

## **Audio Transcript: Fort Sheridan Coastal Artillery Exhibit podcast**

[music]

It's hard to believe that it was just three months ago that Andrew was sitting in a high school classroom sweating over a trigonometry test. Now, sweat ran down his face as he aimed at an airplane.

[airplane sounds]

Yes, his mission was to shoot down an airplane ... an airplane over Lake Michigan. It's a good thing Andrew paid attention in trig!

Wait a second. Lake Michigan, you say? It wasn't a real airplane. It was a drone — a shell of a plane for Fort Sheridan soldiers, like Andrew, to try to hit from an artillery position along the lakeshore. His knowledge of trajectory and angles certainly helped Andrew, but it didn't stop him from sweating. He just hoped that he wouldn't forget his training if he ever had to face the real thing. And ever since the attack on Pearl Harbor, it was looking more and more likely that Andrew would fire on a real airplane.

[sounds of gunfire]

Yes, between 1920 and 1943, Andrew and other soldiers at Fort Sheridan practiced (and sweated!) firing anti-aircraft weapons at drones over Lake Michigan. When Andrew arrived at Fort Sheridan in early 1942, Fort Sheridan housed an anti-aircraft brigade that practiced on three artillery ranges located along the lake.

In fact, throughout its history, Fort Sheridan's environmental features such as Lake Michigan factored into training. Back when horses were the main way for soldiers to travel and to haul cannons, soldiers trained along Lake Michigan. They could get accustomed to water crossings or to moving up and down steep hills by using the bluffs.

The ravines were important, too. They helped soldiers prepare for battle logistics such as quickly building bridges to cross rivers. Soldiers would cut down trees and create makeshift bridges over the ravines that were strong enough for them to cross along with their equipment!

Today you can't go swimming in the lake — like Andrew and other soldiers used to do. But what you can do is check out the coastal artillery exhibit that overlooks the lake. It looks like a firing position with a real anti-aircraft gun. (You can even read a manual that soldiers like Andrew might have used. And ...no, you can't actually fire the gun!)

But you should get a good sense of what Andrew might have seen as he looked out over Lake Michigan, aiming at a drone. Today, the aiming that takes place during training at other bases is done through the wonders of computer technology. It still helps to be good at Trig, though!