# ST. PETERSBURG - BEGINNINGS



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When Peter the Great decided to build a new capital city, he ultimately selected a site near the Neva River. He called his new town St. Petersburg. This map, created for *Gentlemen's Magazine* and published, in London, during 1749, depicts the plan the Russian Tsar had for his new city and its fortifications.

The swampy terrain along the <u>River Neva</u> (*Peka Heba*) wasn't really suitable for <u>building a town</u> but, in 1703, <u>Peter the Great</u> - the <u>Russian Tsar</u> still renowned for <u>leading his country</u> into <u>the modern age</u> - believed its strategic location was perfect.

Having spent time in The Netherlands, where he <u>learned the art of shipbuilding</u> in seafaring towns like Rotterdam, <u>Peter wanted</u> a city - like <u>Amsterdam</u> - of <u>canals</u> and <u>shipbuilders</u>. The problem was ... he didn't have available land with which to create a Russian Amsterdam.

How does one tell a <u>ruler with absolute power</u> that his choice of land, which is subject to flooding, isn't a sensible place for development? At the time ... one didn't do such a thing ... so <u>site preparation</u> commenced. Back then, no <u>bridges</u> spanned the Neva.

The <u>first house</u> in the new town was <u>for Peter</u> himself. It was a small <u>wooden cabin</u>, along <u>the Neva</u>, which still exists <u>inside</u> a protective pavilion. Peter <u>lived</u> there - in a total <u>living space</u> of about 60 square meters - while he supervised building his new fortress and the town itself.

For a time, St. Petersburg was just a small place, built up around the Peter and Paul Fortress. By 1712, however, it was large enough to become Russia's new capital city.

Several years after <u>Peter the Great</u> died (in 1725), <u>Elizabeth</u> - his daughter - became empress and commissioned the <u>Smolny Convent</u> and the <u>Winter Palace</u>. During the twenty years of her reign, the <u>city flourished</u> and its population reached about 150,000.

During this time, Peter the Great's <u>summer palace</u> - called Peterhof - was remodeled by <u>Bartolomeo Rastrelli</u>. The home, and its <u>stunning fountains</u>, remain one of St. Petersburg's biggest attractions.

<u>Catherine the Great</u> was the first to move into the Winter Palace, built <u>along the Neva</u>. The royal art collection, which Catherine started, eventually grew so significantly that it became the <u>Hermitage Museum</u> - now maintained in the Winter Palace.

Let's take a closer look at life in the city which features so prominently in Dostoevsky's writing.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ST.-PETERSBURG-BEGINNINGS-Dostoevsky

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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# Media Stream



**River Neva** 

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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# **Building St. Petersburg**

Image online, courtesy Cal Poly College of Liberal Arts.

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# Peter the Great Learns Shipbuilding

Image, by an unknown artist, of Peter the Great learning the art of shipbuilding in The Netherlands. Online, via a Dutch-language website.

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# Amsterdam, a City of Canals

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# Canals of Amsterdam in 1538

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# Sketch of Shipbuilding in Amsterdam

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#### Peter the Great in The Netherlands

French-language trading card, of *Pierre le Grand* ("Peter the Great"), online courtesy French-language website.

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Site Preparation for St. Petersburg

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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# Trinity Bridge Over the Neva River

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### First House Built in St. Petersburg

Image online, courtesy <u>The Russian Museum</u> website.

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### Cabin Built for Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy The Russian Museum.

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Pavilion Housing Peter the Great's Cabin

Image online, courtesy the saint-petersburg.com website.

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Boat for Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy The Russian Museum website.

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### Bartolomeo Rastrelli

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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#### Drawing of the Neva River

Image depicted above, from the Illustrated History of St. Petersburg: Page 8. Online, courtesy the <u>petersburgcity.com</u> website.

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#### Life in St. Petersburg

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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# Living Space Inside the Cabin of Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy The Russian Museum.

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# Dining Room - Cabin of Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy The Russian Museum.

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Portrait of Elizabeth - Daughter of Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Portrait of Peter the Great

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#### **Summer Palace**

Image online, courtesy the Yale University website.

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### Wooden Cabin for Peter the Great

Image online, courtesy The Russian Museum Website.

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# Peter the Great Plans a New City - St. Petersburg

Gentlemen''s Magazine, Map created for Gentleman''s Magazine and published, in London, during 1749.

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