1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: *Ste. Claire*

Other Name/Site Number: Steamer *Ste. Claire*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Nicholson Terminal and Dock Company's South Slip

City/Town: Ecorse Vicinity:____

State: MI County: Code: Zip Code: 48229

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-local: ___
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): ___
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: X
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
____	____	buildings
____	____	sites
1	____	structures
____	____	objects
1	0	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Transportation Sub: Water-related

Current: Transportation Sub: Water-related

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: N/A

Materials:
Foundation: Steel
Walls: Wood/Steel
Roof: Wood
Other Description:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The steamer *Ste. Claire* is a somewhat modernized version of the typical propeller-driven excursion steamer of the early 20th century, a type once found in many parts of the country. Excursion steamers are steamships built primarily for passengers for day trips. *Ste Claire* and her running mate (subject of a separate nomination) represent the "ocean-going" type of excursion vessel although they were used on lakes. Riverboat excursion vessels exist such as the National Historic Landmarks *Belle of Louisville*, *Delta Queen*, and *President*; however these vessels used a different form of propulsion. *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* are now the last representatives of their type to have integrity. Even though altered, *Ste. Claire* still retains the essential characteristics of the type, and the modernizations are now old enough to be characteristic of another period. Two smaller excursion steamers, *Sabino* and *Virginia V*, will be subjects of future National Historic Landmark studies.

Ste. Claire has a steel hull surmounted by a wooden superstructure strengthened with steel members. Her machinery, a triple expansion reciprocating steam engine powered by scotch boilers, are original and becoming extremely rare. The combination of the original hull and machinery with the original, though altered, wooden superstructure makes her unique save for her running mate *Columbia*, which is somewhat less altered in appearance.

The hull, finely molded, is of riveted steel, 190 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 17.3 feet in molded depth. The draft is 14.5 feet; gross tonnage is 870, and net tonnage 507. The steel main deck overhangs the hull on either side, a practice which provides additional deck space for passengers and clearly derives from the "guards" of sidewheel steamers. Above the main deck, the superstructure is of wood, with steel members for additional support, notably in the dance floor area, where a large steel

beam runs down the centerline of the vessel to provide plenty of open space for dancing.

The external appearance of the vessel is largely determined by the overhang at the main deck level, the rounded bluff bows of the superstructure decks (a characteristic of this fleet, and not typical of excursion steamers generally), the open decks surrounded by stanchions and railings, and the pilot house and stack structures on the top deck. An extensive modernization program before and after World War II considerably altered the exterior appearance of *Ste. Claire* without essentially altering her basic layout and function. Functionally and internally for the most part, she remains a steamer of 1910. Furthermore, the removal in recent years of some of the "streamlining" of the 1940s has changed her appearance to be closer to the original.

On the main deck forward, placed on the centerline of the vessel, is the main staircase, whose entrance is from the sides within an enclosure containing leaded glass windows. Under the main stair is another stair leading to crew spaces in the hull below. Forward of the stair enclosure is a large open deck space, originally open at the sides, which was partially enclosed in the 1940s with bulkheading at the perimeter containing large circular unglazed openings resembling portholes. This enclosure was added as part of the modernization program, and was removed due to deterioration about 1981, thus returning the main deck to its original outward appearance. At the sides of the vessel either side of the main staircase are the gangplank openings generally used for loading and unloading passengers. Aft of the stairs is a passageway running across the vessel. On the centerline, the stack casing defines the aft side of that passageway; aft of the stack is the well opening down into the engine room, which places the main engine in public view. An enclosure at the after end of the engine space houses a stairs leading to the galley, dining room, and crew quarters in the hull. The after end of the main deck has food service counters in the center, with open spaces around them. A pair of stairs is at the perimeter on either side leading to decks above. This aft area was also enclosed at the sides in the 1940s, and the bulkheading has likewise been removed in this location. On either side of the vessel amidships are cabins containing the public rest rooms and crews quarters. These open off large companionways running fore and aft adjacent to the elements of the centerline such as boiler and engine spaces. The outer bulkheading of these spaces was modernized as part of the overall program, the proportion of the windows being changed and gusset plates being installed to provide a more "streamlined" appearance.

