

Department from Louis the XIVth to Napoleon III

« From Louis XIV to Napoleon I » (part I)

The modern department of the Army Museum illustrates the History of France's armies from Louis 14th reign (1643-1715) up until the surrender of Napoleon III. The entrance is located in the main court of the Invalides National Hostel. The exhibition rooms, located in the east wing, take up the great dining halls on the ground floor as well as the second floor. **This document presents only the rooms from Louis the XIVth to Napoleon Ist (1643-1815).**

The monument itself belongs to the theme and the chronology of the department in two counts : the Hostel was built at the request of Louis 14th to accommodate his invalid soldiers ; the main court displays 60 pieces of artillery, among which the most ancient, the Combattant (fighter), was melted in 1674, and the most recent, the Alma, in 1855 ; last but not least, Napoleon's tomb is located under the golden dome of the Saint-Louis des Invalides church.

The ground floor rooms

The ground floor consists of two large rooms (former dining halls), 'Turenne' and 'Vauban', with murals painted by Friquet de Vauroze in 1677-1678. They trace the main episodes of the Wars of Devolution (1667-1668).

Turenne refectory is closed to public.

The Vauban room (at left as you enter), presents (outside temporary exhibits), in a large central window (33 m.), 13 life-size equestrian models which joined the museum collections between 1897 and 1901. This set brings back to life the general look of the cavalry from the Consulate to the 2nd Empire, and reminds that horses played during centuries the key role for speed, surprise and shock troops.





The Vauban room
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Colors in the rooms

- Ancien Regime
- French revolution and 1st Empire
- 19th century

Pictograms

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
|  | Bourbons dynasty |  | French revolution |
|  | First and Second Empire |  | July Monarchy |

First part of the 2nd floor's rooms : from the Ancient Regime to the end of the First Empire

On the second floor, the course follows the three wings of a corridor leading to a series of small rooms, preserved in the exact disposition of the King veterans' rooms. Chronology prevails in the general unfolding of the course, but partitioned rooms often gather collections on a thematic basis, given how rare objects of the 17th and 18th centuries remain, especially clothes. At each room's entrance, a panel indicates its number, and specifies the period and the political regime through the use of colours and pictograms.

The Ancien Regime



Louis II de Bourbon duke of Enghien in front of Rocroi battleground, by Justus van Egmont, 1645 (detail). Inv. 2007.31.1 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

The chronological framework is stressed by the main military campaigns led by France in the 17th and 18th centuries. The protagonist are evoked through military objects, portraits or personal objects, some of them unexpected, such as the armchair of the head of the Spanish army in Rocroi, the count of Fontaine, who suffers from gout. Didactical panels present each significant conflict. The course starts (room 1) with the battle of Rocroi (May 19th, 1643), especially evoked by a recently acquired painting: *Louis II de Bourbon, in front of Rocroi battleground*, by Justus Van Egmont. This victory opens Louis 14th's long reign (1643-1715), which counts more than 40 years of war.

During the reign of Louis 15th (1715-1774), France wins a decisive victory in Fontenoy (May 11th, 1745) during the Austria Succession war (1740-1748) (room 12). It is then involved in the Seven Years war (1756-1763), which opposes the main European powers between them (room 11). The outcome is sad for France, which loses many colonies. In reaction to that, important military reforms are

decided. Revenge on Great Britain happens during the American Independence war (1775-1782, room 13), the only conflict of Louis 16th reign (1774-1791) in which France takes part.

At the beginning of Louis 14th reign, the army remains quite heterogeneous, dominated by a often-rebellious nobility. The will of power of the Sun-King opens a new era in France military history, from 1661 on : royal ordinances, more and more specific, better and better applied, organize, structure and rationalize the King's armies.

Rooms on the left of the corridor remind this effort of modernization, whereas rooms on the right deal with the King's military house and his entourage. Room 2 deals with the topic of recruitment and the recurrent problem of desertion, through the material of recruiting sergeants: ensigns, posters, registers. Foreign military object remind the traditional and permanent presence of foreign regiments in the armies of the King of France. Showcases also testify for the creation of the first hussars, dragoons and carabineers regiments.



