



## NHL Executive Summary



**Name of Property:** *Ste. Claire* Passenger Steamship NHL (withdrawal of NHL designation)

**City, State:** Detroit, Michigan

**Period of Significance:** 1910-1941

**NHL Criteria:** 4

**NHL Theme:** II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements  
4. recreational activities  
VI. Expanding Science and Technology  
2. technological applications

**Previous Recognition:** 1979 – National Register listing

**National Historic Context:** XIV. Transportation  
B. Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures  
XVIII. Technology (Engineering and Invention)  
B. Transportation

### NHL Significance:

- *Ste. Claire* passenger steamship, along with her running mate *Columbia*, is one of the two remaining classic excursion steamers left in the United States and is one of the last two essentially unaltered passenger ships designed by Frank E. Kirby, one of the leading naval architects of the time.



- *Ste. Claire* and *Columbia* shared their original run from Detroit to Bob-Lo Island, a popular amusement park, for 81 years, a record of service on a single run unequalled in U.S. maritime history.
- The ship also has essentially unaltered propulsion machinery of a type which is becoming increasingly rare.

**Integrity:**

- *Ste. Claire* and her sister ship *Columbia*, were taken out of commission at the end of the 1991 season.
- In 2016, while moored in the Detroit River, restoration work was carried out on *Ste. Claire* by her current owner. A steel structure, considered an inappropriate alteration by preservationists, was added to the ship above the main deck, and there was partial destruction of the historic boilers. (The power plant was one of the nationally significant resources on the ship.)
- On July 6, 2018, the *Ste. Claire* caught fire during work by welders. For all practical purposes the vessel's wooden superstructure was completely destroyed, except for a very small section at the stern. The only thing standing above the main deck is the inappropriately added steel structure.
- This NHL has lost its historical integrity and the qualities which originally led it to be designated have been destroyed.

**Owner of Property:** Dr. Ron Kattoo, Detroit, Michigan

**Acreage of Property:** Less than one acre

**Origins of Nomination:** The fire on *Ste. Claire* was reported to the NHL Program days after the event by the author of the National Register nomination and the NHL nomination. NHL Program staff determined that a withdrawal of designation report should be considered.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** By withdrawing the NHL designation of this property which no longer meets the criteria for designation, the NPS will be demonstrating its willingness to maintain the integrity of the list of properties of exceptional national significance in the nation's history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** None known.

**Public Comments (received as of August 21, 2023):** None.

**Landmarks Committee Comments:**

- Committee had no substantive comments.

**Landmarks Committee Recommendation:**

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the withdrawal of the National Historic Landmark designation for *Ste. Claire* Passenger Steamship in Detroit, Michigan, because the property has lost its historical integrity and the qualities which originally led it to be designated as an NHL.

**Advisory Board Recommendation:** The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the withdrawal of the National Historic Landmark designation for *Ste. Claire* Passenger Steamship in Detroit, Michigan.