



**U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District**

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Public Affairs

Corps Facts

Fountain City Service Base
Fountain City, Wis.

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FS-18

The Fountain City Service Base, located in Fountain City, Wis., plays an essential role in supporting the Corps of Engineers effort to improve navigation on the Upper Mississippi River north of Guttenberg, Iowa. The Corps has used the boatyard for the construction, repair and maintenance of vessels and equipment used for river improvement projects for more than a century.

History

The Fountain City Service Base, or boatyard, is located on a 3.6-acre tract of land between the Mississippi River and Highway 35. The site was chosen because Fountain City has a natural protective harbor formed by the widening mouth of Waumandee Creek as it joins the Mississippi River at the north end of town. The Corps purchased the land in 1894 and began using it as a boatyard in 1895. As the number and complexity of navigation projects on the Upper Mississippi River expanded, the Corps constructed an extensive fleet of boats of various types to do its work. More than 200 towboats, tenders, snag boats, dipper and hydraulic dredges, quarter boats, building boats, barges, launches and skiffs have been serviced at the boatyard in the years since 1895. All of these vessels were repaired and maintained at the Fountain City Service Base, and, additionally, a number of them were constructed on the premises.

Mission

Work at the boatyard includes major welding repairs on barges and floating plant equipment, as well as much of the St. Paul District's machine shop and mechanical repair work. The boatyard has the necessary heavy equipment, such as cranes, welders, compressors and blasting and painting tools, to support and maintain the district's locks and dams and floating plant. The maintenance of the nine-foot channel is primarily the responsibility of the Fountain City crew, and its personnel is busy each season surveying, dredging and making repairs to piers and dikes. The boatyard is also called home for the current St. Paul District fleet, including the DREDGE William A. Thompson.

DREDGE William A. THOMPSON

The "William A. Thompson," the Corps' largest and only remaining pipeline cutterhead dredge, has called the Fountain City Service Base home since May 22, 1937. The Thompson operates from April through December throughout the St. Paul District, as well as in the Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis and Kansas City districts. It is used to maintain 850 miles of the Upper Mississippi River, 355 miles of the Illinois River and 24 miles on the St. Croix River. The Thompson can dredge to a 23-and-a-half foot depth and 350 feet wide from one mooring. It can dredge 1,000 cubic yards per hour and is used to dredge approximately 2 million cubic yards each year. New dredging equipment will replace the 67-year old Thompson in the spring of 2005.