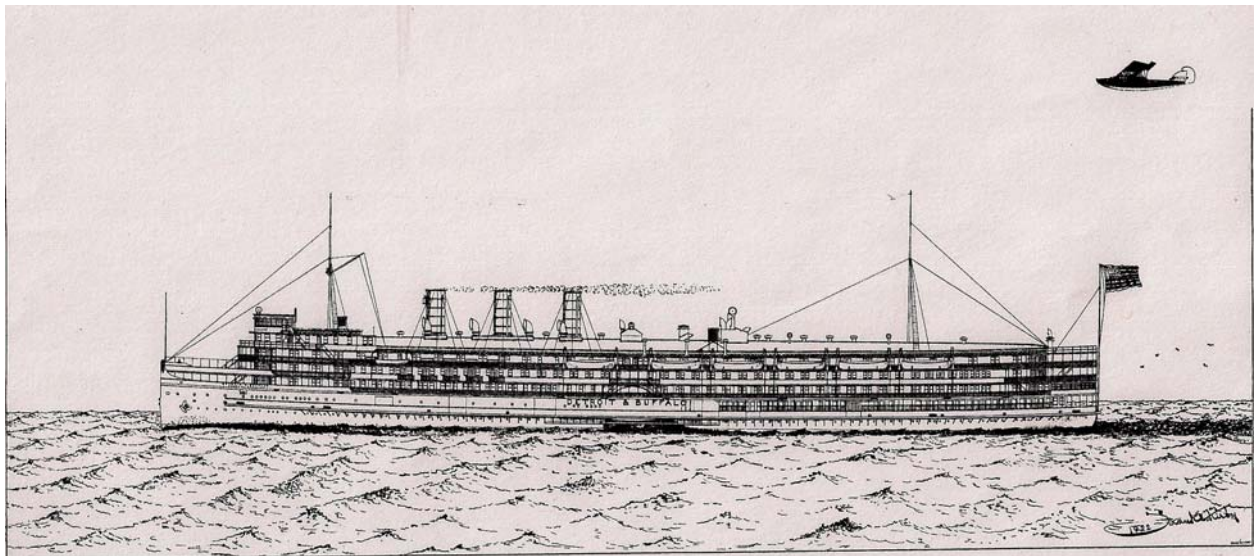


# THE S.S. GREATER DETROIT 1924 -1950 - THE FLAGSHIP OF THE DETROIT & CLEVELAND NAVIGATION COMPANY

The Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company was planning on expanding after World War I by providing more daily commercial traffic on Lake Erie between Buffalo, New York and Detroit, Michigan. The season on Lake Erie was limited due to the ice pack that covered the lake during the winter. With minor exceptions, the service to Cleveland, Ohio ran from April 1<sup>st</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>, while the overnight service to Buffalo, New York ran from May 1<sup>st</sup> to November 15<sup>st</sup>. The later start of the Buffalo run was due to the normal ice jam that existed on the east end of Lake Erie due to the constant wind from the west.

In 1922 the naval architect Frank E. Kirby provided the Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company with a architectural drawing for a massive side wheel steamer that would carry passengers and freight on the Buffalo to Detroit route. The plan called for the Detroit & Cleveland Navigation company to construct two vessels, the S.S. GREATER DETROIT and the S.S. GREATER BUFFALO which would provide continual service across Lake Erie. The length overall of the vessels was 536 feet and with the side paddle wheels the overall width of the vessel was ninety six feet.



The Steamer GREATER DETROIT, known as the “Leviathan of the Great Lakes” was scheduled to leave Detroit, Michigan daily at 5:30 P.M. on an overnight trip across Lake Erie and to arrive at the dock in Buffalo, New York at 8:00 A.M. The route called for the Steamer GREATER BUFFALO, known as the “Majestic of the Great Lakes” to leave Buffalo, New York at 6:00 P.M. and after transiting Lake Erie to arrive in Detroit, Michigan at 9:00 A.M.

Of note is that when Frank E. Kirby submitted this drawing of the proposed vessels he also was aware of the other upcoming competition that was beginning to show inroads into cross lake travel. The sea plane over the stern of the steamer started limited service in 1924 from Detroit to Cleveland.