Dragoon's helmet (end of XVIIIth c.) © Paris, musée de l'Armée

The uniform is gradually adopted. He gets a specific cut. Ordinances set its composition: suit, waistcoat, trousers, headdress, boots or shoes. Each regiment is distinguished by the suit's colours as well as those worn on the collar and the cuffs. Epaulettes and collar identify the military among a corps and a hierarchy. The outfit is rounded off by an equipment allowing to carry and use weaponry: cartridge

pouches, belts, baldrics. Collections present the variety and evolution of these different regulation or customized objects. The exceptional uniform of an Neustrie regiment officer, room 4, complies to a very specific ordinance of 1786.



Uniform of a Neustrie regiment officer, 1786, Inv. Ga 7 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Louis 14th sets up for the first time a decoration, the order of Saint-Louis, which rewards merit regardless of birth, reserved only for catholic officers however. Louis 15th then creates the military Merit for Protestant officers and the veterans lockets for soldiers.

Rooms 6 and 8 are dedicated to the cavalry specific equipments, some of which belonged to historical figures. Harnesses differ between frontline cavalry and light cavalry. Metal protections – breast plate, head protection, helmets – equip the frontline cavalry, which provides shocks in the battle.

Objects linked to the soldier's daily life are scarce: they are gathered in room 10, near the music instruments. Music is inseparable from military life : batman instruments – drums, trumpets – translate and convey orders. It is also an element of prestige. Codification and repertoire of military music starts under the reign of Louis 14th.



Cavalry breastplate, Inv. 0291 © Paris, musée de l'Armée

On the right of the corridor, two rooms present the King's military house, guard of both the sovereign and the court, a true elite troop and a training school for officers. It is made of the Inside guard and the Outside guard, from which the French guard regiment depends, as well as the Swiss guard regiment, the Gendarmerie of France and the chevau-légers. A set, unique in the world, of uniforms, weaponry, emblems, portraits and souvenirs represents this prestigious corps. Subdivisions of the Outside guard and attached regiments are successively presented in **room 3**, those of the Inside guard in **room 5**.



Drums of the corps Royale de la Marine (18th c.)
© Musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Two great military leaders are then evoked in the rooms dedicated to the King's entourage: Turenne (1611-1675, **room 7**) and Vauban (1633-1707, **room 9**). Let us recall that, on Napoleon's initiative, Turenne's tomb and a funeral monument in honour of Vauban are placed in the Dome church of the Invalides. In connection with Vauban, a fortification specialist, small models of artillery and the calibre 4 canon, named "La Pie", are gathered.



Turenne's breastplate. Inv. 6668.1 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Both rooms are enriched by exceptional objects evoking the King and his family in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The middle corridor displays a series of firearms, knives and hast weapons showcases. In that matter, royal regulation progressively becomes more specific, leading to regulated weapon systems. The wick musket is supplanted by the flint rifle, fitted with a case bayonet. The first regulated rifle of the French infantry is the model of 1717. Horsemen use shorter weapons: small muskets or guns. Knives remain necessary; each troop adapts them for a specific use: infantry sword, artillery broadsword, cavalry large sword then sabre... Hast weaponry, omnipresent before, remain in the 17th century, but are used mainly as symbols and hierarchic marks: sergeant halberds and pertuisanes, officer esponsonts.



Blade of the pertuisane of the gardes de la Manche de la Maison du Roi, end of the 17th c., Inv. K 49
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Revolution and Empire

The next two aisles of the corridor remind the Revolution and Empire campaigns, and deal with the transformations experienced by the armies. In the background appears the outline of the fundamental political changes of this time, and the personal career of Napoleon Bonaparte.



Maquette de la Bastille
© Musée de l'Armée, DRHAPM.

The storming of the Bastille on July 14th 1789 opens the course. **Room 14** is organized around a model of the fortress. The formation of the National Guard is illustrated by a series of sabres, the symbolic ornamentation of which spreads messages of political emancipation. The army, evoked vis-à-vis, keeps its structures at first, even if regiments, since 1791, are identified through numbers, and no longer by province names.

