1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Sabino

Other Name/Site Number: Excursion Steamer Sabino

2. LOCATION

Street & Numbe	r: Mystic Seaport Museum	Not	for publication:
City/Town: Mys	tic		Vicinity:
State: CT	County: New London	Code: 011	Zip Code: 06355

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: X	Building(s):
Public-local:	District:
Public-State:	Site:
Public-Federal:	Structure: X
	Object:

Number o	of Resources		Property		
	Contribut	ing		Noncor	ntributing
		-			buildings sites
					structures
					objects
	1				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

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

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

Date

Date

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Transportation	Sub: Water-related
Current: Recreation and Culture	Sub: Museum

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: N/A Materials: Wood Foundation: N/A Walls: N/A Roof: N/A Other: N/A

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Owned and operated as a museum vessel by Mystic Seaport Museum, the excursion steamer *Sabino* steams from the museum's docks using her original engine. Maintained in excellent condition, *Sabino* would be recognizable to those who knew her in service in the early years of this century.

SABINO AS BUILT AND MODIFIED

The 1908 wooden passenger steamer Sabino, official number 205213, has an overall length of 57 feet, 1 inch; a beam of 22 feet, 3 inches; and a draft of 6 feet, 4 inches. Her tonnage is 24 gross and 8 net.¹ Originally named *Tourist*, she was built at East Boothbay, Maine, by H. Irving Adams for the Damariscotta Steamboat Company for service on the Damariscotta River. In her original configuration she had a narrow hull with no sponsons. "The passenger deck had a railing but was not roofed," while the "pilot house was integral with the deck house/passenger cabin."² Propulsion was by a coal-fired, fire tube boiler of unknown make and a compound steam engine manufactured by James H. Paine and Sons which is still in use.³ No contemporary descriptions of

³Ibid.

¹Mystic Seaport Museum data sheet, "Vital Statistics" (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, n.d.); and Robert W. Morse, "The Restoration/Reconstruction of the Steamboat Sabino..." (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1980(?), unpaginated typescript, hereafter cited as "Morse Report")

²"Morse Report," Introduction.

her construction have surfaced to date, but apparently the hull was of pine on oak frames.⁴

At some point between 1908 and 1918, Tourist received a canopy roof over the passenger deck. Her open stern was enclosed up to the passenger deck with what appears, from available photographs, to have been tongue and groove vertical boarding, probably of pine. In 1918 Tourist collided with a bridge and was rebuilt. In this phase, "the pilot house was cut free from the main deck house and mounted onto the passenger deck, which had been extended to the bow."⁵ At some point, possibly after her 1918 mishap, the boarding covering her stern was removed.

When put in service on the more open waters of Maine's Casco Bay after 1927, she received wooden sponsons, and the deckhouse sides were extended out to the edge of the sponson deck.⁶ After being sold to Portland, Maine's Casco Bay Lines in 1941, Sabino's original fire-tube boiler was replaced with an Almy coal-fired water-tube boiler, retaining the Payne engine. Her smokestack was lengthened by approximately six feet to improve draft.⁷ A passenger aboard her in the 1950s recalled:

She had a very good water-tube boiler and steamed her rather small compound engine very easily. This was surprising because W. T. boilers were pretty posh stuff in those days. Yachts, men-o-war, and deluxe passenger lines had them, but the little coastal ports usually had vertical fire-tube boilers.⁸

Sabino retained her steam engine after all the other Casco Bay Line fleet were converted to diesel. "The quiet comfort of the steam engine made Sabino a favorite of the passengers on the allday Bailey run."9

Sabino was laid up in 1958 and sold three years later for \$500. Promptly resold to the Corbin family of Salisbury, Massachusetts, Philip Corbin "found the hull was sound, and the boiler passed a 300-pound pressure test."¹⁰ The Corbins spent a good deal of

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸David Dodge, Gainor R. Akin, and Maynard Bray, Steamboat Sabino (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1974) p. 5.

⁹Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰Newspaper article, n.d., in the collection of Spring Point Museum, South Portland, Maine.

effort refurbishing Sabino's cabin interiors. "The lounge will have wall [to] wall carpeting salvaged from a Newburyport theater that was being torn down. Red velvet is being fashioned into window curtains, with gold fringe trimmings."¹¹ In the restoration, "the most significant change to her outward appearance...was the replacement of a board and post railing around the passenger deck with a higher one of vinyl-covered chain-link fencing. Also, stairways were added on either side of the pilot house leading from the passenger deck to the main deck."¹²

Mystic Seaport acquired Sabino in 1973, and beginning in November 1975, a five-year program of repair and restoration began. According to the "Morse Report" previously quoted, apart from the repair and replacement of structural hull components (a process which workers at Mystic's duPont Preservation Shipyard found had been, quite naturally, going on over her nearly 70-year career), the "most important decision that had to be made ... was to determine the period which the restoration would portray."13

In order for Mystic Seaport to operate Sabino as an operating passenger vessel, as opposed to a static exhibit, the vessel would have to meet Coast Guard regulations.