The contract to construct these new side-wheeled steamboats was given to the American Shipbuilding Company in Lorain, Ohio. The hull of the GREATER DETROIT was launched on September 15, 1923.



The vessel was towed to Detroit, Michigan to the American Shipbuilding yard at the foot of Orleans and the Detroit River. It was there that the multiple wooden decks and ornate interior were added.

**Every Day in Every Way**—these great steamers, "Greater Detroit" (Leviathan of the Great Lakes) and "Greater Buffalo" (Majestic of the Great Lakes) are nearing the end of completion. They are the largest side-wheel steamers in the world—551 feet long—100 feet wide—costing \$7,000,000—and designed by Frank E. Kirby. Note the great number of workers busily engaged in the construction of these gigantic sister ships. The pilot house 20 ft. x 20 ft. being hoisted into position—as shown in illustration at the left—claims the distinction of being the largest that has ever been built completely ashore and hoisted into place. These beautiful steamers will prove a revelation in modernness and comfort to travelers of the Great Lakes.

**DETROIT & CLEVELAND NAVIGATION CO.**—Main Office, Detroit, Mich.  
A. A. Schantz, Pres. & Gen. Mgr. J. T. McMillan, Vice-Pres. R. G. Stoddard, G. P. A.

Printed in U. S. A.

It took almost a year to complete the vessel and the S.S. GREATER DETROIT entered the passenger and freight service the next summer and on August 29, 1924 she completed her maiden trip into Buffalo Harbor. The D & C Navigation Company was proud of their new addition to their fleet.

## STEAMER GREATER DETROIT.

**S**TEAMER *Greater Detroit* is the largest and most palatial steamer of its kind in the world, far exceeding in size, safety, comfort, speed and decorative effects anything heretofore attempted or accomplished in the construction of passenger steamers destined to sail on the inland waters of the United States. The Steamer *Greater Detroit* was the crowning effort of the Master Ship Designer, Frank E. Kirby, of Detroit, who has designed all the Side Wheel Steamers of the Great Lakes.

Each room has pressure water service and in addition to windows there is special ventilation of washed and cooled air and a vent to the outside air. As an indication of the great detail and care, all the water used in the vessel is sterilized by the Violet Ray System, and all drinking water all over the ship is carefully distilled. The De Luxe Parlors are the last word in Marine Architecture, and the palatial furnishings are rich and attractive and in good taste. The view from the large windows is enchanting. The hull is constructed entirely of steel, with double bottom divided into 16 water-tight compartments. The hold is divided into 11 water-tight compartments, thus insuring absolute safety. The steamer is so large that wave motion is scarcely felt, if at all.

The steamer carries every known device to insure the safety of passengers and crew. Steel hull, double bottom and water-tight compartments render this steamer practically unsinkable. Fifty per cent. more life-saving facilities than are required by the rules of the United States Government are supplied on this steamer, besides a watch patrol day and night. The boat is equipped with automatic fire alarm system, safety fire walls and a complete sprinkler system which includes every room on the boat, and is found on no other ship afloat. Fire and boat drills are held each week and daily inspection of all machinery.

The Buffalo-Detroit trip is one of unrivalled interest and scenic beauty. The trip down the island-crowded Detroit River and far into the lake is made during the daylight hours. On the American shore, the great City of Detroit stretches away as far as the eye can see, with glimpses of automobile factories carrying well-known names; old Fort Wayne and the shipyards. On the Canadian shore are restful rural scenes and a succession of interesting towns and villages.

Twilight on the lake possesses a magic all its own. Then a host of stars twinkle in the heavens and the waters reflect in the blue, diamond-studded vault above. A brisk walk on deck or a siesta in a great easy chair, with a cigar and congenial companions, makes the ride memorable for its friendly intimacy. Night falls, and then a large, comfortable stateroom welcomes the tired traveler.

The 1924 season saw good weather on the Great Lakes and allowed the D & C Navigation Company to operate their new sister ships until mid December.