In **room 16**, collections allow to evoke the popular revolution which caused the fall of the monarchy and the first stages of war in 1792. The outfit of National Guard veterans refers to the volunteers who answer the call of "the endangered homeland", and gain victory in Valmy, then Jemmapes. However, two successive levies en masse are necessary in 1793 to push back the invasion and face the civil war. The blue uniform, with distinctive white and red stripes, characterizes the birth of the new army. These "rookies" are mixed with seasoned troops by the amalgam law.

Military badges testify for the political control exercised over the armies by the Convention. Scarce objects refer to the inside resistance and the émigrés armies. Next, in the corridor, the reward sabre awarded to Lazare Hoche for the pacification of the Vendée (region of the West of France) can be seen.

As far as weaponry is concerned, continuity between the Ancient Regime and the Revolution is highlighted in the corridor, in spite of the production of a few new models. The regulated rifle, model of 1777, still equips the revolutionary and imperial armies. The artillery system in use is the one refined at the end of the Ancient Regime by Gribeauval, small models of which can be seen in **room 28**.



Infantry uniform of an officer, vers 1793, Inv. 0271 © Musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

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The four military campaigns which take place between 1796 and 1800 allow to expose, in addition to military objects, personal souvenirs and portraits of military leaders who distinguish themselves in these campaigns. The scale model of Lodi, in **room 18**, made on Napoleon Bonaparte's demand, brings back to life this battle of the first Italy campaign (1796-1797), which proved to be decisive for Bonaparte both military and political future. The second Italy campaign (1800) takes place in room 256, around a carriage, a unique object purpose-manufactured for the crossing of the Alps. Germany (1796-1798) and Helvetia (1799) campaigns occupy the corridor between the two rooms.



Rifle model 1777, Inv. M459
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.



Mamelouk's harness from Pyramides battlefield, Inv. 5171 | © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

The Directory drives apart the young, popular and ambitious general Bonaparte, by putting him in charge of the Egypt expedition. Among the trophies brought back from the East, the Museum displays a collection of harnesses and sabres with sumptuous decoration. Eager to play a political role in France, Bonaparte leaves Egypt in August 1799, transferring command to Kleber. The coup d'Etat of Brumaire 18th and 19th (November 9th and 10th) places him on the top of power.

The rest of the course is inseparable from Napoleon's personality. In **room 19**, the furniture of his room in Auxonne reminds the modest start of the young Corsican officer. The blue outfit embroidered in gold thread, highlighted in the middle of the room, is the one the First Consul wore at the Marengo battle: in May 1800, he takes a political risk by leaving Paris to personally lead a second campaign in Italy.



General uniform worn by Napoleon at Marengo
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

By the senatus-consulte of May 18th 1804, Napoleon becomes Emperor of the French. Two connecting rooms display ceremony outfits and weapons, made exceptional both by their ornaments and belonging. They bring back to life the emperor's family, the great dignitaries of the court and the marshals, a distinction Napoleon restores. In **room 23**, a showcase presents the decorations created by Napoleon and members of his family in their respective kingdoms. Many of them belonged to Napoleon. Finally, the famous painting by Ingres, *Napoleon the 1st on the imperial throne*, painted in 1806, is exposed.



Napoléon I^{er} by Ingres, Inv. 5420
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Between 1804 and 1809, war strengthens and perpetuates the empire. Napoleon's military genius and warlike skills of his army reveal along the victorious campaigns, even if success is always harder to obtain. The Austerlitz battle, an archetype of Napoleon's strategic and tactic mastery, is an irrevocable defeat for the Austrian-Russian troops. A set of uniforms gives a global vision of the evolution of infantry outfits during the Empire. The adjacent room, **room 24**, renders the prestige of generals surrounded by their general staff, and conveys an idea of the functions fulfilled by executives of the napoleonian army.

In the third aisle, along with the global presentation of a military campaign, one or two arms subdivisions more specifically engaged in fights are presented. Their respective weaponry is presented in the adjacent corridor. The imperial Guard, recruited among elite soldiers, is inseparable from the emperor. It surrounds him permanently, and he decides by himself and directly of their use. When Napoleon and the Guard join the army, this gathering forms the Great Army. **Room 25** lists infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineering and marine corps of the Guard. This presentation, however, is not exhaustive.