Mystic Seaport, in planning the restoration/reconstruction of Sabino, wanted to be able to continue carrying the same number of passengers; therefore, the sponsons and the increased deck area which they generated would have to be retained. This set the date of restoration...at 1927, since the sponsons were added in 1927.¹⁴

The smokestack, lengthened in 1941, was necessary for efficient operation and the Coast Guard insisted on the retention of the staircases from the 1960s.

After some thought, it was suggested that Sabino be presented as a composite and that we honestly state that we had been selective in deciding which features we would keep. This composite would illustrate some of the changes that occurred over the years and would help to show how her operation has been made more efficient.¹⁵

¹¹Ibid.

- ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Ibid.

¹²"Morse Report."

PRESENT CONDITION AND APPEARANCE OF SABINO

As was the case throughout her career, her hull is painted white. As discussed above, the only major difference between Sabino's present appearance and her appearance in 1941, when her stack was raised in height, is the addition of two staircases required by Coast Guard regulations. As mentioned above, Sabino would be perfectly recognizable to those who knew her in service on the Damariscotta River in the early years of this century.

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____ B___ C<u>X</u>__ D____ Criteria Considerations B____ C___ D___ E___ F___ G____ (Exceptions): A NHL Criteria: NHL 1, 4 NHL Theme(s): XII-L: Business Shipping and Transportation XIV-B: Transportation Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures Areas of Significance: Period(s) of Significance Significant Dates 1908-1941 1908 Maritime History Architecture (Naval) 1908-1941 1908, 1927, 1941 1908-1941 1908 Transportation

Significant Person(s)s: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: H. Irving Adams, Builder

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

The earliest use of the steamboat in the United States was the adoption of steam for small passenger and cargo carrying vessels. Dating to the first decades of the 19th century, these craft in time dominated the American steam excursion fleet. One of two surviving members of the American "mosquito fleet," the unlicensed steamers that flitted around like mosquitoes on the inland waters of the United States, *Sabino* is the sole survivor of these small excursion steamers built on the Atlantic Coast. The other vessel, *Virginia V*, is the sole surviving Pacific Coast-built small excursion steamer. These two vessels alone represent a fleet that in June 1932 was documented at an astounding 260,983 vessels. The fact of their survival, and a contributing factor in their significance, is the fact that both continue in operation, keeping alive a tradition and a technology now vanished.

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

MOSQUITO FLEET: THE SMALL EXCURSION STEAMER IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1926, a treatise on American ship types noted that "there is in American waters a larger proportion of ships designed purely for pleasure or excursion purposes than anywhere else in the world.... " explaining that this was because of the large population centers at seaport cities such as New York or Philadelphia, on the shores of the lakes, such as Chicago or Detroit, or on the rivers, as was the case with St. Louis or Cincinnati.¹⁶ The excursion steamer, designed to transport large groups of people for leisurely trips for pleasure, occasionally to resorts or recreation centers, was one of the first adaptations of the steamship. Beginning in the mid-19th century, excursion steamers sprang up in large numbers on the eastern seaboard's bays and sounds, spreading to the Great Lakes and the Western Rivers in the decades that followed.

Built for protected waters, these steamers were not designed for the open ocean. Characterized by uniform qualities -- a maximum of open deck space, with a maximum number of decks on a minimum of draft and freeboard--the excursion steamers were constructed on long, wide shallow hulls with two or more deck levels above on a lightly constructed wooden superstructure.¹⁷ By the early 20th century, however, variations of the excursion steamer had developed on the various waterways--1) the lakes excursion steamer (as exemplified by the sternwheel steamers Ticonderoga, Columbia and Ste. Claire); 2) the river excursion steamer (as exemplified by the sidewheel steamers Delta Queen and Belle of Louisville; and 3) the bay and sound excursion steamer. The latter were usually the smallest, and the largest-numbered group. In June 1932, at the end of the heyday of the excursion era, the United States Department of Commerce registered 260,983 bay and sound excursion steamers, the so-called "mosquito fleet" of America.¹⁸

The term "mosquito fleet" originated on the west coast for these tiny single-ended, at times unlicensed vessels. Also known as "pointy enders," the terms were little used until after 1900. Once defined in the late 19th century, excursion steamer design changed little. Unlike the larger river and lake excursion steamers, many of the at times tiny bay and sound steamers were screw-propelled. In 1926, it was noted that "the excursion shipbuilding industry is not progressive," in large measure because the trade worked the vessels seasonally, and hence many had careers that spanned decades, long outlasting their

¹⁸The Marine Digest, September 3, 1932.

