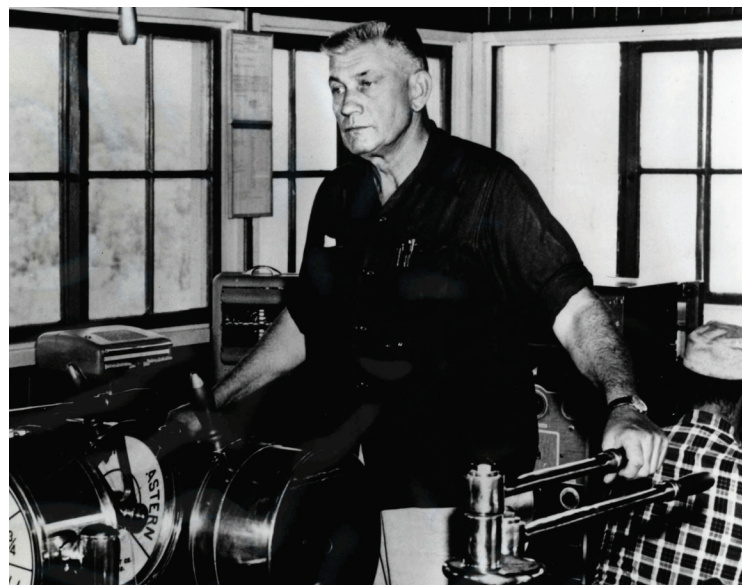




Dredge William A. Thompson



- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers initiated plans to purchase a new, more efficient hydraulic dredge in 1935. It was to be named the William A. Thompson.
- The vessel's namesake William A. Thompson (b. Dec. 16, 1854, d. 1925) graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in civil engineering in 1878 and entered federal service that same year with the Corps. In 1896, he was appointed to the position of assistant engineer responsible for improvements on the Upper Mississippi River.
- The Corps selected the Dravo Corporation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to build the Thompson for \$846,130. It was christened there in March 1937 by a granddaughter of William Thompson's. The new vessel arrived at the Corps' Fountain City, Wisconsin, Boatyard on May 22, 1937.
- The Thompson was the biggest single piece of equipment used by the St. Paul District. It was 267 feet long from the tip of the cutterhead to its stern. It was 48 feet wide and had a minimum bridge-clearing elevation of 52 feet, 9 inches.
- The hydraulic dredge Thompson worked much like to a gigantic vacuum cleaner as its pipeline cutterhead sucked up the sand from the river bottom. It was capable of extracting 1,800 cubic yards per hour. The hydraulic pump was driven by a 1,800 horsepower diesel engine. Two 850 horsepower diesel engines generated electrical power to run the two 500 horsepower motors used for propelling the vessel.

