

PRISCILLA ALDEN

An impressive vessel that gave Alden publicity early in his career is the large, three-masted schooner *Priscilla Alden*, design number 88, originally intended as a cargo carrier. Built by Frank C. Adams of East Boothbay, Maine, she was completed in 1919, not quite in time to meet the demand for tonnage that existed during World War I. Clifford Swaine writes that she was built on a cost-plus-23-percent basis. Her dimensions are 154 feet 6 inches, by 134 feet 4 inches, by 33 feet 4 inches, by 12 feet 6 inches, and her plans indicate that she could carry "700 tons dead weight."

It was mentioned in Chapter 3 that the three-master was christened by the owner's daughter, Priscilla Alden Dennett. Actually, there were 13 owners, and shares were divided into 64ths, with the designer himself owning four shares. Of course, the schooner's name was also that of the famous Pilgrim, who was an ancestor of the designer, which brings us full circle. In 1923, after commercial sail had become less profitable, the *Priscilla Alden* was converted to a yacht, and her name was changed to *Rocinante*. It was stated in E.J. Schoettle's book, *Sailing Craft*, that she embarked on a round-the-world cruise, but there was no indication of whether or not she completed the circumnavigation. She was sold to the Russian government in 1929.

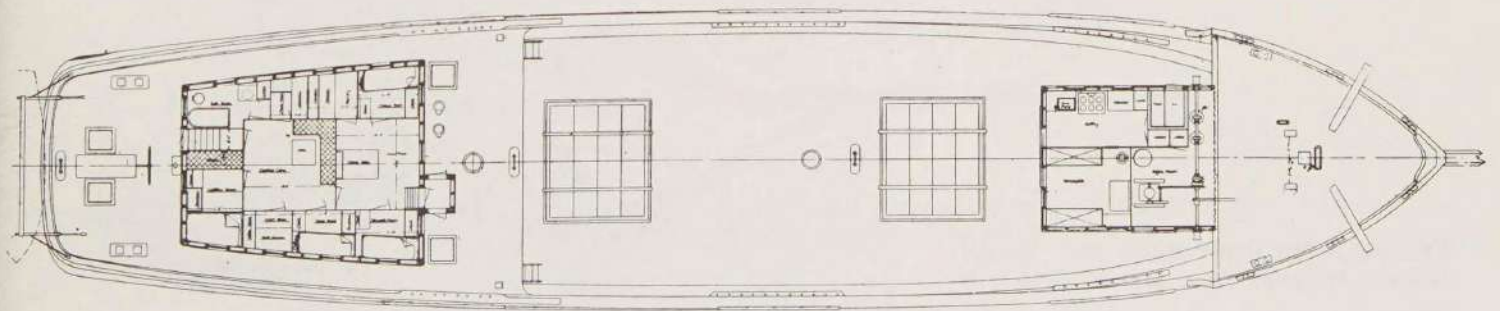
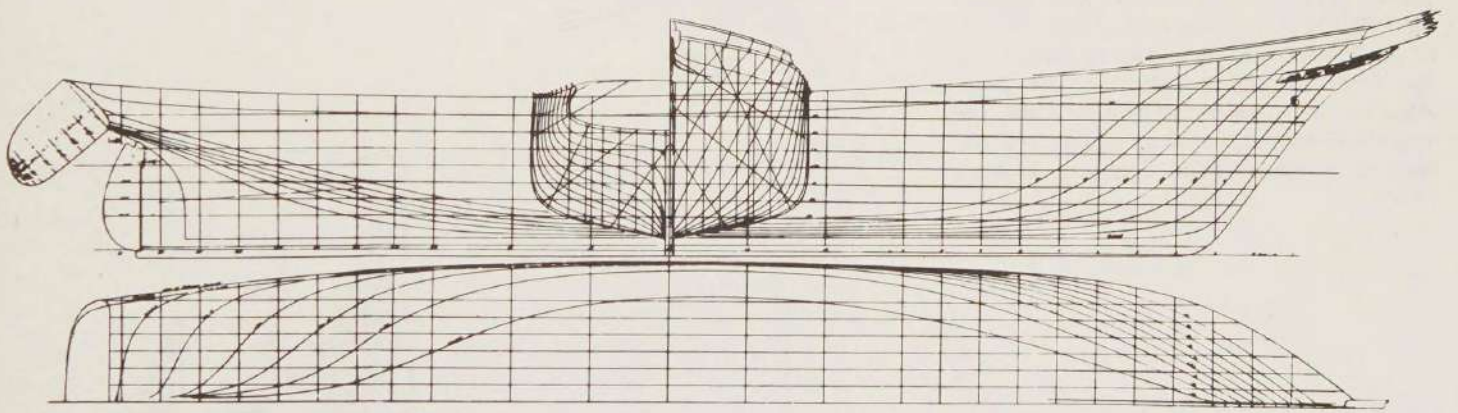
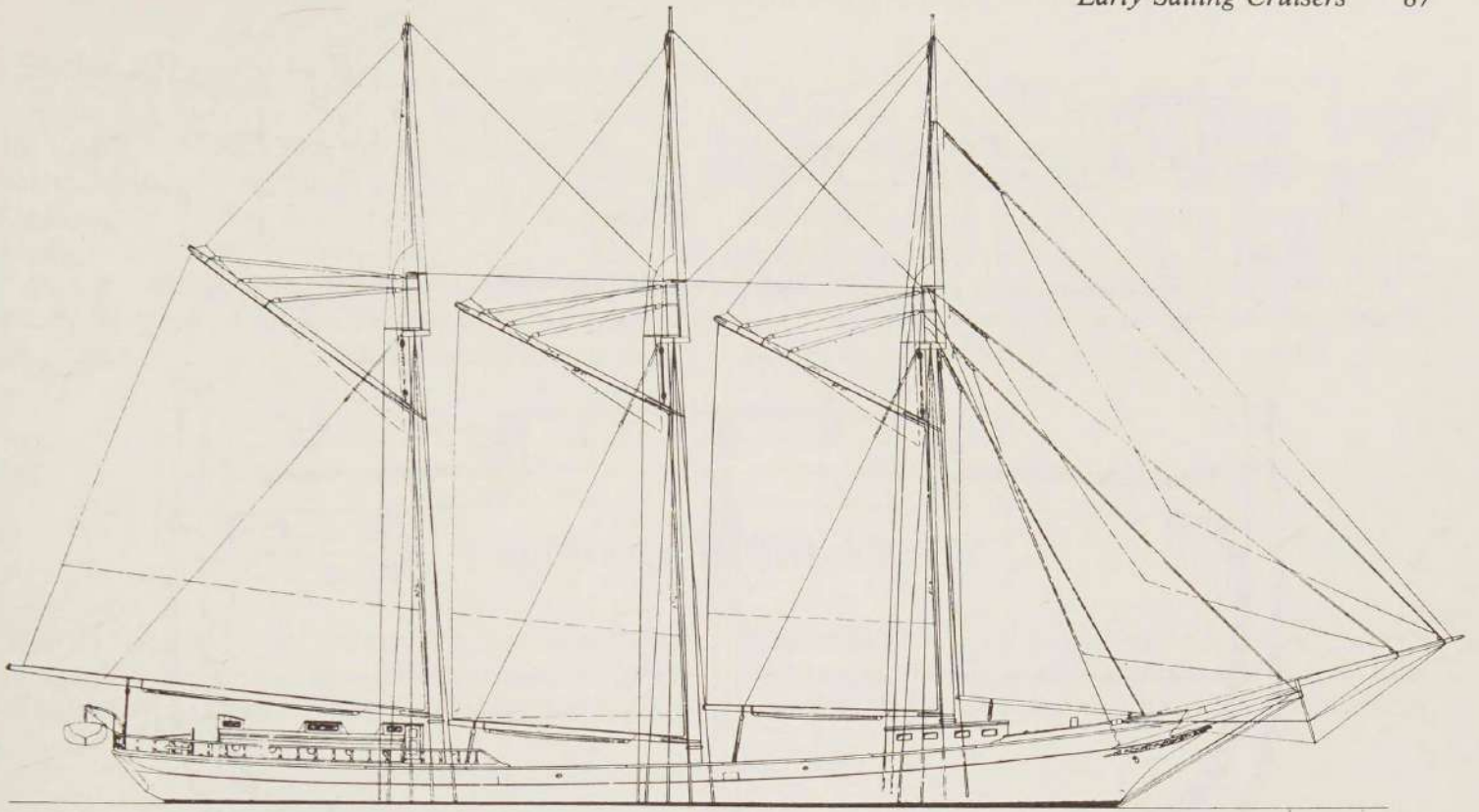
The plans presented here are the original ones, so most of the hull's interior consists of cargo holds. Nevertheless, there are adequate accommodations in the forward and after deckhouses for the crew needed to handle the vessel. Aft, there are four staterooms, a large bathroom with tub, a saloon with transoms and table, and numerous lockers; the forward deckhouse contains the galley, a fo'c's'le, and housing for a large windlass, which would handle the ground tackle and other heavy gear.

