WHAT'S THERE IN THE NAME?

The November 2003 RNJ News Letter reports on the issue of a medal honoring the Grand Duke Georgii of Russia. The legend on the obv. side of this medal reads: Е. И. В. ВЕЛИКИЙ КНЯЗЬ ГЕОРГИЙ МИХАИЛОВИЧ which is interpreted as HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS GRAND DUKE GEORGI MIKHAILOVICH. There appear to be two discrepancies in this inscription - one major and one minor. 1) The abbreviation Н.И. or its fully spelled form is an address and is not part of the royal title. It is used more or less as a pronoun when formally addressing, referring to or introducing a member of the royal family, and therefore does not belong on the said medal. 2) The less serious discrepancy is the spelling of Grand Duke's patronimic МИХАИЛОВИЧ. The preferred form for the first names and patronimic for members of the Romanov family was the old Russian spelling МИХАЙЛОВИЧ(ъ) (М instead of Н) or СОЛОМОНОВИЧ, for Empress Alexandra (АЛeksандра instead of АLEXANDRA), or СЕРГЕЙ (instead of SERGEY) for GM's younger brother, etc. but the revolution of 1917 changed all that. First, after the March abdication of Nicholas II, he became "former Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich" and then, after the October Bolshevik coup d'etat, his social status was downgraded to "citizen Romanov".

Over the last one hundred years of Romanov rule in Russia there appeared over a dozen medals honoring or commemorating members of the royal family and proper use of their titles on them can be seen on plate II of Y.B. Iversen's work on medals of the reign of Alexander II, SPB 1880.

This problem of how one properly addresses a Russian grand duke has also been addressed by the GM’s older brother Grand Duke Alexander during his tour of United States over seventy years ago. In his book entitled: «Always a Grand Duke», Garden City, N.Y., on pages 272-273 he writes:

This also happened in Los Angeles.
"Say, what's your name, anyway?" asked a gentleman seated next to me at a luncheon during the course of which I had been addressed in turn as "Your Highness," "Excellency," and "Monseigneur."
"My name is Alexander."
"Alexander what?"
"Alexander nothing, just Alexander."
"Now listen," he said impatiently, "let's get this matter straight... Didn't your folks have a last name of some description?"
I confessed that there was a last name in our family but that a well-established custom precluded our being addressed by that name. In order to make myself thoroughly understood I pointed out that while the intimate friends of the Prince of Wales may call him "David" or "Edward," he has never been referred to as "Mr. Windsor," so far.
My neighbor shook his head dubiously and remained silent for a while.
"Now then," he exclaimed suddenly, "let's suppose for argument's sake that my name is Johnny Walker. Would I be introduced to you as Mr. Johnny or as Mr. Walker?"
"You would be introduced to me as Mr. Walker, to be sure, but had that been my name I should have been introduced to you as Grand Duke Johnny."
"That settles it," he admitted gloomily. "You win".

Великий Князь Финляндский.

Император и Самодержец Всероссийский,
Царь Польский, Великий Князь Финляндский,
и прочая, и прочая, и прочая.

Объявляемъ всѣмъ вѣрнымъ Нашимъ подданнымъ:
30-го сего априля, въ Корфу совершено Бракосочетание Любезнѣйшаго Двокороднаго Дяди Нашего, Его Императорскаго Высочества Великаго Князя Георгія Михайловича съ Дочерью Его Величества Короля Эдуарда Королевскою Марію Георгиевною.

Возвѣщая о семъ радостномъ для сердецъ Нашего события и повелѣвая Супругу Великаго Князя Георгія Михайловича Марию Георгиевну именовать Великою Княгиней, съ титуломъ Императорскаго Высочества, Мы вполнѣ убѣждены, что всѣ наши подданные Нашимъ соединять теплый молитвы ихъ съ Нашимъ къ Всемогущему Богу о дарованіи постояннаго незыблемаго благодаренія Любезнымъ сердцу Нашему Новобрачнымъ.

Дань въ Царскомъ Селѣ, въ 30-й день априля, въ дѣто отъ Рождества Христова тысяча девятисотаго, Царствованія-же Нашего въ шестомъ.

На подлинномъ Собственномъ Его Императорскаго Величества рукой написано:

Царское Село
30-го априля 1800 года.