

Just over one hundred years ago, Lieutenant-Colonel Rothmann, an officer in Napoleon III's army, decided to settle in Yerres on retirement. A talented watercolorist, he set about depicting our town as he saw it at the time. These colorful watercolors are [on display from December 16 to 24](#), by the Yerres Historical Society.

Lieutenant-colonel Rothmann's brief biography

By André Bourachot

See also: [Lieutenant-Colonel Rothmann's Mexican campaign](#).

The man who was to become Lieutenant-Colonel Rothmann was born on February 6, 1837 in Rennes to Amélie Sainte Antoinette Le Pord and her husband Louis Maximilien Rothmann, a professor at the Collège Royal de Rennes who had died the previous January. The newborn had not known his father, who had died a few weeks earlier. He was given the name Louis Hyppolite.

Louis Hyppolite was educated in Rennes, where his mother continued to live at 1, rue impériale. He entered the [École impériale polytechnique](#) on November 1, 1856, at the age of 19, and graduated two years later in the fall of 1858 as an engineer¹. He graduated ranked 39th out of 112 students, roughly the same as his entry rank, and was accepted into the engineering corps 3rd out of 18. This was followed by a period of training at the *École d'application de l'artillerie et du génie* in Metz. On November 24, 1860, the school's general inspector noted: "Very hard-working student, draws remarkably well. Exemplary conduct will make him a good officer". His only criticism is that he "rides badly". Physically, he is tall for his time (1.75 m) and of "good constitution, if slightly short-sighted".

Appointed lieutenant on October 1, 1860, his military career began in earnest, and he joined the 3rd Engineer Regiment in Metz on February 3, 1861. He remained with the regiment for around 18 months, embarking in Cherbourg for [Mexico](#) on August 22, 1862 with the 13th company of the same regiment². Disembarking at Brest, he did not return to France until March 19, 1866, almost 4 years later, during which time he was appointed captain. He was also made a knight of the [Legion of Honor](#) on August 14, 1863, during the campaign. After a few months' leave in Rennes, he was transferred to *Camp de Châlons* (now *camp de Mourmelon*), detached from the 2nd Engineer Regiment, until August 1870.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 began at this time, and Captain Rothmann held various positions in the army of Paris during the siege, then in the army of Versailles when the troops of the army reconstituted by Mr. Thiers recaptured Paris, which had fallen into the hands of the Commune insurgents. He was made an Officer of the Legion of Honor on February 7, 1871.

He then held various positions in the engineering department, responsible for the construction and maintenance of military infrastructure, first at Mézières, then at Givet and Poitiers until April 1878. He was appointed battalion commander on December 27, 1877. He made his name in Poitiers with the discovery of a Roman cemetery at La Pierre-Levée, known as "[la nécropole des dunes](#)" (the dunes necropolis), during the construction of a military feedlot. He published at least three papers on this occasion, and some of the finds were transported to the Musée de Cluny in Paris.

This was followed by two further transfers, the first to the *Dépôt des fortifications* in Vincennes, then back to the service, again in Vincennes. On leaving the army and the engineering corps, his superior noted: "Major Rothmann, who has shown remarkable qualities as a war officer, is also an excellent peace officer.

He applied for retirement and was struck off the active army rolls on February 9, 1886, declaring that he was retiring to Paris 235 boulevard Voltaire; he had only thirty years' active service. He was then retired with a commander's annual pension of 3,525 francs³, the Mexican campaign having given him a 500-franc bonus. The reasons why he left the service are not known to us, especially as he continued to serve in the territorial army, a sort of reserve available for possible mobilization, in which he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel on June 12, 1886. He was finally discharged from the army on January 23, 1891. He died in Yerres at his home on rue de Villecrenes (now rue René Coty) on November 14, 1915.

When did Rothmann settle in Yerres? That's what the various archives tell us. The officer died in Yerres on November 14, 1915, declared widower of Cécile Biard. The 1906 census gives no indication of his presence in Yerres at that date, but he appears in the 1911 census in the company of his wife Cécile Biard. The latter died in Yerres on April 24, 1912. This is an indication that the couple settled in our town between 1906 and 1911 and that, consequently, the watercolors must be dated between 1906 and 1915, except perhaps for earlier stays in Yerres without having lived there, which seems possible!

The couple had a daughter, Louise Claudine Rothmann, who married Henri Dupont-Vernon (actor, commonly known as Henri Dupont). They had a daughter, Marie Cécile, who married Maître Édouard Tercinet in Yerres on June 4, 1917, a brilliant politician and

lawyer who also lived in Yerres, but had his practice in Paris. This marriage gave birth to Noël Tercinet, father of Madame Guilment, who passed on his grandfather's watercolours to us, enabling us to stage this exhibition.

We thank her and her husband.



Mr Rothmann and family

Références :

1. The École Polytechnique is a military school where most students go on to serve in the artillery and engineering corps.
2. The 3rd Engineers provided one company.
3. In terms of purchasing power, around 15,000 euros today.