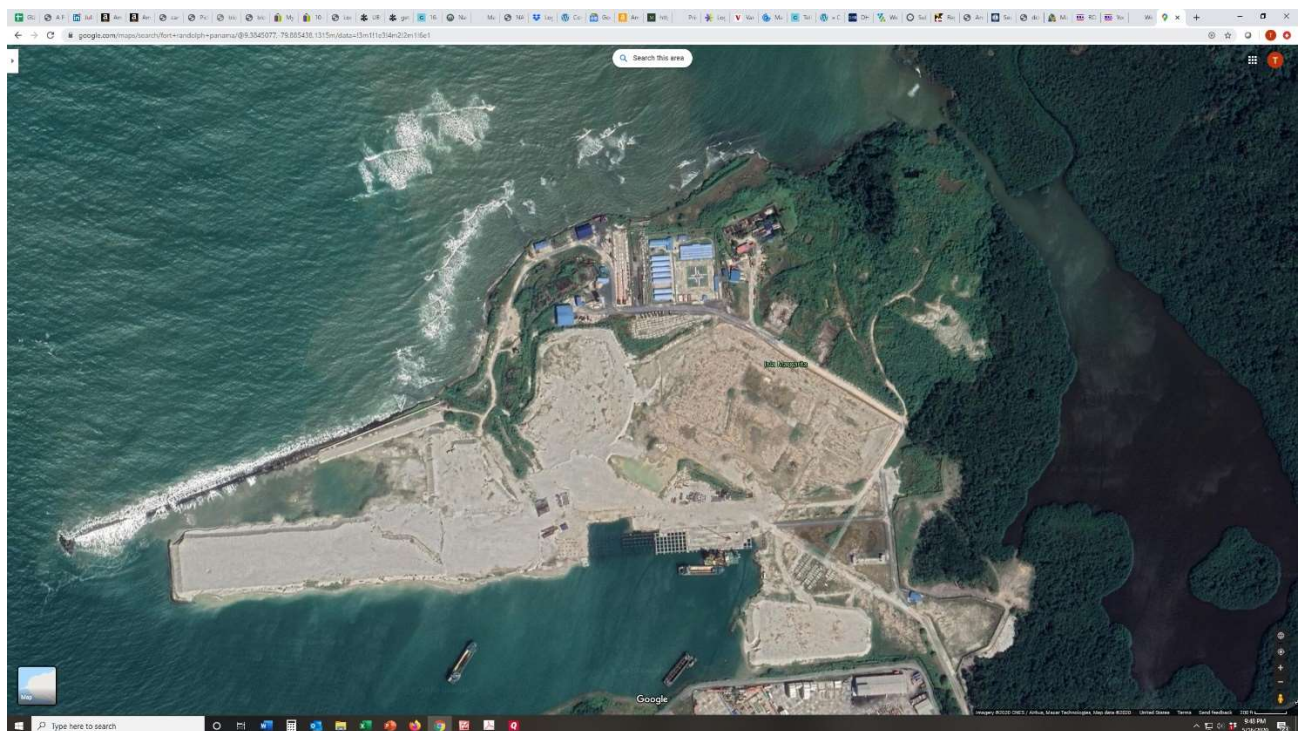
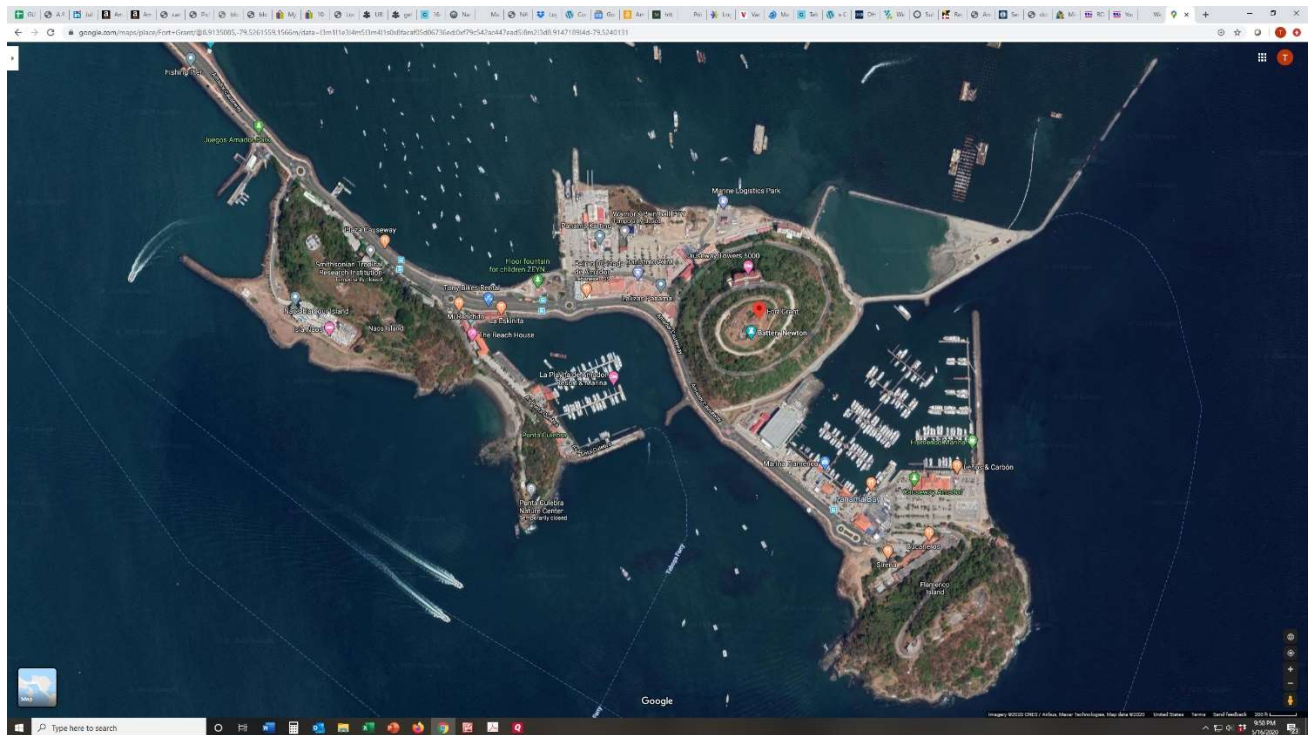