¹⁶A. C. Hardy, American Ship Types: A Review of the Work, Characteristics, and Construction of Ship Types Peculiar to the Waters of North American Continent. (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1927), p. 96.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 97.

oceangoing cousins.¹⁹ The small bay and sound steamers lasted longest, some for 50 years or more, while the river steamers lasted the shortest, averaging four to five years. This meant, on the average, that the excursion trade contained "a larger proportion of ships over 25 to 30 years of age than any other maritime trade."²⁰

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF SABINO

Built in 1908 at the Adams Shipyard in East Boothbay, Maine, as Tourist, the steamboat, first saw use on the Damariscotta River, carrying passengers and freight between small villages along its shores. This small, shallow draft vessel was ideally suited to Maine's often shoal conditions as her subsequent service on the Kennebec River and Casco Bay over a 50-year working life proved. Sabino was removed from service and laid up in 1958. Eventually she was donated to Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Connecticut, and carefully restored to active use in a meticulously documented five-year restoration program. She is the only extant, operating example of the little steamers which once serviced Maine's coastal communities and retains her original steam plant.

Sabino's ports of registry have been as follows:

1908-1911	Damariscotta, Maine
1911-1919	Waldoboro, Maine
1919-1922	Rockland, Maine
1922-1928	Bath, Maine
1928-1966	Portland, Maine
1966-1974	Gloucester, Maine
1974-present	New London, Connecticut

Sabino is an example of one of the less glamorous, but no less useful, "small steamers." The big coastwise steamers did not stop at the mouth of the Damariscotta, nor, in the second phase of Sabino's career on the Kennebec, did they make the long run up to Bath. The 1910 schedule for the Damariscotta Steamboat Company advertises connections with trains from New York and Boston. Mrs. Lillian Hale of Newcastle, Maine, recalls watching the steamers come to meet the trains during World War I. "I'd be standing on the wharf, seeing the boat come in with a big black trail of smoke."²¹ She recalls that on the voyage downriver, "she watched the shore all along."²² She was also present when *Tourist* had its one serious mishap, colliding with the bridge over the Damariscotta River. She had gone to meet her aunt who,

¹⁹Hardy, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁰Ibid., p. 96.

²¹Nicholas Dean, Interview with Lillian Hale, Newcastle, Maine, July 1991.

²²Ibid.

fortunately, was not on board. Local historian, Harold Castner wrote that on August 26, 1918, at "the top of the tide," *Tourist* attempted to dock at Damariscotta. The crew ashore was unable to secure the hawser and Captain Etheridge signalled for "reverse." "There was no response," and the deckhand rushed below to find the engineer had caught his arm in the machinery.

Things happened quickly then. The steamer piled up against the rocks and the swift current carried it out sidewise to the bridge, where the superstructure caught on the bridge. There was an awful moment when the hull began to curl over but with a great crashing and scraping, the steamer turned almost over but passed under the bridge and drifted to the Newcastle shore It was a miracle that all on board reached shore except the engineer Spear who perished by drowning.²³

At the time of the accident, Tourist was owned by Capt. "Business had begun to fall off due to the advent of Etheridge. automobiles," and the Damariscotta Steamboat Company sold off its fleet in 1917.²⁴ After repairs, Captain Etheridge sold Tourist Bath. In 1922, now renamed Sabino, she went into service on the Kennebec.²⁵ for operation on the run on the Kennebec River between Popham and

Steamboats like Sabino were both utilitarian and provided a great deal of pleasure for the communities they served. They carried both passengers and freight; "those were the days of excursions.... There was an excursion for every occasion...and if there was no occasion planned, one was easily made."²⁶ There There were were excursions to Bath to watch ship launchings. excursions upriver to "the famous Richmond and Dresden Camp Meeting Grounds, where hundreds of people gathered for hymn singing that could be heard 'the length and breadth of the Kennebec'".²⁷

²³Harold W. Castner Papers, Skidompha Library, Damariscotta, Maine, Book A-13, Section 2.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Robert W. Morse, "The Restoration/Reconstruction of the steamboat Sabino at the DuPont Preservation Shipyard, Mystic Seaport, 1974-1980," unpaginated typescript, hereafter cited as "Morse Report;" and Appendix 4: abstracts from List of Merchant Vessels of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908-75)

²⁶James Perkins and Jane Stevens, One Man's World: Popham Beach, Maine (Freeport, Bond Wheelwright Company, 1974), p. 80.

²⁷Ibid., p. 80.