Detroit, Mich., Dec. 18, 1924

TICKET AGENTS AND CONNECTING LINES:

The Operators of the two largest Steamers of their type in the world, the "Greater Detroit" and "Greater Buffalo" ask you to lay your work aside long enough to accept our Heartiest Wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a New Year of increased Prosperity and Happiness.

DETROIT & CLEVELAND NAVIGATION CO.  
General Office, Detroit, Mich.

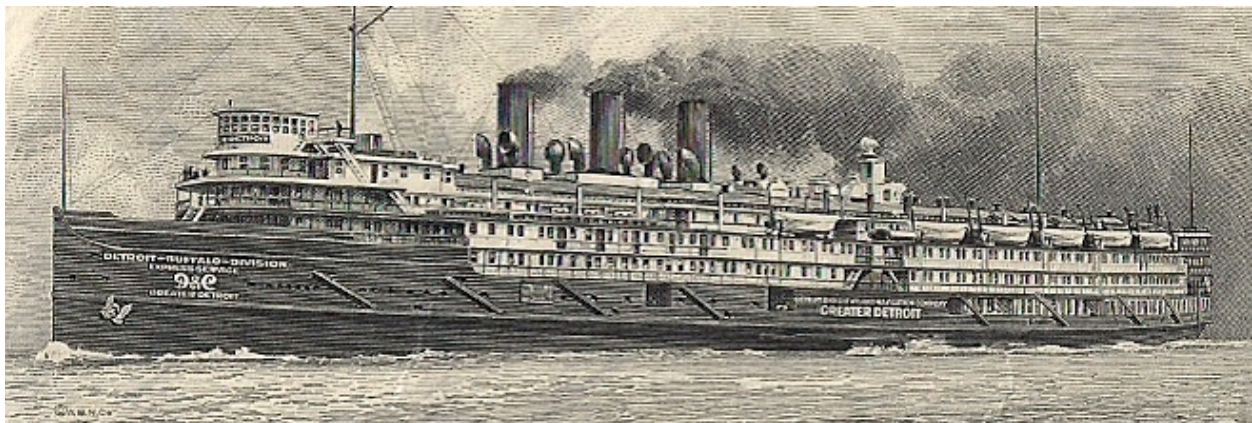
A. A. Schantz    Jas. T. McMillan    R. G. Stoddard  
Pres. & Gen. Mgr.    Vice-Pres.    Gen. Pass. Agt.

Printed in U. S. A.

