On a chart of Lake Erie, one of the most prominent features is the string of islands which extends across the westerly region of the lake. Most of these islands lie along and around a line extending roughly from Sandusky, Ohio, on the south shore, toward Kingsville, Ontario, on the north. The largest of these outcroppings of land is Pelee Island, which lies some 8½ miles south-westerly from the tip of Point Pelee and which, apart from tiny Middle Island, which lies not far off the southerly tip of Pelee Island, is the southernmost point in Canada. Middle Island lies just barely to the north of the International Boundary.

Pelee Island itself is some 8 3/4 miles in extreme length between the most northerly and southerly points, and its greatest width is three miles near the south end of the island. Pelee Passage, the main shipping channel, runs between Pelee Island and Point Pelee, and is marked by Pelee Passage Light.

Pelee Island, named by the French explorers, was inhabited by native peoples for many years,and was leased from them in 1788 by Thomas McKee. William McCormick purchased the island for $500 in 1823, and his descendants later sold off sections of the island. Today, Pelee Island has a substantial per-manent community and plays host to a large number of tourists and cottagers during the summer months. Soybeans are grown in large quantities on the Is-land, as is corn, but in recent years the Island has established itself as a major area of grape growing. One would hardly associate the soil of a low-lying island with that of the world's famous wine-producing regions which have soil that is stony, hilly and well-drained, such that "only a grape could love", but regardless, Pelee Island is now one of Canada's respected wine regions.

Various lake vessels called at Pelee Island over the early years, but the first regular ferry service, running from the Canadian mainland to the Is-land and then on to Sandusky, reportedly began about 1861 with the steamer MONARCH, about which we have no details. The small sidewheeler VALLEY CITY, owned by David McCormick, son of William, took over the route in 1867. The only VALLEY CITY of which we are aware was a 90-foot boat built at Hamilton in 1859 and, according to the "Mills List", broken up in 1869.

In the years that followed and into the first years of the twentieth centu-ry, a succession of steamers ran the ferry route to Pelee Island, often from Leamington and Kingsville, but also from Windsor and Amherstburg. In 1909, a group which included a number of Pelee Islanders formed a stock company which was incorporated as The Pelee & Lake Erie Navigation Co. Ltd., Pelee Island. The company in 1910 acquired the wooden-hulled steamer SAUGATUCK (U.S.116149) which had been built by John B. Martel in 1887 at Saugatuck, Michigan, and was registered at Grand Haven. The United States register lis-ted her as 110.0 x 22.2 x 8.6, 228 Gross Tons and 147 Net, with Indicated Horsepower of 150.

Brought onto the Canadian register as C.126193 enrolled at Windsor, this steamer was renamed (b) ALFRED CLARKE for her new duties, her name honouring the federal Member of Parliament for South Essex. The Dominion register showed exactly the same dimensions for the CLARKE as had the U.S. list, but her tonnage was recorded as 229 Gross and 148 Net, and her horsepower as 10. The CLARKE operated very successfully, but she proved too small and slow for the run, and in 1913 the P.&L.E.N.Co. (soon to be reorganized as the Windsor & Pelee Island Steamship Co. Ltd.) let to the Collingwood Shipbuilding Com-pany Ltd. a contract for a new, steel-hulled steamer for the Island service. The new vessel was ready in 1914, and the ALFRED CLARKE was sold back into U.S. registry that year, taking up her old name as (c) SAUGATUCK. She lasted until abandoned due to age in 1930.

"The Collingwood Bulletin" of Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25, 1913, reported: "NEW PASSENGER STEAMER AFLOAT. At the yards of the Collingwood Shipbuilding Co. on Saturday afternoon (December 20) the new steel vessel