# Most Endangered Coast Defense Sites

## CDSG Preservation & Interpretation – May 2020

### Site: Fort Amador & Grant, Balboa, Panama and Fort Randolph, Margarita Island, Panama

The completion of Panama Canal in 1914 caused the US Army to construct coast defenses on both the Pacific and Caribbean side. Using the spoil from the canal Fort Amador was created and causeway were built to several islands offshore. These islands were used for several large caliber disappearing guns and mortars. These Endicott-Taft batteries represent the final stages in their design and function. Many unique feature, such as underground tunnels and lifts were included. After World War II these batteries were disarmed, while the US Army used them for other purposes until 1979 when they were turned over to the Panamanian government. Little development occurred for the next twenty until the ownership of the Panama Canal was turned over to Panama in 2000.



**Threat:** Since the ownership of the Panama Canal was turned over to the Panamanian government in 2000 a commercial development plan for these forts has been in place. The last fifteen years have seen most the Army buildings at Fort Amador demolished, while on the fortified island of Fort Grant have suffered from the extensive landfill and the building of a large water tank, marina, condos, and a shopping center on top of coast artillery batteries. (upper photo) Fort Randolph had all its building destroyed leaving only the batteries. Today, what was Fort Randolph is a large construction site for a container terminal and power plant with LNG storage facility. The remaining historic coast defense batteries barely survive as the landscape around them cut and diced. (lower photo)

**Contact:** There is no organized group working to protect these coast defense sites. For more information, please contact Terry McGovern for more information at [tcmcgovern@att.net](mailto:tcmcgovern@att.net)

### **Site: Fort W.G. Wright, Fisher Island, New York**

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As the headquarters fort for the Defenses of Long Island Sound, Fort W.G. Wright was a large Endicott-Taft fort that support a range of both rapid-fire and disappearing guns and mortars, along with a controlled mine depot. It supported several smaller forts defending Long Island Sound so it had a large warehouse and recreation/health complex. The US Army made us of this fort from 1879 to 1948. In the late 1950's it was sold to private interests.





