

Sites Worth Saving

MINNESOTA'S 10 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES 2011

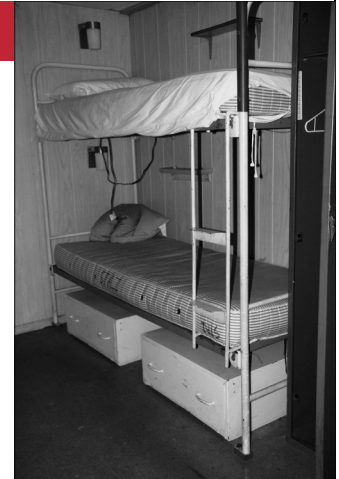


Preservation Alliance of Minnesota ❖ www.mnpreservation.org

MISSISSIPPI RIVER (NEAR WINONA)

River activity has always been essential to Minnesota. In order for the complex system of river traffic to flow smoothly, dredges were used to deepen the shallow areas along the Mississippi River, enabling vessels to more easily navigate the meandering river channel.

The Dredge *William A. Thompson* was built in 1937 by the Dravo Corporation in Pittsburgh, named after a revered member of the Corps of Engineers who was responsible for many improvements along the Mississippi between Winona and Prairie Du Chien. The *Thompson* is a hydraulic dredge that can extract approximately 1800 cubic yards per hour. Weighing in at 1370 tons and with a length of 267 feet, it is the single largest piece of equipment used by the St. Paul District of the Army Corps of Engineers. For over 70 years, the *William A. Thompson* was an integral part of maritime activity in the Upper Midwest.



Since 2005, three new dredging vessels have been employed in the St. Paul District, and the Corps is no longer authorized to spend funds on maintenance of the *Thompson*. Disposition has been ordered, but as of yet a new owner has not been found. If a buyer does not materialize, the General Services Administration may be forced to sell the vessel for scrap. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is underway but, since the dredge is not a building, it is not eligible for state or federal rehabilitation tax credits; assembling funding for restoration will be particularly challenging in this case. As one of the more unusual nominations for PAM's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places list, the *William A. Thompson* is a prime example of Minnesota's maritime heritage.

Action Steps

1. Support the Friends of the Thompson (FOTT) in their efforts to preserve and restore the *William A. Thompson*.
2. Volunteer your grant-writing services to the FOTT, or make a financial contribution toward such services.
3. Facilitate a discussion between the FOTT and potential non-profit partners to ensure the preservation and reuse of the *Thompson*.



DREDGE WILLIAM A. THOMPSON



PRESERVE



PROTECT



PROMOTE