

The ship originally had only one mast, an exceedingly tall and heavily-raked pole stepped just abaft the pilothouse. At first, auxiliary sail was carried on this mast, and hence it was fitted with a prominent gaff and also with ratlines, the latter to allow the crew to climb the spar to work the sail. By the mid-Nineties, however, a second mast had been added about half-way down the deck, this new mast being much shorter and lighter.

The crew were accommodated in a large cabin located on the upper deck abaft the texas, and a centred catwalk ran from the bridge deck to the roof of the crew's cabin. Two sidepoles, apparently intended only for the display of festive bunting, were set at the after end of the crew's house, one at either corner. Behind the deckhouse was a large expanse of open deck, on which cargo sometimes was stacked. At least one of the five sisters, the JAMES R. LANGDON, is shown in a later photograph to have been given an additional small, windowless deckhouse in this area, perhaps to accommodate refrigerated (iced) cargo of a perishable nature, but we have no photographic evidence that the McVITTIE ever was so fitted.

Aft, there was a metal boilerhouse with a domed roof, and close behind this was the after accommodations cabin which, like the crew's house up the deck, had a large skylight in its roof to admit daylight. A tall jackstaff was set at the far aft end of this cabin, raked heavily to match the mast. The tall and rather heavy smokestack rose out of a collar and apron through the boilerhouse roof, the large steam whistle carried fairly far down the front of the stack. There was a large ventilator cowl on either side of the stack which, like the shuttered ports in the front of the boilerhouse, were designed to provide fresh air to the stygian conditions in the boiler room. Bunker coal appears to have been loaded through the sideports onto the main deck rather than through a hatch in the upper deck.

The drawing of the McVITTIE which appears in the builder's book shows that originally she carried her lifeboats atop a small overhang on either side of the boilerhouse roof, but this seems to have been changed within a very few years, probably in appreciation of the danger of fire in that area. The platforms were then removed to a position on either side of the aft deckhouse, and the lifeboats were relocated there.

If any of our readers think that we are going to have an easy time describing the livery worn by the McVITTIE, they may think again and pity the poor Editor in his job. We will do the best we can, but please forgive us if the description seems to be confusing.

In the early years, the McVITTIE had a dark hull, which we believe to have been black, with a grey boot-top and white trim on the top section of the upper deck bulwark. The large letters 'O.T.Co.' appeared in white on the black section of the closed rail, and below this, in smaller white letters, appeared the legend 'Central Vermont Line'. The ship's name was done in barely legible letters (gold, perhaps?) on the white section of the forward rail.

The big problem comes in describing the way the cabins were painted. We have two photographs of F. H. PRINCE at Port Dalhousie, taken on July 3rd and 4th, 1896, and they show her with dark cabins, perhaps dark grey or maybe even a dark yellow or light brown. Our best photo of the A. McVITTIE at this stage of her career shows her in these same colours. Moored just behind her can be seen the schooner-barge SAMUEL P. ELY. The ELY was lost in 1896, so we know that the photograph was taken in 1896 at the very latest. Another view taken during the summer of 1896 shows GOV. SMITH waiting in Port Dalhousie Harbour for upbound canal passage, but that photo shows her with her cabins all painted white!

How so the white cabins on the SMITH? And were her deckhouses just freshly painted that way, or were they originally that way and not yet painted dark to look the way the PRINCE and the McVITTIE did? A quandary, indeed...