**Threat:** Since the former fort was purchased by private interests many of its structures have been demolished or converted to other uses. The fort infrastructure was turned into the island commercial center supporting the island residence with transportation, educational, and utilities. These activities have caused widespread damage and destruction to the military structures, especially the batteries that are been used for trash disposal and landfill activities. Continued commercial development threatens even more of the remaining sites at Fort W.G. Wright

**Contact:** There is no organized group working to protect this coast defense site. For more information, please contact CDSG Preservation Officer Gordon Bliss at his email address: [preservation@cdsg.org](mailto:preservation@cdsg.org)

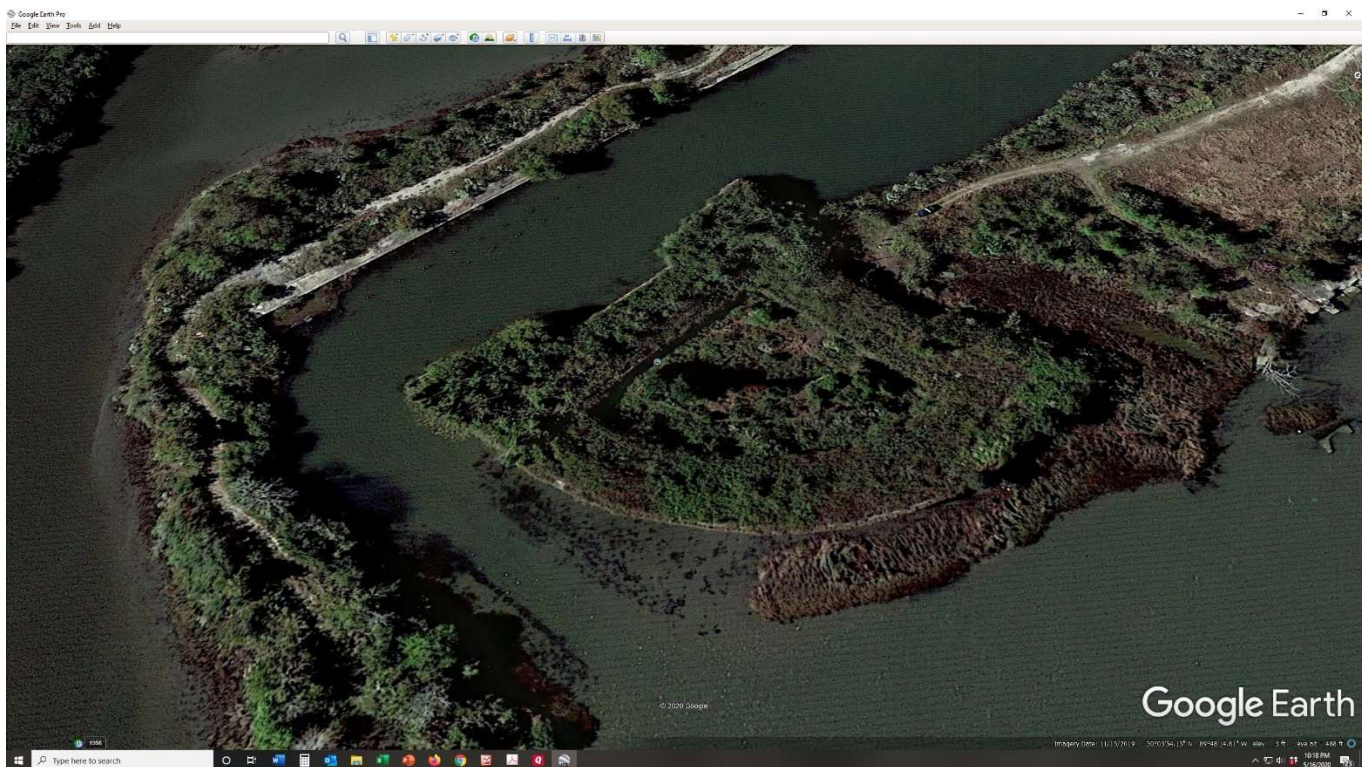
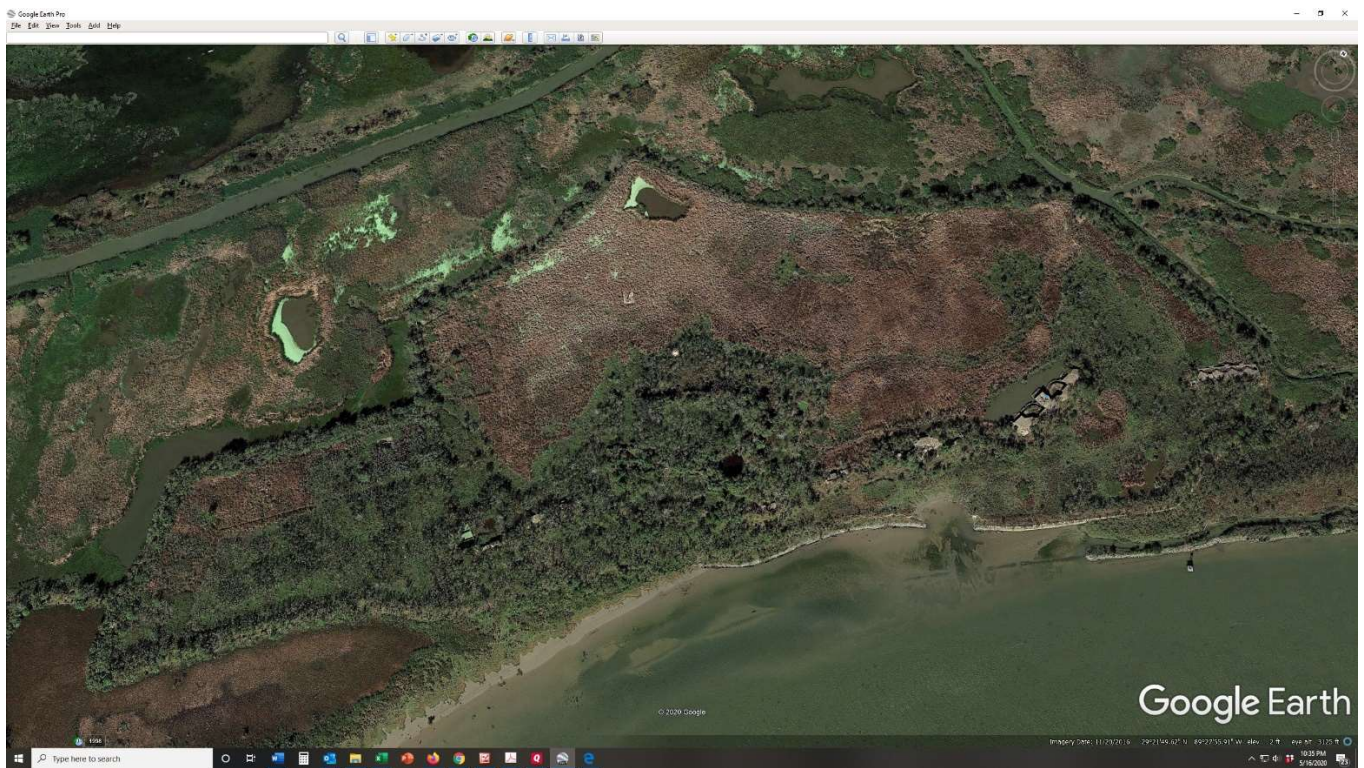
**Site: Louisiana Forts (Fort Jackson, Fort St Philip, Fort Pike, Fort Macomb, Proctor's Tower, and Fort Livingston)**

