

The wheelsman would steer the ship with the assistance of a vertical steering pole set right at the stem of the boat, and to improve visibility, there was a brightly decorated ball on the pole. The foremast rose up out of the texas cabin abaft the pilothouse, and it was a very heavy pole mast, raked at quite an angle. The mast was fairly short by the standards of the day, and it was surmounted by a decorative ball atop a pin.

About three-quarters of the way down the deck was a small "doghouse" - a cabin to provide additional crew space. The steamer's mainmast rose up out of this deckhouse; it was as heavy a spar as the foremast, no taller, and was raked at a matching angle. In later years, when ALVA was fitted with a wireless radiotelegraphy set, the antenna wires were strung up between the two masts.

Right aft, sheltered by a closed steel taffrail around the stern, was located the large after deckhouse and in front of it was a separate steel boilerhouse. The coal bunker was set into the forward part of the boilerhouse, and there was a low wooden rail around the bunker hatch above to keep the coal in place. The tall and well proportioned smokestack rose up from a low apron set not far abaft the bunker hatch, with several small ventilator cowls near its base. The lifeboats were carried on the hurricane deck atop the cabin, set on the rather prominent overhang which ran all around the accommodations house and out over the fantail. The lifeboats were worked with davits of the radial type.

A close look at early photographs of ALVA will show something very unusual about the aft end of the steamer's boat or hurricane deck. Her jackstaff would normally be carried right aft on that deck, but instead it was further forward, set at the after end of the cabin skylight. Far aft was a single radial davit, and if one looks beneath it, one will see a very large, stocked anchor lying on deck, one of its flukes protruding upward about half as high as the davit. Many lake steamers carried stern anchors, but we never (to the best of our knowledge) have seen another steel-hulled ship with this sort of stern anchor arrangement. The anchor seems to have disappeared completely in later years when the big cabin roof overhang around the stern was removed, as it was on many steamers as a safety precaution following a number of unhappy experiences suffered in the Great Storm of November, 1913.

As a consequence of the ALVA being built as a combination bulk and package freighter, she not only required hatches in her spar deck (with matching openings below in the 'tween deck), but she also was fitted with cargo ports in her sides for the easy movement of general cargo. There were four ports in each side of the ship, one astride the bridge structure, two between the bridge and the doghouse, and one between the doghouse and the boilerhouse. In package freighters built years later, cargo ports were secured by means of heavy, hinged doors which were swung shut and dogged from inside, but ALVA had much more rudimentary gear. Each of her ports was covered by a heavy, single-piece steel plate, which was opened with the aid of steel chains attached to the outer side of the "door". The chains were attached to a hoisting post some ten feet high, curved at the top and mounted on deck immediately above the port, and by the use of this gear, the port cover could be cranked "manually" up to deck level.

ALVA carried this cumbersome cargo port system right through to the very end of her days, and we never will know why more modern, hinged doors were not fitted in later years. She also carried a rather labour-intensive mechanism inside her hold to hoist package freight that was stowed in the lower hold below the 'tween deck. She was not fitted with a cargo elevator, but rather had a shaft which ran down the full length of one side of the hold just below the main deck. This shaft was turned by means of steam, and gear rigged on the shaft was used to hoist the cargo.

We do not have a photograph of the ALVA in Bradley colours, but we do know