

# The William S. Mitchell Story

*"She is the grandest of all working steamboats..." Dedication ceremony  
1934*

After transforming the U.S. Wake Robin into one of America's premier haunted riverboats, the producers set out to find a boat suitable for the next generation haunted riverboat. What they found was the William S. Mitchell, an Army Corps of Engineers' steam powered dredge. The new owners were looking for a steamboat to house the new USS Nightmare II. What they got was a steamboat filled with angry spirits; a vessel with a history of tragedies resulting in over 112 crewmember deaths. Because of a curse like service, surviving crewmembers would give the vessel the nickname "Death Dredge" as service on her would very often end in death.

Investigation into the history of the vessel has resulted in many horrible stories. Some could be explained as coincidental, others have no explanation. Separating myth from reality is difficult after so many years. One thing is certain, from three unrelated deaths during construction to a death and dozens injured during launching ceremonies, the vessel started its long service with a crew that held many superstitions.

The history of the vessel reveals many stories; most seem unrelated and many more are little more than mysterious nuisances. From missing personal belongings, to mechanical failures that seem to repair themselves, to dredge operation that halts abruptly and for unexplained reasons, each alone would easily be dismissed. However, with these accounts combined with the numerous deaths during the years of dredging service, it became clear that a dark force is present.

There are many surviving crewmembers that believe that the real trouble started when dredging during the maiden voyage uncovered an apparent ancient Indian burial ground. Then, later that same year, dredging operation halted when the pump became clogged with what was later identified to be a mast from an ancient sailing vessel. The legend passed among crewmembers describes a belief that many crewmembers had. They believed that this large dredge, clearing the long uncovered riverbed, was in some way disturbing the eternal rest of past mariners and an ancient people's sacred burial ground. This disturbance has released the resting souls that haunt the William S. Mitchell, and they have cursed the souls of the boat's crew to an eternity of unrest within the boat.

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*"She's haunted as sure as I am standing here. I am one of the survivors of "Death Dredge" and I can tell you that my nights are filled with nightmares more horrifying than you can imagine." ~J. Bryant, Engineer First Class 1932-1936*