41, Kavalergardsky riding school**



**Potemkinskaya 5/62, Dubyansky "Income" house**



**Furshtatskaya 58, Spiridonov mansion**



**Furshtatskaya 48, Petelin mansion**



**Furshtatskaya 15, Schreiber "Income" house**



**Furshtatskaya 52, Vargunin mansion**



**Furshtatskaya 40, Gippius mansion – Gendarmery**

To the west of the central part of **Potemkinskaya** street, lead **Furshtatskaya**, **Zakharievskaya** and **Tchaikovskogo** streets. These streets have always been preferred residential areas: houses not very tall, trees, **Tavrichesky Garden**, and later a subway station "Chernyshevskaya". The streets housed private mansions as well as "income houses" for well-to-do tenants. The **U.S.** and **German Consulates** are located on **Furshtatskaya**, and the **Finnish Consulate** – on **Preobrazenskaya** square not far from **Kirochnaya**.

Moving west to **Liteiny** on **Kirochnaya**, past **Potemkinskaya**, one passes on the left **Radischeva**, **Vosstaniya**, **Mayakovskogo** and, making left turn on **Manezny** pereulok, walks into Preobrazensky square, with the imposing **Preobrazensky Cathedral**. The Cathedral was built on the western side of Preobrazensky settlement by Catherine the Great, in gratitude to the this regiment for support given her in the palace coup against her husband, Peter the Third. In 1830 architect Stasov design the fence of the Cathedral made of Turkish trophy cannons.

To the west of the Cathedral begins **Pestelya** street with quite a few remarkable building, among them the first St. Petersburg stone church, the **Church of St. Panteleimon**, which was built in the baroque style in 1735-1739.

**Preobrazenskaya Square and Pestelya street**



**The Transfiguration Cathedral "of All of the Guards"**



**Church of St. Panteleimon**



**Salt Town, Fontanka 10, Pestelya 2, 18<sup>th</sup> century Salt Exchange**



**Pestelya 11, Schobert "Income" house**



**Pestelya 27/24, Muruzi "Income" house**



**Pestelya 14, Tupikov "Income" house**

**Pestelya 13-15, "Income" house Rat'kova-Roznova**

Pestelya opens onto beautiful **Panteleimonovsky Bridge**. On the right, on the corner with **Fontanka** embankment, there is a two-story 18<sup>th</sup> century ensemble of the **Salt Exchange**, "Salt Town". Pestelya crosses three typical St. Petersburg streets, built mostly in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries: **Mokhovaya**, **Gagarinskaya** and **Solyanoj pereulok**, where baron Shtiglitz built an **Applied Art Museum** and a unique **Academy of Applied and Industrial Art** (initially started as **College of Technical Drawing**).

**Mokhovaya street and Solyanoj pereulok**



**Solyanoj 13, «College of Technical Drawing» named after A.L. Shtiglitz**



**Solyanoj 15, Shtiglitz Museum**



**Solyanoj 12, 3-d Gymnasium**



**Solyanoj 9, Siege Museum**



**Mokhovaya 15, Shtifter mansion**



**Mokhovaya 34, Bezobrazova mansion, Academy of Performance Arts**



**Mokhovaya 33-35, Tenishev College-TUZ, Academy of Performance Arts theater**



**Gangutskaya 10, "Income" house**

The fastest path from **Hotel Vera** to the **Golden Triangle** is on **Nekrasova** to **Liteiny**, and then on **Belinsky** street to **Belinsky Bridge**.

**Nekrasova street**



**Nekrasova 10, Burtsev mansion – Puppet Theater**



**Nekrasova 31, Leushinsky Monastery Church**



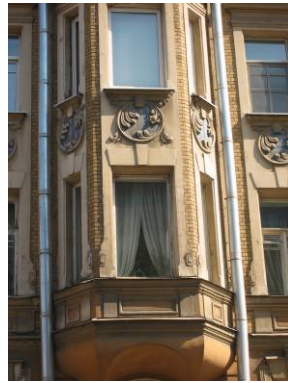
**Nekrasova 40/35, Egorov "Income" house**



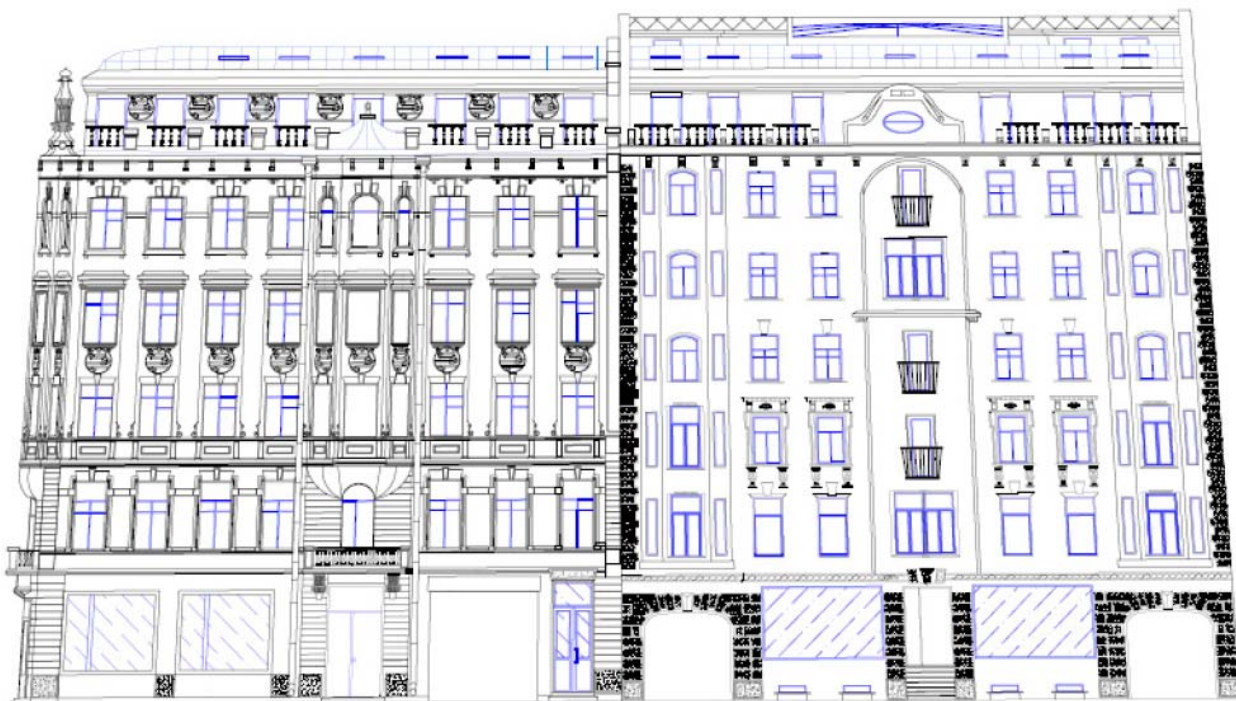
**Nekrasova 58-60, residential compound of Basseiny Partnership**

**Stepnov's House (Hotel Vera) facade**

The façade of Stepnov's House is the most interesting part of the building from an architectural point of view. It exhibits charm and beauty of Art Nouveau despite the fact that it needs major restoration, which will be undertaken once the additional wing is constructed on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sovetskaya Street next to Stepnov's House.



**Façade details**



**Hotel reconstruction project, additional wing on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sovetskaya street**