Le général Lasalle, by Gros, Inv. 19814
© Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

The Prussia campaign in 1806, **room 26**, starts with two French victories gained on October 14th in Lena and Auerstaedt. The cavalry chases down the remains of the Prussian army in retreat. This campaign allows to present uniforms and weapons specific to the hussars and the chasseur horsemen of the light cavalry. Iconography is dominated by a work of baron Gros, a great full-size portrait of Lassalle in front of Stettin (October 30th, 1806).

Napoleon then moves on to the offensive against Russian armies during the Poland war (1807). The great cavalry charge which restores the situation in Eylau (February 8 1807) allows to present the cuirassiers' branch. At the same time, the Dantzic siege unfolds (January 23rd-May 24th 1807), and allows to discover the engineering branch.

Difficulties encountered by Napoleon in Spain prompt Austria to take over the struggle. The Austria campaign in 1809 is a difficult one. A series of hard-fought and deadly battles - Eckmühl (April 22nd 1809), Essling (May 21st-22nd) - concludes with the Wagram victory (July 4th-6th 1809). The heavy use of artillery ensures Napoleon's success. The uniform of General Drouot, commander of the Guard's artillery and wounded in Wagram, is a centrepiece of the collections for that matter.

Room 27 ensures a transition between the unfolding of the campaigns and the sequence dedicated to the armies' daily life. It gathers the array of rewards awarded in military respects, before the Legion of Honour is established in 1804. Individual distinctions suppressed since 1792 show up again during the Directory, which informally awards reward weapons, manufactured in the best workshops. Bonaparte, as soon as the first Consulate days, codifies the award of reward weapons: to the luxury weapons, he adds honour sticks, honour grenades... The holders of a luxury weapon are admitted by right in the Legion of Honour order.

The visitor is welcomed, as he enters **room 29**, by the foot grenadier of the Guard in full-dress. He then faces the legendary silhouette formed by Napoleon's frock coat and hat. This whole room is dedicated to the personal objects of the Emperor while he is campaigning. **Room 30** further develops the topic of the armies' daily life in campaign by exposing officers' outfits, personal objects and soldier's daily life objects. The health service is therefore dealt with here: practitioners around Dominique Larrey's outfit, medical material around General Daumesnil's wooden leg, after he was wounded in Wagram.

War unwinds the Empire between 1809 and 1815. After 1809, and even at its apogee in 1810 – 1811, Napoleon fails in permanently assuring his domination on continental Europe.

Room 31 deals with the Iberian Peninsula, where the army is faced with both guerrilla warfare and regular battles. Iconography and personal souvenirs herald some of the military leaders who exercise command in Spain while the Emperor is away. Military objects evoke the Spaniards as well as the Britons, who unusually engage troops on the ground against France. They highlight the dragoons, most regiments of which were engaged during the campaign, and the polish lancer cheveau-légers of the Guard, who distinguish themselves in the Somo Sierra battle, on November 30th, 1808.

The will to put an end to the confrontation with England leads Napoleon to strengthen the continental blockade and attack Russia which breaks it. In that purpose, he gathers the huge "Twenty Nations army". Faced with Russian immensity and burnt land tactic, Napoleon must bring himself to retreat. Privations and harshness of the winter swallow up the "Twenty Nations army" and destroy the exceptional military tool which existed since 1800. The Committee for specialized studies of the Army Museum put a lot into the excavation of Vilnius military graves, where thousands of soldiers who died in 1812 are buried. The collections in **room 32** account for these events, as well as the presence among the troops of carabineers and frontline lancer cheveau-légers, used for the first time in the campaign of Russia. **Room 33** tops up this panorama by evoking the soldiers of the allied foreign armies who composed the Twenty Nations army



Grenadier of the Guard, Inv. Ga 27 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

Germany and France campaigns of 1813 and 1814 alternate victories and defeats, but Napoleon can't stop the advance of the coalition armies toward Paris. He must resign himself to abdicating on April 6th 1814. These events are evoked through Paul Delaroche's retrospective painting, "Napoleon the 1st in Fontainebleau on March 31st, 1814", in **room 35**, and the famous farewell flag kissed by the fallen Emperor before leaving in exile toward Elbe island. The monarchy is restored.