The main staircase forward leads to the main cabin on the second deck above. This "U"-shaped space has the stack casing within the arms of the "U" and the main stairs centered. The room is finished in mahogany, with a cream-painted beamed ceiling. Canvas panels within the beams of the ceiling were likely originally stencilled. The stack casing, panelled like the rest of the space, has a large mirror facing the top of the stairs

coming from the main deck; over those stairs another flight leads to the deck above. The outer walls have doors to the open deck forward and at either side, and there are four bays with curved corners containing window seats; these bays originally had leaded glass in the curved windows in their corners. Some of that leaded glass survives. At the after end, folding glazed doors divide the cabin from the dance floor. On the starboard side forward, a modern souvenir counter has been built against the windows.

The dance floor aft is open at either side and aft to the open decks. Forward, a bandstand backs up to the stack casing. A large steel supporting member runs fore and aft on the centerline, supported on steel posts, in order to avoid numerous stanchions in the dance floor. A hardwood floor was added to the dance floor and main cabin in 1925; this had been avoided previously for fear of warpage. Aft of the dance floor is a small food service counter centered, and the two staircases on either side which lead down to the main deck. A stairs to the deck above is centered partially above the food counter.

Both the main cabin and the dance floor have higher overhead than the open decks surrounding them, creating a "monitor" roof with ribbon windows in the upper parts of the walls of the cabin and above the open sides of the dance floor. These are no longer glazed, but filled with panels. Those in the dance floor may never have been glazed, in order to provide a route for the band music to reach the deck above.

The main staircase leads up from the main cabin to another cabin on the decks above. This cabin, painted for many years, is thought to be finished in oak. "U" shaped like the cabin below, this space is smaller and ends at the forward side of the stack casing. Windows look out on the deck, and at either side doors give on stairs leading down to the open deck, since this cabin is placed on the higher deck created by the taller overhead in the main cabin and dance floor. Two doors on either side of the stack casing lead to the "beer garden" which occupies the higher deck level above the dance floor, and has a set of steps leading down to the open deck centered aft. The cabin and beer garden on the third deck also have higher overhead than the surrounding deck, again giving the opportunity for "clerestory" windows, as they are called in steamboat parlance.

The main staircase and the after stairs terminate at the third deck; forward, another stair centered in the open deck area leads to the decks below and above. On the top deck, public access is limited to a "U"-shaped area forward and at either side of the raised deck created by the higher overhead in the cabin and beer garden below. The sides of the deck from about the bridge wings aft is occupied by lifeboats. Forward on the higher central deck space is the pilot house and crew's quarters structure built after World War II. The original pilot house was removed, and a new structure built which includes a pilot house raised on a high base and several cabins for officers at the deck level behind.

The structure includes streamlined gussets at the drop from pilot house roof to cabin roof, and again at the after end of the cabins, where the gussets--recently removed due to deterioration--terminated either side of the smokestack. The stack itself was altered prior to World War II along with that on *Columbia*. The height was reduced, and the old stack encased in a new "teardrop" section casing. Further aft, there is a single pole mast. The rest of the central deck space has liferafts and other equipment installed.

The machinery of *Ste. Claire* is of great interest and increasing rarity, even on the Great Lakes, where such installations have generally lasted longer than elsewhere. The main engine is a triple-expansion reciprocating steam engine built by the Toledo Shipbuilding Company in 1910, as was the vessel itself. Cylinder dimensions are 20.75, 32, and 50.25 inches; stroke is 36 inches. Steam is supplied by Scotch marine (fire-tube) boilers, built in 1910 by the Marine Boiler Works at Toledo, Ohio. One of the boilers developed a serious crack in 1964, and the vessel was forced to finish out her season on one boiler. Apparently serious consideration was given to the replacement of the entire propulsion system at that time, but repairs were made in time for the 1965 season. The boilers were originally coal-fired, but were converted to burn oil many years ago. The engine and boiler rooms retain much of the original equipment, such as pumps, electrical generators, and the like. The original steam anchor windlass is forward on the main deck. The original steam "chime" whistle is still in use, and is mounted on the stack.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B ___ C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): XIVB: Transportation: Ships, Boats, Lighthouses & Other Structures

XVIIIB: Technology (Engineering and Invention): Transportation

XXXIVC: Recreation: General Recreation/Other

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture (Naval)	1910-1941	1910
Maritime History	1910-1941	1910
Transportation	1910-1941	1910

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Frank E. Kirby, designer/Toledo Shipbuilding Company, builder

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The steamer *Ste. Claire* is significant as one of the two remaining classic excursion steamers in the country; as one of the two last essentially unaltered passenger ships designed by Frank E. Kirby; and for its essentially unaltered propulsion machinery of a type becoming increasingly rare. *Ste Claire* and her running-mate *Columbia* are the last two steamers of their type with integrity left in the United States. The pair shared their original run from Detroit to Bob-Lo Island for 81 years, a record of service on a single run unequalled in U.S. maritime history.

