In search of Fort Jaco II

Too much of a coincidence really. The part of Uccle as you leave Brussels is called Fort Jaco for a reason but where was this fort? Who or what was Jaco?

This is an updated article following further research. Much of the original is retained but the conclusion has been updated, and I've fleshed out our local hero, 'Jaco'.

The fort was built by the Quartier-Maître Général Verboom, work having started on 21 August 1705 just a few weeks after the first Battle of Waterloo about which I'll say a little more later. It occupied a favourable location on the then "Walschen Wegh", now known as the Chausée de Waterloo. The road at that time had forest on both sides and if you go the site you will find yourself at the summit of the hill.

Originally a square wooden fort of sides 40m long, the palisades were constructed on earthen banks and surrounded by a ditch, it was dismantled around 1820, and remembered in the name of this area of Uccle, Fort-Jaco.

First, let's track down the exact site and then we need to talk about Jaco.

Here is part of 'Carte Particuliere des Environs de Bruxelles' by Eugène Henry Frickx (1706), three years after its construction and look what we have:

Just to the south of Vivier d'Oie you can see a square within a square at the top right of a diagonal inscription that reads 'Red de Worboom'.

Worboom is obviously an alternative spelling of Verboom, who built the fort. But 'Red'?
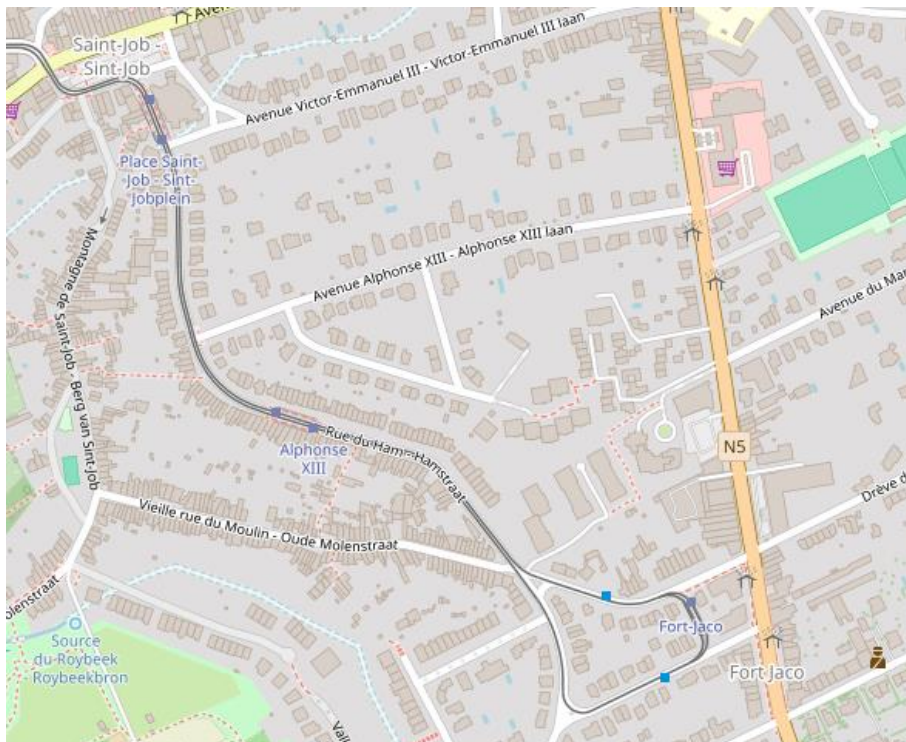
My money is on an abbreviation of some sort, much like you still get on modern maps so as not to clutter up the actual map with words. An abbreviation of 'Redoubt' for example so Verboom's Castle.

I looked at the Ferraris map of Uccle (1777) to see if it had survived. It had:

Bottom right there is a square with 'Fort' written beneath it. It still was not called Fort Jaco.

The road leading towards it from the left looks to be from St. Job, going up the Montagne de Saint-Job before following the Vieille Rue du Moulin until ending at the terminus of the 92 tram. If you look carefully, you can see a curved hedge with the number 92 repeated three times. This is now the Rue de Ham. You can see this here, courtesy of OpenStreetMap:

Oh look, Fort-Jaco is written exactly where the fort was. Should've just looked here rather than having spent a few hours of research on it!

But wait, the 92 tram <u>and</u> the number 92s on the Ferraris map? Is this another historical rabbit hole I'll disappear into, Alice?

The 92's on the map seem to refer to the fief (estate) of Roetaert at Neerstalle in Uccle, an 18th-century property encompassing about 11½ bonniers (about 16 hectares or approximately 40 acres) of arable land and meadows, including the Roetaert manor.
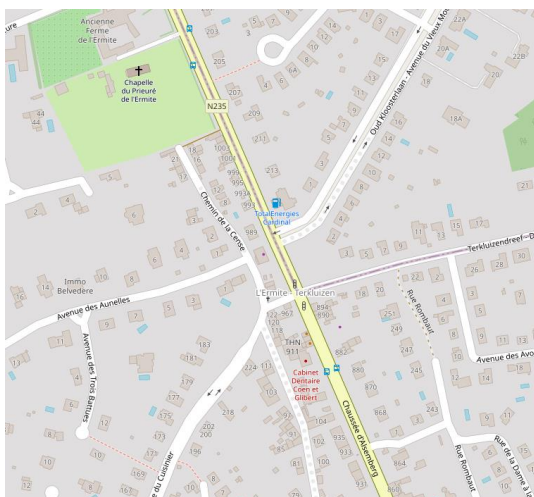
Sadly I doubt there is any connection with the 92 tram. Tram numbers followed a series with trams 90-99 serving the southeastern parts of the city and unless there was a very keen amateur historian working for the STIB…

And now onto Jaco. Briefly, Jaco was born Jacques Pastur in Waterloo as around 1660 then part of the Spanish Netherlands. Although not from a noble family, he had a distinguished military career and rose through the ranks to become, Maréchal de Camp de Louis XV, Knight of St. Louis. He was instrumental in the first battle of Waterloo in 1705 in inflicting heavy casualties on the Duke of Marlborough's forces during a tactical retreat. Doubtless his intimate knowledge of the forest would have played a key part. Following this, in recognition of his actions, Pastur was presented at the court of Louis XIV in March 1706, receiving honours such as a gold chain, a medal, and the Cross of the Order of Saint Lazarus.

There was a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the battle on YouTube, and you can watch it [here](#).

So that would seem to be the end of the matter regarding the naming of the Fort after Jaco but perhaps not because he was directly connected with it. Firstly, there was an article in Le Soir, January 26, 1995 by Eric Meuwissen '*He gave his name to Fort Jaco without ever having set foot there!*' (now behind a paywall) which cast doubt on him being based there at all, although that doesn't mean it wasn't named after him.

Just a few days ago I came across an article from 1967 by Major P. Léonard in the publication Cercle d'histoire, d'archéologie et de folklore d'Uccle et environs. In it he indicates the site of a fort actually commissioned by Jaco and built in 1694. It was very close

to the Chapelle d'Ermite at the intersection of the Chemin de la Cense and Terkluizendreef, actually within the boundary of Rhode-St-Genèse close to the road between Alsembergh and Braine L'Alleud. In Rhode-St-Genèse. Map courtesy of OpenStreetMap

So, there's no doubt really that area called Fort-Jaco is named after Jaco and a fort, but it wasn't his fort.