Soubrest of a royal mousketeer (First Restoration), Inv. 994-79 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

The **room 36** presents this period called « first Restoration». The new king, Louis 18th, reduces military numbers and abolishes conscription. Despite financial difficulties, he revives with monarchic tradition by forming a luxurious military house of the king.



Napoléon I^{er} à Fontainebleau by Delaroche, 1840, Inv. 11931 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

The Hundred Days (1815, room 37)



Corporal of fusiliers' costum, 26th infantry regiment, ca. 1812-1815, Inv. 09709 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

On March 1st, 1815, Napoleon leaves Elba and lands in Provence. On March 20th, he is in Paris. The day before, Louis XVIII fled to Belgium. The Empire is restored with the support of many French men and women worried about the Bourbons' policy : the liberal bourgeoisie, the owners of national property, and especially the thousands of demi-soldes (officers retired by the Monarchy with only half of their pay – solde in French). The eagle and the tricolor flag once again become the symbols of imperial France, against which a new European coalition is formed (the seventh since 1792).

The decisive battle, presented in the Museum through an animated map, occurs on June 18th, 1815, in Waterloo, near Brussels. Napoleon and 72,000 French soldiers clash with the Duke of Wellington, who leads the British army reinforced with Dutch, Belgian and German units, totalizing 67 000 men. Despite repeated attacks of the French, the British line, firmly entrenched on the Mont St. Jean's plateau, is not broken. The English infantry shows a great capacity of resistance which, along with its firing discipline, holds Marshal Ney's cavaliers in check. At the end of the day, the arrival of Blücher's Prussians definitely shifts the outcome of the battle in favor of the allied armies, which are now 150 000. Napoleon sends in the Imperial Guard, but this fails to rectify the situation. The French army, losing 40,000 men, withdraws in disorder, pursued by the Prussians. Pierced through by a cannonball, the armor of French rifleman Antoine Fauveau testifies to the harshness of the fights and the failure of the heavy cavalry.

Back in Paris, Napoleon is abandoned by the deputies. He abdicates a second time, on June 22nd, 1815. On July 3rd, the Anglo-Prussian troops enter the French capital, followed a few days later by Louis XVIII. The crackdown falls on the Marshals who joined Napoleon during the Hundred Days: Ney is shot, Suchet is put under house arrest and Brune is assassinated by the ultra-royalists.

Napoleon, who tries to leave France from Rochefort's harbour, can not get out because of the British ships. After boarding one of them, he is exiled to St. Helena Island, located 8000 km from France in the South Atlantic. He lives there secluded and dies on May 5th, 1821. His comments inspire Las Cases' *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (St. Helena Memoirs), published in 1823. Hence, in popular imagery, Napoleon appears as the hero of the Revolution, a supporter of nationalities and victim of the revenge of monarchies.



Rifleman Fauveau's breastplate, killed at Waterloo, Inv. Cc206 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, RMN-GP.

In June 1815, the Congress of Vienna reorganizes Europe according to the interests of the four victorious powers of Napoleon (Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia). This conference is the largest meeting of diplomats and sovereigns since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Against the proposed Napoleonic hegemony, it restores the principle of balance of power, but without taking into account the aspirations of peoples. France, isolated, experiences a territorial decline and is placed under allied watch. Britain is the main beneficiary of the Peace of Vienna : ruling the seas, it is no longer bothered by the French presence in Belgium, which is united to Holland within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Austria acquires large possessions in Northern Italy (Venetia and Lombardy). Prussia expands in the Rhine region, while Russia is assigned a large part of Poland, the rest of which is under Prussian and Austrian rule. As for Germany, it remains fragmented in a Germanic Confederation reduced to 39 states (instead of over 300 in 1789).



Europe after Vienna conference in 1815 © Paris, musée de l'Armée, G. Spourdos.

Map of «From Louis XIVth to Napoleon III» rooms

