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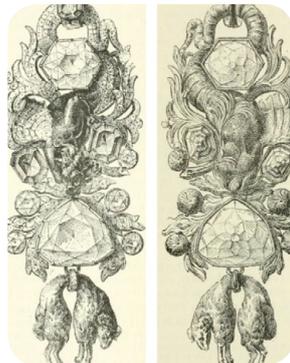
## THE FRENCH CROWN JEWELS – TRANSFORMATIONS AND FATE OF THE COLLECTION

Louis XV did not add to the collection but instead had stones recut. He especially had the Côte-de-Bretagne recut in the shape of a dragon to be set in the Golden Fleece. By recutting it, the stone now weighs almost half of what it did.



Replica of the Golden Fleece

The Côte-de-Bretagne and the Golden fleece are amongst the very few pieces ever to be found after the great theft of 1792. Over the course of a few days, thousands of jewels,



tapestries and furniture was stolen at the Hotel de la Marine, the royal storage since 1775. No one knows who exactly is responsible for the heist and accusations were made against everyone. Many were executed by guillotine, which had been moved in front of the Hotel de la Marine as a statement. Other thieves survived by revealing the whereabouts of the jewels and furniture. The Sancy and blue diamond were lost, but the Côte-de-Bretagne was found in Holland, where it was recut and sold in England. It was later brought back to France along with the Regent.

Napoleon added to the collection over the years.



"Napoleon" diamond necklace, Smithsonian Museum

In 1814, when Louis XVIII came to power, the crown jewels counted 65,072 stones and pearls: 57,771 diamonds, 5,630 pearls, 1,671 coloured stones (424 rubies, 66 sapphires, 57 emeralds, 235 amethysts, 547 turquoise, 24 cameos, 14 opals and 89 topaz).

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Charles X had some diamonds set in a sword. The sword was modified by Napoleon III, by adding bee motifs and number III. It was stolen from the Louvre in 1976 remains lost to this day.

During the III Republic, the Crown jewels were exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in 1878 and again in 1887 at the Louvre. In 1882 a vote was put forward by Benjamin Raspail to decommission the Crown jewels to be sold and dispersed. The Republic wanted nothing to do with Royalty. The vote was 325 yes against 85 no. Luckily the Regent and Côte-de-Bretagne were given to the Louvre and the Musée des Mines.

The Crown jewels were offered for sale a few years later in 1887 over the course of 9 sessions at the Louvre. The sale was a success for the government but a historical and gemmological disaster. Gems were unset so none would be traceable to a particular monarch or piece of jewellery. The biggest buyers were Boucheron, Tiffany and Van Cleef. Bapst Frères also purchased many in order to keep the gems in France.

Tiffany sold many pieces to American heiress who wanted a piece of history and French aristocracy. William Waldorf Astor purchased the Sancy and donated it to the Louvre. Over the last 70 years, the Louvre has tried to buy back as many pieces as possible. There are currently 23 pieces in the Apollo Gallery.