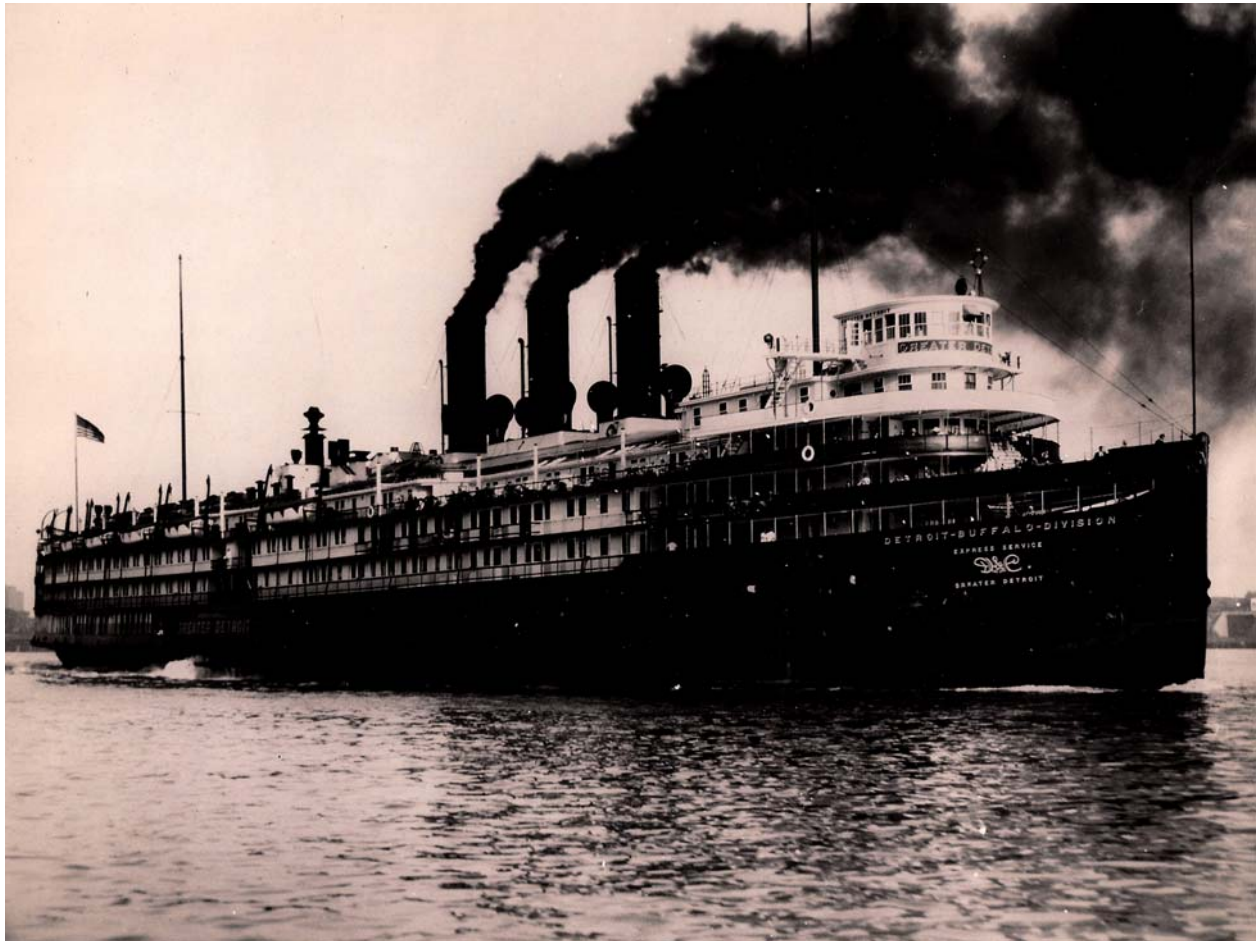


The Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company was so proud of the Steamer GREATER DETROIT that when they issued new stock certificates in 1925 the image of this vessel was engraved at the top of the certificates. The vessel could not only carry some 2,127 passengers, but provided 625 staterooms and made allowances for the storing of 103 automobiles on the main deck.

There were excellent accommodations provided for the passengers and the crew. In the pilothouse there was a separate steering wheel for the bow rudder to help navigate the narrow rivers and harbors. The bow rudder also helped when the steamer left the Detroit dock. At 5:30 P.M. the captain would ring the telegraph to the engine room and request the engineer to start the engines and to back away from the dock. Using the Detroit River current and the bow rudder the vessel would swing out into the current and turn around headed downriver to Lake Erie.



The GREATER DETROIT had a double bottom steel hull with sixteen water tight compartments. The gross tonnage was 7.739 and the vessel was powered by the largest Corliss type engine ever built and capable of speeds up to 21 knots.



For most of the years that the Steamer GREATER DETROIT spent in service her paint scheme was like the rest of the fleet, with white cabins and upper decks with a black hull. As the vessel departed the Detroit and Buffalo docks the smoke stacks put up a great cloud of billowing smoke. In this photograph of the vessel departing you can see the black smoke coming forward over the pilothouse. This is due to the fact that when she backed away from the dock the vessel was in reverse. So the smoke had the opportunity to come forward on the boat and make those standing on the forward deck head toward the stern unless they were willing to suffer a heavy coating of smoke. Later in life she was converted to an oil burning vessel which cut down on most of the thick smoke whenever she left the dock. In 1950 the vessel was painted all white to reflect the image that she was a clean boat, not a one that smoked.