The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements that follow.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPELLER PASSENGER STEAMER

The propeller began to supplant the sidewheel for passenger steamers in the late 19th century. The structural evolution from sidewheel to screw propulsion was gentle. The broad overhanging decks of the American sidewheeler which were intended to protect the sidewheels from damage, were retained, though in a narrower form. The overhanging superstructure provided space for more passengers. Sometimes, the overhangs were simply supported on brackets under the main deck, as on *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire*, or were plated over to protect them from the seas, as on the Fall River liners. The difference appears to have been more regional than navigational; the big D & C sidewheelers on the lakes had open brackets in contrast to the Fall River steamers, although similar sea conditions existed in both places.

The propeller steamer with overhang was extremely pervasive. It was the accepted type all up and down the East Coast, the West Coast, and in the lower Great Lakes. These steamers could be found in the Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, and the St. Lawrence, Hudson, Delaware, and Potomac rivers.

HISTORY OF FERRY SERVICE IN THE DETROIT AREA

Ferry service between the Detroit and Windsor sides of the Detroit River has existed in some form since the settlement of the area in the early 18th century. The first recorded ferry operated in 1802, and the first steam ferry, *Argo*, entered ferry service in 1832. Service was provided by a number of entrepreneurs over the years, among them William Campbell, whose *Gem* entered service in 1864. Ultimately, the Campbell family were to become the controlling influence over the ferry service. In 1878, the various owners and operators formed a pool arrangement to offer ferry service on a more rational basis, and in 1881, the Detroit, Belle Isle, & Windsor Ferry Company was incorporated. This firm, controlled by the Campbells until the late 1940s, provided ferry service not only to Windsor but also to Belle Isle, an island north of the city in the river, which was initially a private picnic and amusement park, and later became Detroit's most distinguished city park. In 1898, the company leased Bois Blanc Island, across from Amherstburg, Ontario, at the southern end of the Detroit River. On June 18 of that year, service to Bois Blanc, which came to be known as Bob-Lo, opened with the ferry *Promise*, built in 1892. Bois Blanc quickly developed into a popular spot for a day's outing, with picnic grounds, a small amusement area, dancing and other amusements of the period. In 1901, the company purchased the major part of the island, and service was maintained with *Pleasure* of 1894. By this time, the popularity of the island had become such that plans were laid for the largest steamer the company would build, *Columbia* of 1902. At the time *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* were built, Detroit had the highest volume for boarding passengers on water transportation of any port on the Great Lakes.

CAREER OF THE STEAMER *STE. CLAIRE*

Increasing patronage made another steamer in addition to *Columbia* necessary, and plans were laid for a slightly smaller vessel. Frank E. Kirby had designed all the company's later vessels, and designed *Ste. Claire* as well, but the letting of the contract to build the vessel to the Toledo Shipbuilding Company was a departure from the usual practice of using the Detroit Dry Dock Company's yards. The early 20th century was a time of business amalgamations, and Great Lakes shipyards were not immune. At the time *Ste. Claire* was built, the Detroit Dry Dock Company had become part of the emerging American Ship Building Company, and a number of officers of the old Dry Dock Company, unhappy with the course of events in the combine, had purchased the Craig Yards in Toledo, Ohio, and founded the Toledo Shipbuilding Co., which eventually found itself part of the American Ship combine as well. But in 1910 many of the personalities intimately connected with Detroit shipbuilding, including Kirby, were involved with the Toledo effort.

Ste. Claire was launched at Toledo Shipbuilding Company on May 7, 1910, as the yard's Hull no. 116, and entered service later that year. Her design was simply a slightly smaller version of *Columbia* and a slightly larger version of *Brittania*, which had been built for the Belle Isle service in 1906. However, one departure was the addition of a passenger deck forward and to either side of the pilot house, a feature later added to *Columbia*.