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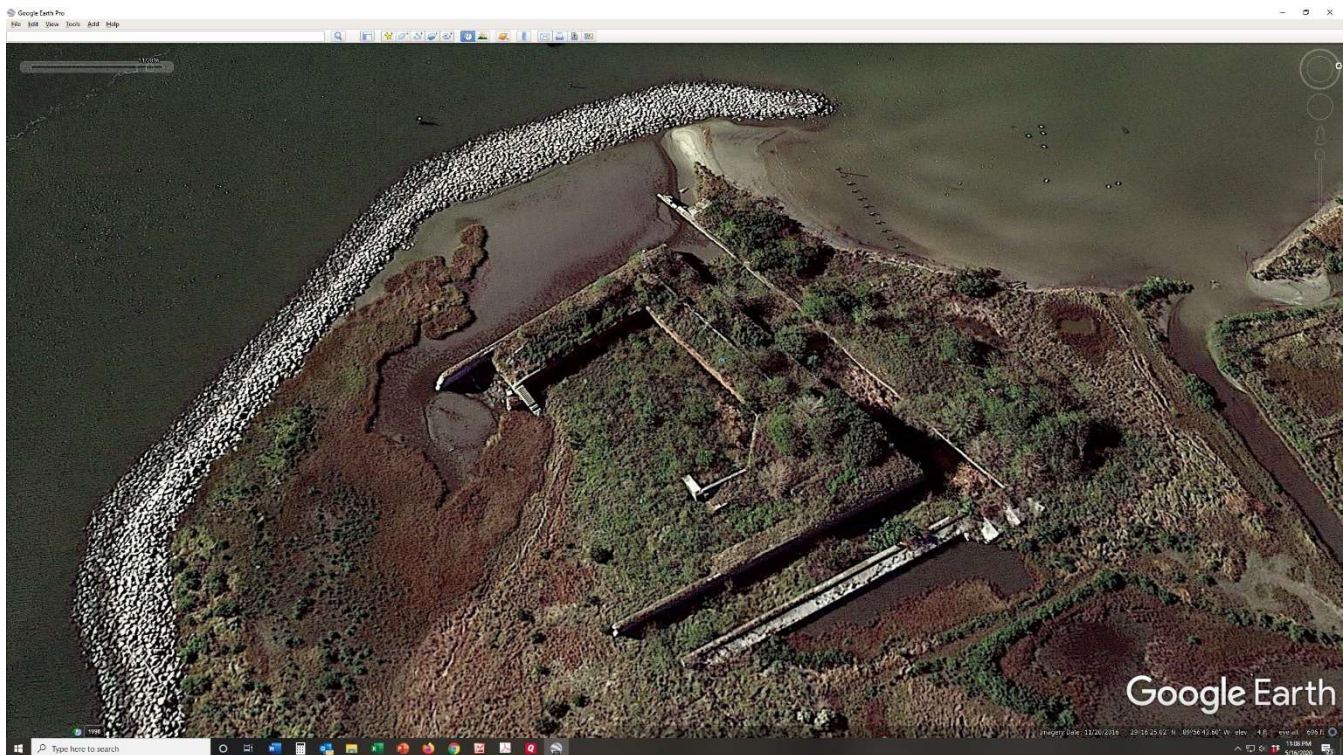
The defense of the Mississippi River and New Orleans has been important military objective since the War of 1812. As a result, several early Third System forts were constructed along the various waterways leading to New Orleans. The primary defense works were Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip on the Mississippi River, about 90 miles downriver from the city. Secondary works were constructed at the entrances to Lake Pontchartrain and at Grand Isle from the Gulf of Mexico. Many of these defenses were involved in the Civil War and later had Endicott-Taft batteries added. By the 1920's most of these defenses had been abandoned.