The steamboat era was a particular phase of maritime history which will be remembered perhaps longer and with warmer recollections than any other phase, simply because it was an era that belonged to the $people...^{28}$

The same economic forces which drove steamboats off the Damariscotta, also operated on the Kennebec. In 1927, Sabino was sold to Capt. Harry Williams of Casco Bay Lines in Portland, Maine. At that time her sponsons were added and her hull given somewhat more overhang fore and aft, bringing her length overall (though not her registered length) to her present 57 feet, 3 inches.²⁹

Casco Bay presents a very different transportation picture than do either the Damariscotta or Kennebec rivers. While in the case of the later, improved roads made steamers redundant, there are a number of well-populated islands in Casco Bay, accessible by waterborne transport only. Although the bulk of traffic from Casco Bay Lines' terminal on Portland's waterfront was functional: passengers, freight, mail, and to the larger islands, automobiles; "excursion" traffic was still a significant aspect of the Line's operations. Sabino's career with the Line was uneventful. A promotional pamphlet published shortly after her retirement mentions that "during the past 148 years Casco Bay Lines has carried over 74 million passengers on a year-round basis! To date there has never been a fatal accident."³⁰

One of Sabino's last engineers was William Taylor, who ran her during the summer of 1957. In an interview Taylor concluded that "there's not much future in it [i.e., steamboating] today." However, he continued:

People come to Portland just to ride the Sabino because of her steam power.... Many say they prefer it to Diesel power because it is smoother. Some confess they go to sleep. And if it happens to be cold going down the bay, they like to move to the enclosed lower deck where the boilers provide warmth.³¹

Retired at the end of the 1958 season, Sabino lay idle at Custom House Wharf for three years, though her former "engine foreman

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹William Dunn, Casco Bay Steamboat Album (Camden, Maine: Down East Enterprise, 1969), p. 28.

³⁰Casco Bay Lines, Portland, Maine, promotional pamphlet, "The Casco Bay Islands, " n.d.

³¹Portland Press Herald, Portland, Maine, September 4, 1957.

[Walter Clark] went over the engine regularly."32 The State of Maine and the City of Portland turned down opportunities to purchase her for a token \$1.00. Eventually she was sold for \$500 to Capt. "Red" Slavit of Haverill, Massachusetts, who in turn sold her to the Corbin family.³³

Sabino was purchased in 1973 with museum funds and a gift from Mystic Seaport Museum trustee, John Deupree. A major restoration/rebuilding program began in 1975 and lasted through 1980.³⁴ A program of recording construction details "as found" was an integral part of the restoration. Measured drawings, completed by Robert Allyn,

serve as an important record of the data and features that indicated past structural changes in the vessel. In many cases, these details were either covered or destroyed in the rebuilding process due to the need for strength or for ventilation of closed areas.³⁵

The knowledge of early 20th-century steamboat construction gained in Sabino's extensive refurbishing is documented in the archives at the duPont Preservation Shipyard at the Museum.

As an operating museum vessel, Mystic Seaport Museum feels Sabino

should convey to the visitor a glimpse of a lifestyle which required the vessels for daily transportation.... The Seaport feels that much of the reality of a steamboat cannot be captured by a static exhibit because the principle actor in this drama is the steam The smell of hot lubrication oil, the engine.... clocklike sound and motion of the engine linkages, and the grating of the coal on the coal scoop as the engineer spreads the coal on the fire, all contribute to a fuller appreciation of a coal-fired steamboat.³⁶

The only working example of her kind, Sabino continues to steam using her original engine.

³²Dodge, et. al., *Steamboat Sabino*, p. 5.

³³"Morse Report," Introduction.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Mystic Seaport Museum data sheet, "Vital Statistics" (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, n.d.).

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James P. Delgado and Candace Clifford, eds., Inventory of Large Preserved Vessels (Washington: National Park Service, 1990).

Norman J. Brouwer, International Register of Historic Ships (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1985).

W. Bartlett Cram, Picture History of New England Passenger Vessels (Hampden Highlands, Maine: Burncoat Corporation, 1980).

David Dodge, Gainor Akin, and Maynard Bray, Steamboat Sabino (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1974).

List of Merchant Vessels of the United States (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908-1975).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- _____ Previously Listed in the National Register. (Ref. #79002671)
- 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
 - Other: Specify Repository:

Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one (1) acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 19 251790 4582860

Verbal Boundary Description:

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

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the entire area of the vessel as she floats at her berth

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Nicholas Dea	n	Date: September 1991
Street & Number: River Roa	d	Telephone: (207) 633-6235
City or Town: Edgecomb	State: ME	ZIP: 04556

Final form prepared by JCC, May 6, 1992, stored at WP51\nh1\sabino.nh1