In 1911, the company was forced to reorganize because at the termination of its limited term charter, and became the Detroit and Windsor Ferry Company. The building of the Belle Island Bridge, the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, and the Ambassador Bridge, all in the 1920s, spelled the end for the company's Windsor and Belle Isle services. Ferry service to Windsor ended on July 18, 1938, the Belle Isle service having terminated some years earlier. The Bob-Lo service became the company's only activity and by the early 1940s, the company was known as the "Bob-Lo Excursion Company." Late in the 1940s, ownership passed to the Browning Family of Detroit, who operated the steamers and amusement park until 1979, when the operation was sold to a group of investors. The steamers were sold in 1983 to AAA of Michigan, who, in turn sold it to International Broadcasting Corporation of Minneapolis in 1988. In November 1991, *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* were sold at auction to Lansdowne Nightclub, Inc., a commercial firm, whose plans for the vessels are uncertain.

CAREER OF NAVAL ARCHITECT FRANK E. KIRBY

Frank Kirby's career can hardly be completely covered within the confines of this study. One of the leading naval architects of his time, he was responsible for the development of several lines of characteristic Great Lakes steamers, as well as the 20th-century development of the world-famous Hudson River Day Line. His achievements of design for the Detroit and Cleveland

Navigation Company, which extended from 1878, culminated in *Greater Detroit* and *Greater Buffalo* of 1925, the largest sidewheel vessels ever built. He is credited with the invention of the bow propeller for icebreaking, and is said to have designed icebreakers for the Imperial Russian government. From his start in Detroit and with the Detroit Shipbuilding Company, he came to be a world-famous figure in vessel design, particularly of moderate draft passenger steamers for the Great Lakes, Hudson River, and coastal areas. His early association with Eber Brock Ward, who founded iron and steel mills at Wyandotte, Michigan, led him to be an early advocate of metal in ship construction.

HISTORIC EXCURSION STEAMERS TODAY

While some vessels of a type similar to *Columbia* and *Ste. Claire* exist, the two Bob-Lo steamers are now the only excursion steamers left which possess integrity. For example, their near-sister *Canadiana*, also designed by Frank E. Kirby, exists without her original wooden superstructure. *City of Keansburg*, inactive and unmaintained for over 20 years, is seriously deteriorated and her superstructure is partially removed. *Peter Stuyvesant*, designed by J. W. Millard for the Hudson River service in 1928, was a near-copy of Kirby's earlier *Put-in-Bay*, designed for Detroit-Lake Erie service. *Stuyvesant* was retired as part of a restaurant complex on the Boston waterfront and later sank in a windstorm at her dock and was scrapped. Former Wilson Line steamer *The Duchess*, originally *City of Wilmington* of 1910, was rebuilt with a streamlined steel superstructure in the 1940s and renamed *Bay Belle*. During 1991, she sank at her dock and was scrapped. Although some preserved American steamers--like *Virginia V*--do operate today as excursion vessels, they were not built for that purpose, but adopted that function later in their careers.

Columbia and *Ste. Claire* constitute an amazing survival. They are unique in that they are still operable and have received minimal alteration. *Columbia* is apparently the oldest American flag passenger steamer in operating condition, and *Ste. Claire* may well be next in age to her running mate.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American Bureau of Ships, *Record*, New York, annual, various years.

G. P. Bugbee, *The Boats That Stayed Home*, privately printed pamphlet, Detroit, 1977

G. P. Bugbee, *The Lake Erie Sidewheel Steamers of Frank E. Kirby*, Detroit: Great Lakes Model Shipbuilders Guild, 1955.

Marine Review, Vol. 40, No. 5., Cleveland, Ohio: Penton Publishing Co., May 1910.

Telescope, Journal of the Great Lakes Maritime Institute, Detroit, various issues.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register, Ref. #79001177
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other: Specify Repository: Kirby Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Plans for both steamers are on microfilm at the Institute for Great Lakes Research, Bowling Green State University, Perrysburg, Ohio.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one (1) acre.

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 17/324760/4680320

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that area encompassed within the extreme length and breadth of the vessel.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary incorporates all that area of the vessel as she lays at her berth.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Date: November 1, 1991