**Fort Jackson (upper) and Fort Pike (lower)**



**Fort St. Philip (upper) and Fort Macomb (lower)**



## Fort Levingston

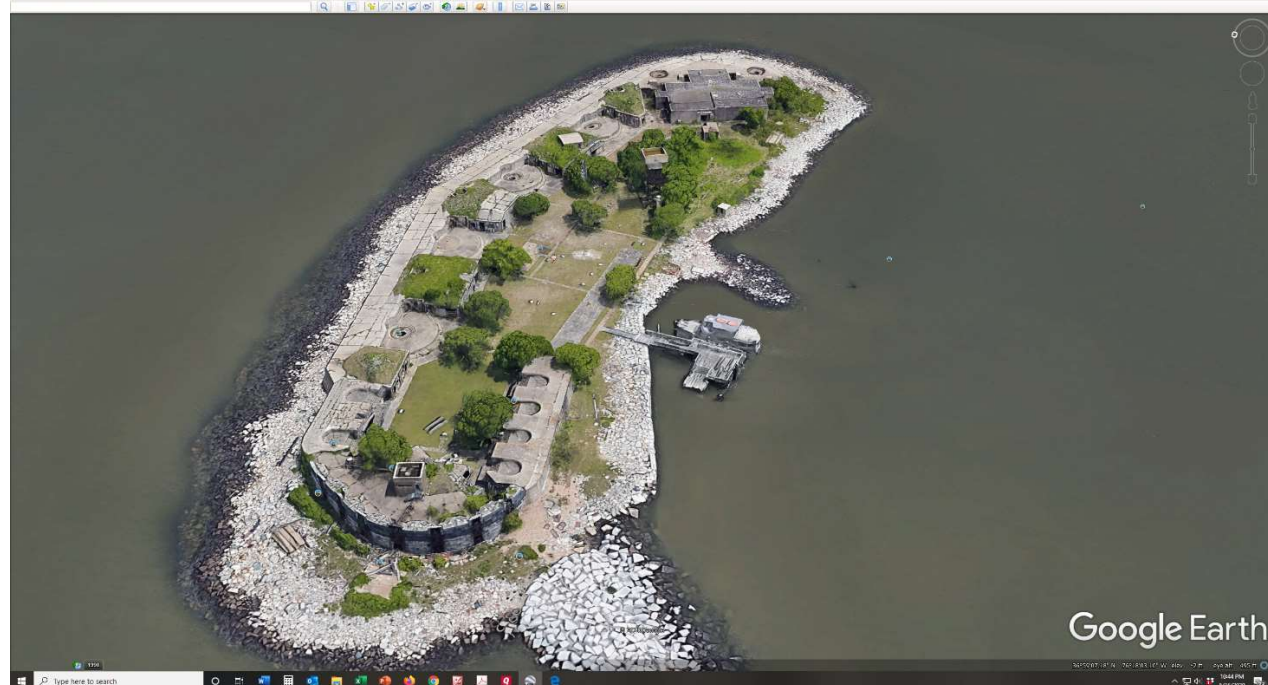
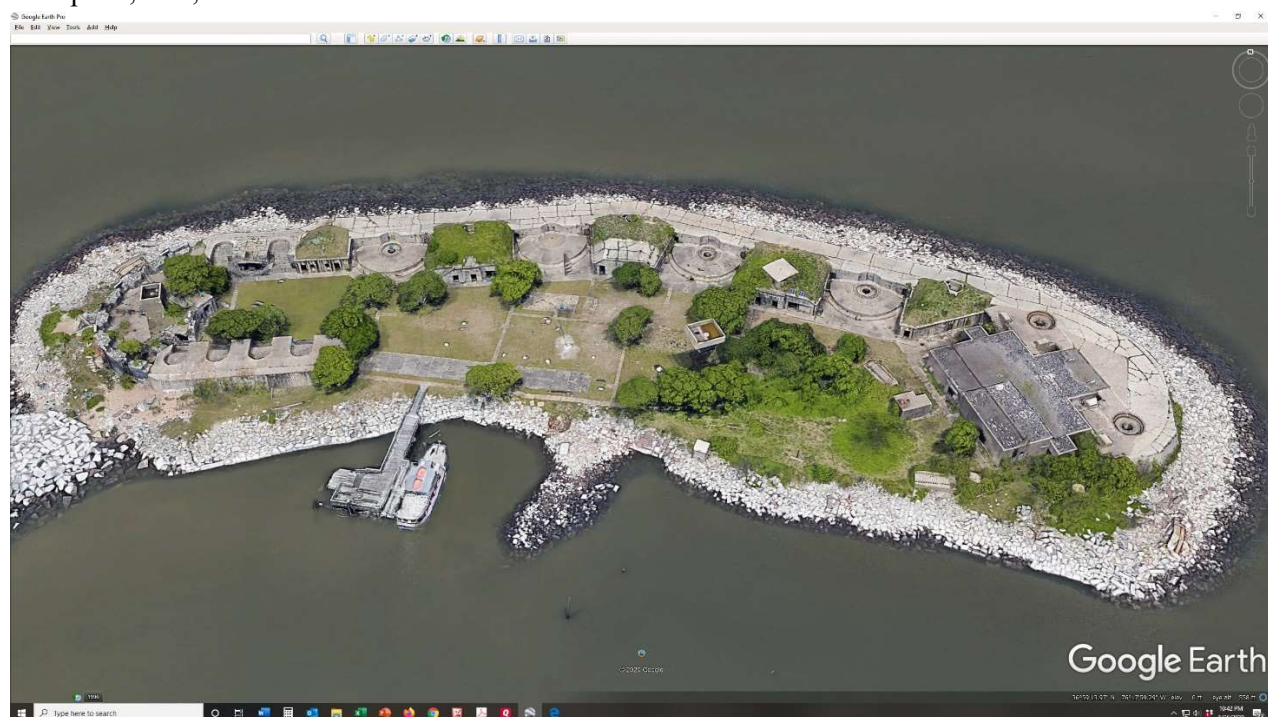
**Threat:** Large masonry structures built in marshlands and exposed to periodic hurricanes need constant care, but unfortunately these works have received little care over the last 100 years. The wasting away of the Mississippi delta has brought these forts closer to the Gulf while the have sunk lower into the mud. This has causes large cracks and erosion of their foundations. Commercial development and dredging round these works has also had a negative effect. Without maintenance these forts will disappear into the swamps. In fact one defense, Tower Dupre was complete destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2004. All these forts continue to be closed to the public.

