

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Columbia and Sauk
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE DEC 31 1974

1. NAME

COMMON: Merrimac Ferry
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: State Highway 113 at the Wisconsin River			
CITY OR TOWN: Merrimac		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Second	
STATE Wisconsin	CODE 55	COUNTY: Sauk - Code 111 Columbia - Code 021	CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Department of Transportation, State Highway Commission		
STREET AND NUMBER: 4802 Sheboygan Avenue		
CITY OR TOWN: Madison	STATE: Wisconsin	CODE 55

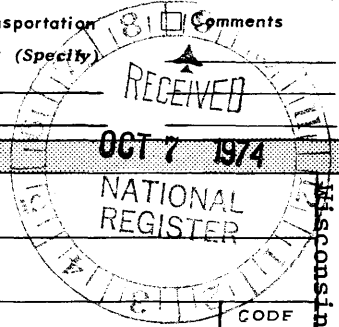
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Department of Transportation		
STREET AND NUMBER: 4802 Sheboygan Avenue		
CITY OR TOWN: Madison	STATE Wisconsin	CODE 55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Wisconsin Registered Landmark			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1973	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State	<input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: State Historical Society of Wisconsin			
STREET AND NUMBER: 816 State Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Madison	STATE: Wisconsin	CODE 53706	CODE 55

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Columbia - Sauk
ENTRY NUMBER: DEC 31 1974
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Merrimac Ferry crosses the Wisconsin River between the northern extremity of State Highway 113 in Columbia County and the southern extremity of State Highway 113 in Sauk County. It is approximately 2,700 feet long and is near the west end of Lake Wisconsin.

Originally, the river at this point was much narrower and resembled the lower Wisconsin downstream of Prairie du Sac, with shifting sands constantly changing its course. In 1914, however, a hydroelectric dam was built at Prairie du Sac, seven miles downstream from Merrimac, forming Lake Wisconsin. As a result, the river at the ferry is wide and relatively deep and the Wisconsin's reddish-brown, iron-laden waters lie nearly still.

A ferryboat trip across the river at the ferry now can be taken in about twelve minutes any time 24 hours a day, nine months a year. The present boat is Colsac II, a modern cable-operated, twelve-car catamaran vessel with twin steel pontoons covered with a heavy steel floor and central powerhouse. The ferryboat is powered by a gasoline engine connected, through a transmission of pulleys and shieves, to a steel cable anchored at both termini of State Highway 113. The craft pulls itself along the cable to each highway ramp where three drawbridges are lowered to permit access by motor vehicles. The ferryboat, operated by the State Highway Commission, is a popular tourist attraction.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Merrimac Ferry is the last of over 500 ferries which once crossed Wisconsin rivers and lakes. The first Merrimac ferryboat began operation in 1844 when Chester Mattson, the town of Merrimac's first settler, obtained a territorial charter to provide service across the Wisconsin River. In 1851 a road, which later became State Trunk Highway 113, was begun and made use of the ferry. The boats which originally crossed the river at Merrimac were of the overhead cable type. The Mattson ferry was abandoned in 1877 but put back into operation in 1883 by John Brownrigg. It was operated until 1914 when the construction of a hydroelectric dam at Prairie du Sac created Lake Wisconsin. At that time Arthur Brownrigg, John Brownrigg's son, built a gasoline-engine ferryboat which did not make use of a cable. He operated this until the present type of cable-operated ferryboat was put into service in 1924. In 1933 the Wisconsin State Highway Commission became responsible for the operation of the Merrimac Ferry and since that time no fare has been charged for the Merrimac crossing. In 1963 the eight-car Colsac I, used since 1924, was retired and became a tourist site in Merrimac. It was replaced by the larger twelve-car Colsac II now in operation.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

HB 16 / 257400
0504925

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

File, "Merrimac Car Ferry," Wisconsin Historic Sites, Division of Sites and Markers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

UTM Coordinates:
Zone 16: 4,804,820 N.
287,390 E.

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.000

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Wisconsin	55	Sauk	111
Wisconsin	55	Columbia	021



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Charlene Stant Engel, Preservation Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION: **State Historical Society of Wisconsin** DATE: **25 July 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin 53706** CODE: **55**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name James Morton Smith
James Morton Smith

Title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date Oct. 1, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Arthur H. Hays
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 12/31/74

ATTEST:

Wm. M. Smith
Keeper of the National Register

Date 12/31/74