**Vacation Days**  
 on the GREAT LAKES  
 Niagara Falls, Mackinac Island, St. Ignace  
 Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago ~

**TIME TABLE**  
**BUFFALO DIVISION**  
 Steamers Greater Detroit  
 and Greater Buffalo

Lv. Detroit daily	5:00 P.M.
Ar. Buffalo daily	8:00 A.M.
Lv. Buffalo daily	6:00 P.M.
Ar. Detroit daily	9:00 A.M.

**CLEVELAND DIVISION**  
 Steamers City of Detroit III and  
 City of Cleveland III

Lv. Detroit daily	11:30 P.M.
Ar. Cleveland daily	6:45 A.M.
Lv. Cleveland daily	11:30 P.M.
Ar. Detroit daily	6:45 A.M.

**CHICAGO DIVISION**  
 Steamers Western States and Eastern States

Lv. Detroit	Tue. Thur. Sat.	1:30 P.M., E.T.
Ar. Mackinac Isl.	Wed. Fri. Sun.	9:15 A.M., "
Lv. Mackinac Isl.	Wed. Fri. Sun.	9:45 A.M., "
Ar. St. Ignace	Wed. Fri. Sun.	10:15 A.M., E.T.
Lv. St. Ignace	Wed. Fri. Sun.	11:30 A.M., "
Ar. Mackinac Isl.	Wed. Fri. Sun.	12 Noon, E. T.
Lv. Mackinac Isl.	Wed. Fri. Sun.	12:30 P.M., "
Ar. Chicago	Thur. Sat. Mon.	9:00 A.M., "
Ar. Chicago	Thur. Sat. Mon.	8:00 A.M., C.T.
Lv. Chicago	Thur. Sat. Mon.	1:30 P.M., E.T.
Ar. Mackinac Isl.	Fri. Sun. Tue.	10:30 A.M., E.T.
Lv. Mackinac Isl.	Fri. Sun. Tue.	11:15 A.M., "
Ar. St. Ignace	Fri. Sun. Tue.	11:45 A.M., "
Lv. St. Ignace	Fri. Sun. Tue.	12:30 P.M., E.T.
Ar. Mackinac Isl.	Fri. Sun. Tue.	1:00 P.M., "
Lv. Mackinac Isl.	Fri. Sun. Tue.	1:30 P.M., "
Ar. Detroit	Sat. Mon. Wed.	8:00 A.M., "

Denotes Chicago Daylight Saving Time

The 1930 route for the Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company saw their vessels servicing the ports of the lower Great Lakes. At 96 feet wide the GREATER DETROIT and other side wheelers could not pass through the Sault Ste. Marie Canal into Lake Superior nor the Welland Canal into Lake Ontario.

*Sail the Great Lakes  
with the Grand Fleet*



1936



*The  
Grand Fleet  
of the  
Great Lakes*



**DETROIT · CLEVELAND  
BUFFALO · NIAGARA FALLS  
MACKINAC ISLAND  
ST. IGNACE  
CHICAGO**

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

*Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Co.*

Even with the Depression of the 1930's, it was possible for the Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company to run daily routes to the major ports on the Great Lakes.

# THE FLAGSHIP

One of the newest vessels of the D. & C. Grand Fleet is the S.S. Greater Detroit, shown here. With her sister ship, the Greater Buffalo, she crosses Lake Erie between Detroit and Buffalo. Each of these vessels cost \$3,500,000 to build. They are the largest steamships on inland waters. Each has sleeping accommodations for 1,700 passengers and a crew of 275 officers and men.



In 1936 the Grand Fleet was comprised of the GREATER DETROIT and the GREATER BUFFALO, the CITY OF DETROIT III, the CITY OF CLEVELAND III, the EASTERN STATES and the WESTERN STATES. The GREATER DETROIT was considered the 'Flagship of the Fleet'.





## GOOD FOOD FOR TALL APPETITES



A dinner menu on a vessel of the Grand Fleet is made to order for appetities sharpened by brisk lake breezes. Fish fresh from the cold depths of the Great Lakes themselves—broiled, baked or fried the way you like them—are a daily dinner specialty in D. & C. dining rooms. Always a wide choice to delight every taste. And to start the day right, a la carte breakfasts at attractive prices. A before-bedtime snack—a tasty sandwich in several combinations with coffee, tea or your favorite beer—may be purchased for as little as twenty-five cents. Choice liquors are served at economical prices.