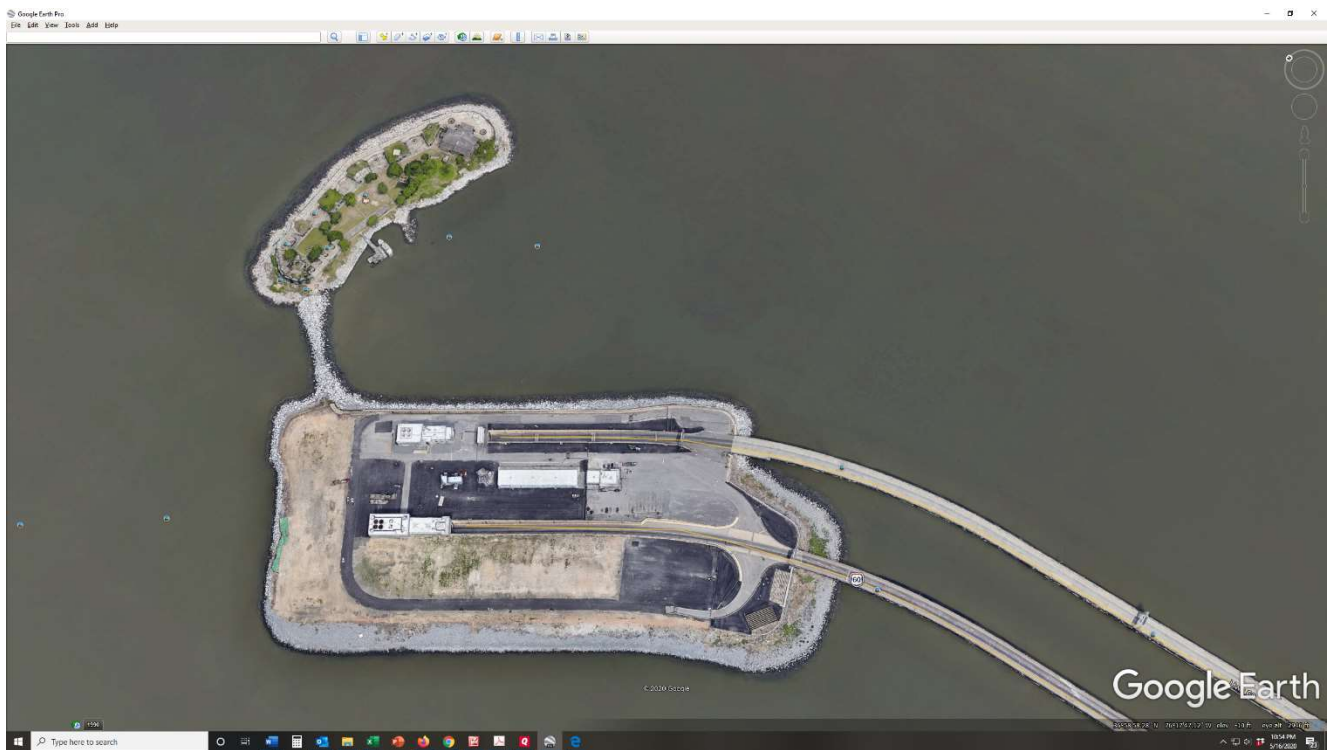
**Contact:** There is no organized group working to protect this coast defense site. For more information, please contact:  
Louisiana Office of State Parks  
P.O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4426  
Phone: 225-342-8111  
Email: [parks@crt.state.la.us](mailto:parks@crt.state.la.us)

