FORT WADSWORTH, GATEWAY NRA: GUARDIAN OF NEW YORK HARBOR

Dave Taft: If you're looking for an overlook to see the lower harbor, there probably is no better than the one that we're standing on at Fort Wadsworth.

Allison Luchnick: There have been fortifications built here since the Dutch colonized the area. Even the Native Americans before that, realized the strategic point we had here. Not only did you have this narrow body of water, which is easily defended, but it's a great place to look out across the harbor, in both directions. You can see who's coming and who's going.

The fortifications here at the narrows were used as early as the War of 1812. They soon became obsolete and then were replaced by the structures we have here at Fort Wadsworth today, which date back to the Civil War. Battery Weed, down at the water, and Fort Tompkin, at the top of the hill.

Phil Melfi: The strategy was to engage the enemy as quickly as possible, before they even entered into New York harbor.

And the shape of Battery Weed is a classic design. It's a trapezoid so that you have three opportunities to fire at the enemy. You have your southern face which can open up fire on an enemy vessel as soon as they're sighted. And as the vessel passes you would have the sea face that can direct fire at the vessel. And then when the vessel is passed the Fort, the northern side can also fire at the vessel. So you have three opportunities to sink that ship.

Allison Luchnick: Fort Tompkins wasn't even complete until after the Civil War, and by that point, they already knew that these structures had become obsolete. The cannon inside the Fort, they had actually become too large for the embrasures, or the holes, from which they fire out of. In the 1890s, we have structures that are hidden behind hillsides and they're made out of concrete, and they have what's called a disappearing gun. And this gun has the ability to actually sink down and hide behind the hill, and also hide the men there, and then only come up when necessary.

Phil Melfi: The Coast Guard uses Fort Wadsworth right now for their vessel tracking station, which is a group of cameras strategically located that see any vessel entering or leaving the harbor.

Fort Wadsworth is historically significant in the fact that we have these two remaining Civil War era stone forts and that is why the National Park Service is here now, because the National Park Service has been entrusted with nation's treasures.