

all were built for the ship in 1893 by the Cleveland Shipbuilding Company.

The ALVA was a very handsome steamer indeed, considering that she was built only seven years into the era of steel shipbuilding on the Great Lakes. (The first steel-hulled laker was the steamer SPOKANE, built in 1886 by the Globe Iron Works at Cleveland.) ALVA had a straight stem and a fairly "heavy" counter stern, with a pleasant but not greatly accentuated sheer to her decks. She had a full topgallant forecastle and a flush quarterdeck. Her stockless anchors were suspended from hawseholes set into the bows very close to the stempost and rather high above the loaded waterline.

It should be noted that ALVA was the very first vessel on the Great Lakes ever to be equipped with stockless anchors. Other ships of the period had stocked anchors, which had a stock affixed through the top of the anchor's shank and at right-angles to the set of the flukes, thus making over-the-side stowage next to impossible. Such anchors had to be carried up on the forecastle, wasting valuable deck space, and when it was necessary to use an anchor, it had to be lifted by means of tackle rigged on a davit, whereas the stockless anchor could be dropped entirely by gravity-fall, simply through the unwinding on the anchor windlass of the heavy anchor chain, which ran up out of the chain locker, around the windlass, and down a hawse-pipe to the side of the ship near the stem.

Like many other bulk carriers and package freighters built at this time, the ALVA had her bridge structure set back off the forecastle head and abaft the first hatch. Although there was an open steel rail around the forecastle head, a closed steel bulwark ran back down the spar deck from the break of the forecastle to the after end of the bridge structure in order to provide protection from boarding seas. The lowest level of the forward deckhouse was a squarish cabin with big windows across its front. It would have provided quarters for the senior deck officers and, we suspect, judging from the large windows, a well-appointed suite for the use of the owners.

The roof of this cabin extended out to the sides of the ship, to form a set of lower bridgewings. At the forward end, it was connected to the fore-castle head by means of two narrow catwalks or "bridges", one near either side, which were in place when the ship was in operation, to give easy and dry access to the forecastle head, but which could be lifted away easily when the vessel was in port, so that loading and unloading rigs would have unobstructed access to the steamer's Number One Hatch.

Set at this same upper level was the small texas cabin, which contained the sleeping quarters and office of the ALVA's master, its roof extended out to the ship's sides in the form of "flying" bridgewings. Forward of the texas was a rather large and squarish pilothouse, which was raised three steps above the bridge deck, a small walkway (with open rail) running around the front of the house. There were four large, sectioned windows in the front of the pilothouse, and if one looked at these windows from close on to broad-side, it could be seen that they arched in the centre rather noticeably, to reflect the extreme camber of the ALVA's decks.

Atop the pilothouse, on the monkey's island, was located an open navigation bridge, as was the custom of the day. It was not then considered proper for a navigating officer to do his job from within a comfortable pilothouse. Rather, he should stand where he had a better view of everything around him, albeit exposed to every vagary of the elements. (It was not unknown for a steamer's master to have to stand, half-frozen, in a barrel of straw on the open bridge, while the wheelsman, to whom he shouted helm commands via a "cussing box", enjoyed the relative comfort of the steam-heated pilothouse below.) To provide rudimentary shelter for the navigation officers, a closed rail was fitted as a "dodger" around the open bridge, with a canvas weather-cloth hung above it, and a big awning to provide shade could be carried on stretcher poles overhead, hung in the centre on a line from the forestay.