*Four o'clock in the afternoon is tea time on board D. & C. cruise ships of the Chicago Division, and the social hall becomes a popular meeting place.*

*Your enjoyment of appetizing meals is increased by attractive surroundings in the spacious dining rooms of the D. & C. fleet.*



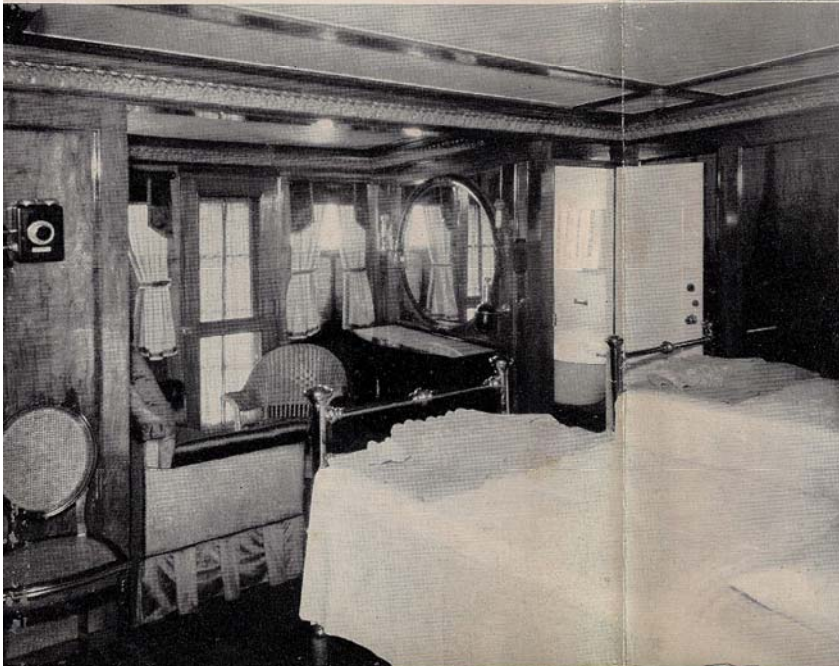
The GREATER DETROIT and the GREATER BUFFALO had a dining room capacity of 375 patrons.

