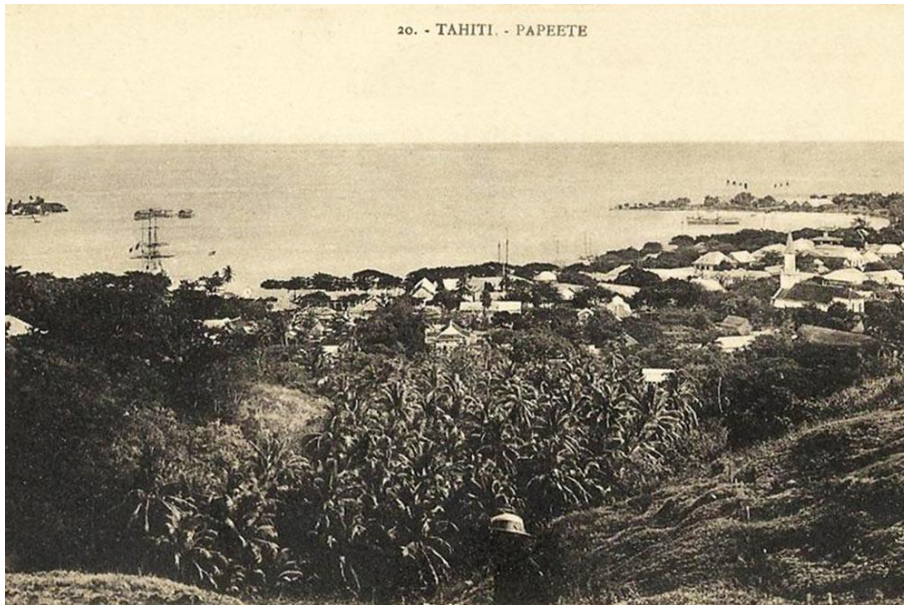


Štefánik in Tahiti

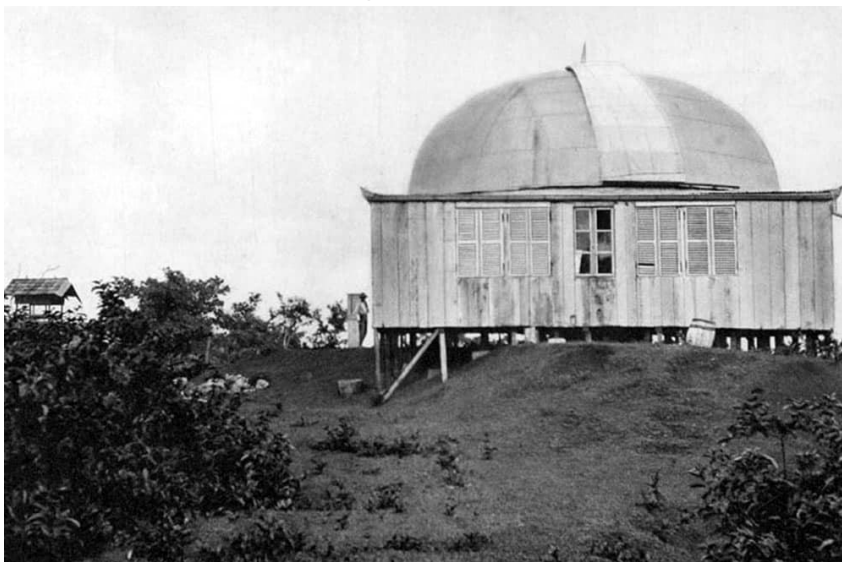
Papeete in the past: the Mount Faiere observatory of astronomer Štefánik



The observatory on the heights of Mount Faiere, in Sainte Amélie, was established in 1910 by Milan Rastislav Štefánik, astronomer and founder of the first Czechoslovak Republic, whose love for Tahiti undoubtedly contributed to the arrival of a small Czech community in French Polynesia.

The Tahitians nicknamed him 'Taatahio fetia', the man who watches the stars.

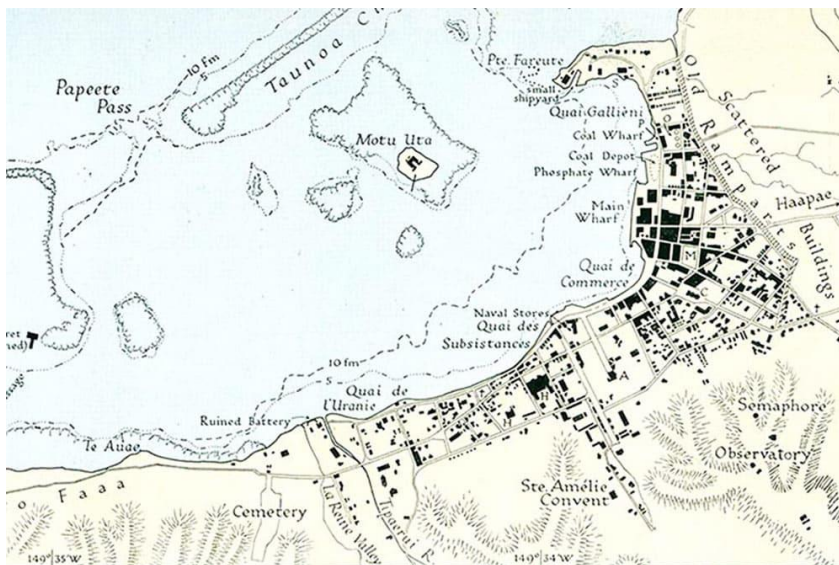
The Mont Faiere observatory



The Mount Faiere observatory around 1910



In 1910, the Bureau des Longitudes and the Central Meteorological Office sent Milan Rastislav Štefánik to Tahiti to build an observatory to observe Halley's Comet and the solar eclipse of 28 April 1911. The astronomer devoted all his energy to this project, which consisted of a simple wooden structure with a dome housing his telescope and the equipment needed for observations.



Map of Papeete in 1931 showing the observatory at the bottom right

Mount Faiere was not only used for stargazing... When World War I broke out in Europe (on 3 August 1914), Commander Destremeau chose Mount Faiere as his command post to defend Tahiti.

In 1935, a weather station was added to the observatory.

The Mont Faiere observatory was destroyed by fire in September 1948. Despite a vote by the municipal council on 5 August 1921 to rename Mont Faiere, Chemin de Faiere and Observatoire de Faiere as Mont Štefánik, Štefánik Hill and Štefánik Observatory, this decision was never implemented, for reasons that remain unclear.

A commemorative plaque erected on the site and unveiled in October 1994 now pays tribute to the work of the Slovak researcher.



Milan Rastislav Štefánik in 1905

Štefánik was officially appointed director of the observatory, head of the meteorological service and head of the local radiotelegraphy project by the Ministry of Colonies in 1910. He spent about a year in Tahiti, making several trips to the islands for observations aboard the gunboat *Zélée*. He was tasked with preparing the organisation of a meteorological network and the installation of a radiotelegraphy station.

Sources:

Dikda. [Fotografie zo života Milana Rastislava Štefánika](#)

Rudolph Klima. Štefanick et l'Observatoire. 1950 Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Océaniques n° 96.

[Mairie de Papeete, Bibliographie de Milan Rastislav Štefánik.](#)