## Site: Fort Wool, Rip Rap Island, Hampton Road, Virginia

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Historic Fort Wool, Hampton Roads, VA, has been lost as a historic park after more than 60 years as a wonderful example of American coast defenses of the 3rd System, Endicott-Taft Period, and WW2 Program. Additionally, the island has a long history as a presidential retreat for several US Presidents, including Abraham Lincoln, as well as taking part in the battle between the CSS Virginia and USS Monitor during the Civil War. In the last 30 days, Rip Raps Island, home of Fort Wool, has been transformed by the Commonwealth of Virginia into a nesting habitat for seabirds. This has involved removal of all trees on the island, sealing the historic structures, eradication existing animals, removing historic markers and granite blocks, and laying down a foot of sand and gravel over the island. The island will no longer be open to the public and ferry service from Hampton, VA, has been discontinued.





## Fort Wool, Rip Raps Island and Hampton Road Bridge Tunnel, South Island

**Threat:** You might ask why this loss occurred without public input and without concern about the impact on the fort's historic structures, since Fort Wool has been included in the National Register of Historic Places since 1969. It is my understanding that this action is an outcome of building a second Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. As part of the new tunnel's construction, the VA Department of Transportation transformed South Island, a nesting area for seabirds for many years, into a construction yard. Various nature associations and bird societies were very unhappy with this action and demanded that a new nesting habitat be created right way, as the spring nesting time was rapidly approaching. The commonwealth agencies looked to Fort Wool as that replacement habitat. The fort's structures and dock were declared safety hazards so tourist could no longer visit the island. The City of Hampton (which operated the fort as a historic attraction for many years) did not renew its lease from the commonwealth, and control of the island returned to the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation, which turned the island over to the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, for use for bird nesting (South Island may become available again upon the completion of the second HRBT). Additionally, the commonwealth is seeking to surround the island with several dozen jacked-up barges with sand on their decks to provide more space for nesting.

**Contact:** There is no organized group working to protect this coast defense site.  
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