## D & C "HOTELS AFLOAT" AFFORD EVERY

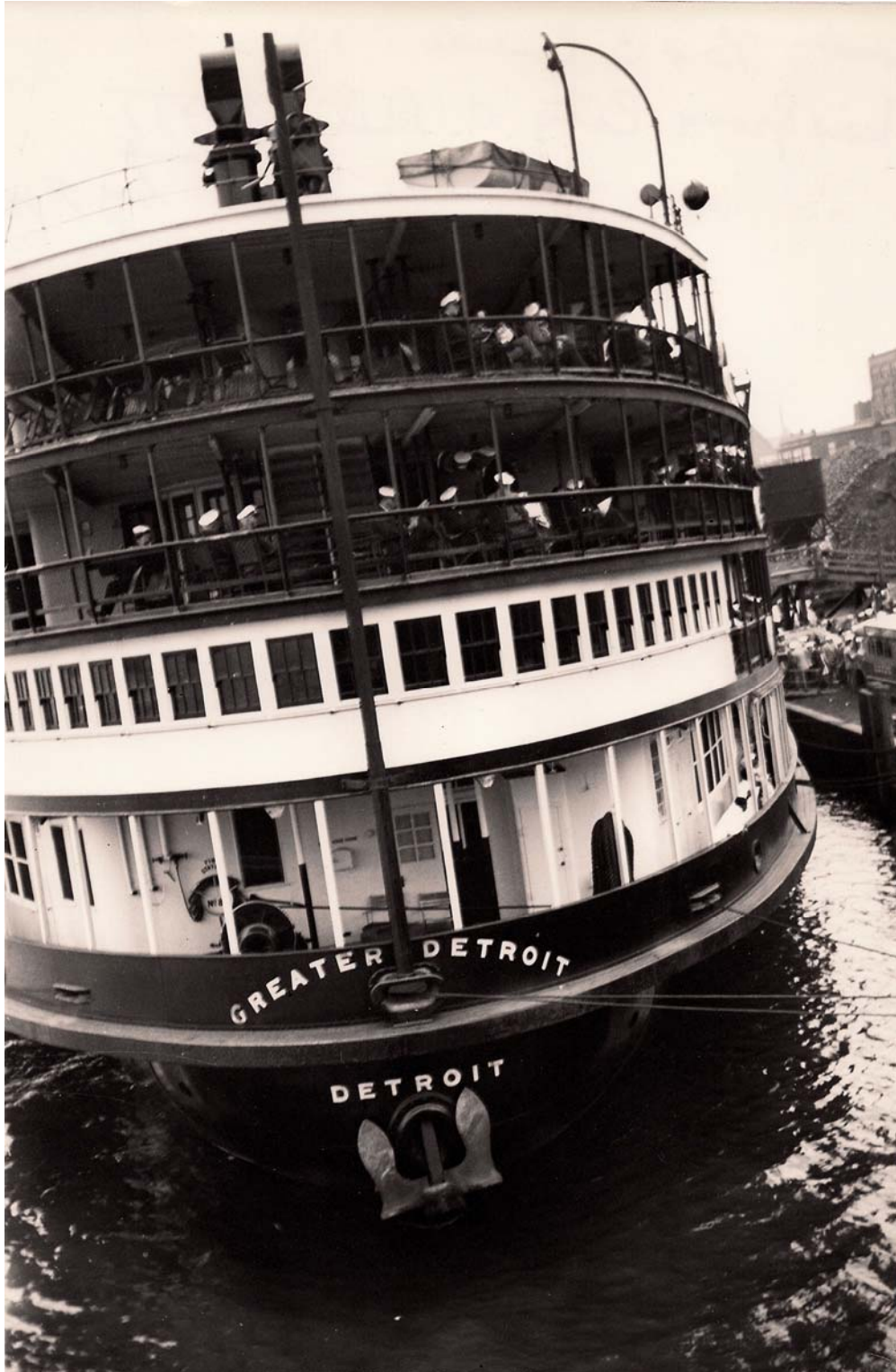
There is an air of hospitality about the steamships of the Grand Fleet. You feel it the moment you cross a D. & C. gangplank. The purser who hands you your key, the bellboy who takes you to your stateroom, the head waiter in the dining room—all have a way of making you feel at home. And this first impression of courteous, friendly service deepens with every hour on board. Staterooms and parlors on D. & C. ships are completely furnished and equipped for your convenience. The free circulation of fresh lake breezes aids sound, restful sleep.



*(Above) Roomy stateroom berths with good mattresses and springs add to the comfort of passengers on D. & C. steamships. (Left) From this typical parlor with twin beds, you step through an outside screened door on to a private, covered deck veranda.*



The GREATER DETROIT and the GREATER BUFFALO had 625 staterooms of which there were a number of berths, state rooms and parlors. The most expensive accommodation was \$15.00 and it included twin beds, a couch, toilet, shower and bath tub and an outside veranda.



The GREATER DETROIT was painted all white for the 1950 season and in December was laid up at the D & C dock at the foot of Third Street in Detroit. On May 9, 1951 the D & C Company announced the suspension of service on the Great Lakes. The D & C fleet sat at the dock waiting for the end.



The GREATER DETROIT and the EASTERN STATES were idle from 1951 to 1956. Near the end the public was invited on board to purchase whatever they wanted – serving pieces from the dining room, carpets and runners from the halls, chairs, bedding, and even the murals that graced the staircases.

The bow anchor was lowered to keep the GREATER DETROIT from drifting, and when it came time to burn the vessels there was no steam on board to raise the anchor. The chain was cut and the anchor has laid on the bottom of the Detroit River for the past fifty seven years.



The GREATER DETROIT and the EASTERN STATES were burned on Lake St. Clair in December 1956.