Cruise christens riverboat season

"I liked it when we passed the big freighter!" exclaimed Eric Burr, 9, of Botsford Elementary, when asked what he liked beat labout his recent boat ride on the Detroit River.

On Friday 60 students from the classes of Pat Piel and Mariann Keach at Botsford boarded the Els-foot tour boat "Diamond Belle." one of the two former Mackinne Island ferries now oper-setting as Diamond Jack's River Tours.

Botsford Elementary is part of Clarenceville School District, which includes southeast Farmlington Hills.

The classes have been studying

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The classes have been studying the state of Michigan, and their trip last week offered a new perspective to transportation, an up-coming unit, as the Detroit River is one of the busiest commercial waterways in the world.

A distinction for the Botsford students was being the first school group on board the boat for the 1994 season.

As the Diamond Belle pulled away from the dock at Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit and began its up-bound trip, many students headed for the open-air third.

headed for the deck.

The skies were sunny and clear, but there also was a crisp spring wind out on the water, which sent many of the fourth-grade sallors

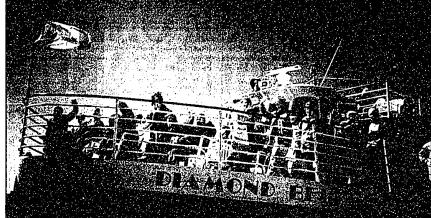
A short blast of the whistle while passing under the McArthur Bridge, which connects the mainland to Belle Isle, caused lots of jumps and shouts. Diamond Jacks River Tours crew member Steve Carrothers presented the tour narration, which pointed our historical information about Detroit, Windsor, Lake St. Clair and Belle Isle.

The young passengers also learned nautical terms, while seeing parts of southeastern Michigan and Canada from a whole new perspective.

There was an exciting moment for the Botsford sailors when the giant 1,000-foot-long freighter "Oglelay Norton" silently glided by the "Diamond Belle" and the captain stepped out onto the bridge to wave to the students.

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Captain Bill Hoey, founder and owner of Diamond Jack's River Tours, kept the boat close to the shorelines so that the students could see the river sights, while included railroad barges and tugs that cross between Windsor, Canada, and Detruit, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on Belle



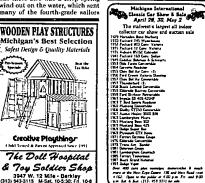
First to go: Botsford Elementary was the first school group this season to take a tour aboard the Diamond Belle.

Isle, with its famous wheelhouse on the river and Peche Island, a totally uninhabited island just north of Belle Isle. Another highlight for the group was gliding under the Ambassa-

dor Bridge. Craning their necks to look up, the students saw trucks and cars that looked like toys passing above them. More favorites were cited as the Diamond Belle made her leisurely

turn-around for the up-bound trip back to the dock. "I like all the bonts," said Rachanda Jones, 10. Heather Ringrose, also 10, loved going under the bridges, and Sar-ah Kearfott thought seeing the

Oglebay Norton was the best. And what was Mike Moore, 36, chaperon, who sat on the upper deck with his son, enjoying the most? "My favorite part is going downriver, out of the wind!"



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