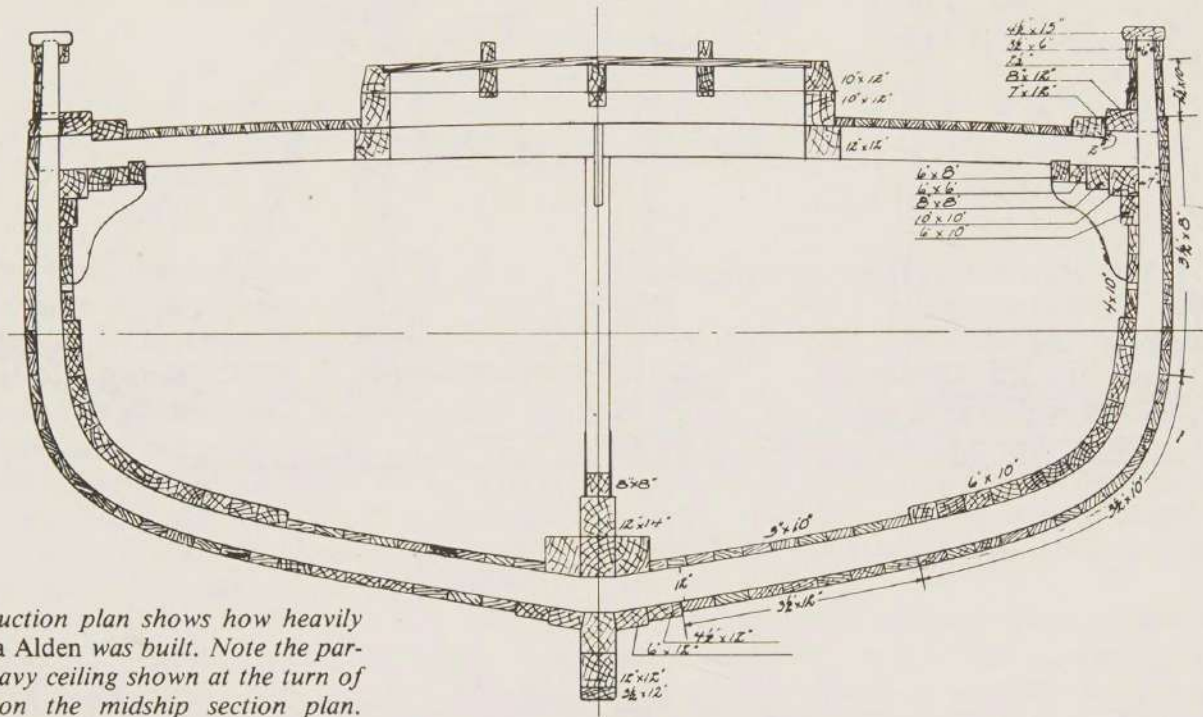
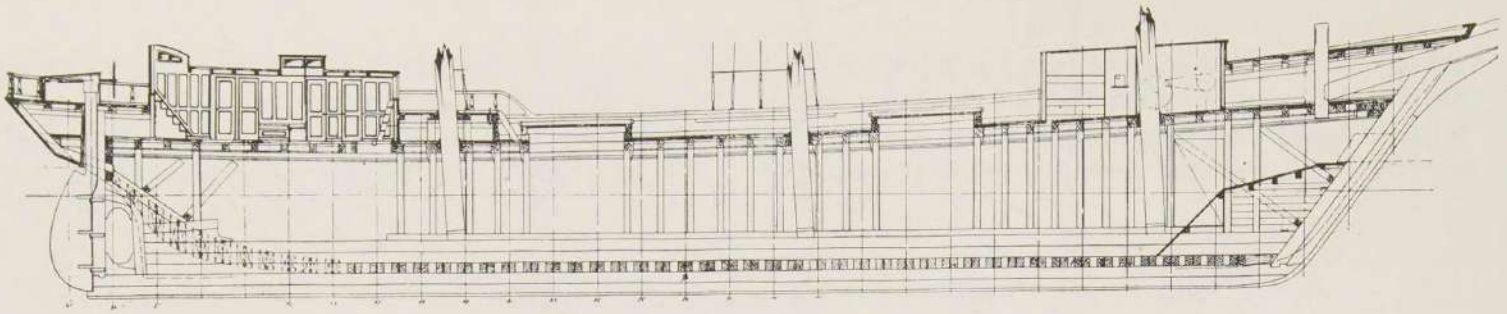
The three-masted schooner rig was chosen, of course, to divide the sail area in such a way that the boat could be handled efficiently by a small crew. No one sail is exceedingly large, considering the size of the vessel, and the rig offers great versatility in achieving good balance in all kinds of weather. Furthermore, the main and foresail booms are convenient to the cargo hatches. A snug sail combination for heavy weather might be the mainsail, foresail, and jumbo.

Like most cargo schooners, *Priscilla Alden* has an exceptionally long, straight keel, which balances her longitudinally spread-out rig and holds her on a steady course. I would not care to sail her in restricted waters or attempt to beat off a lee shore in a blow, for she must be slow in stays with her lack of keel drag, her deep forefoot, and her small rudder. Some sailing cargo-carriers have auxiliary power for the hard chance and for windless passages, but the Alden schooner had no engine until she was converted to a yacht in 1923. Originally, she probably used a yawl boat for auxiliary power in light airs.

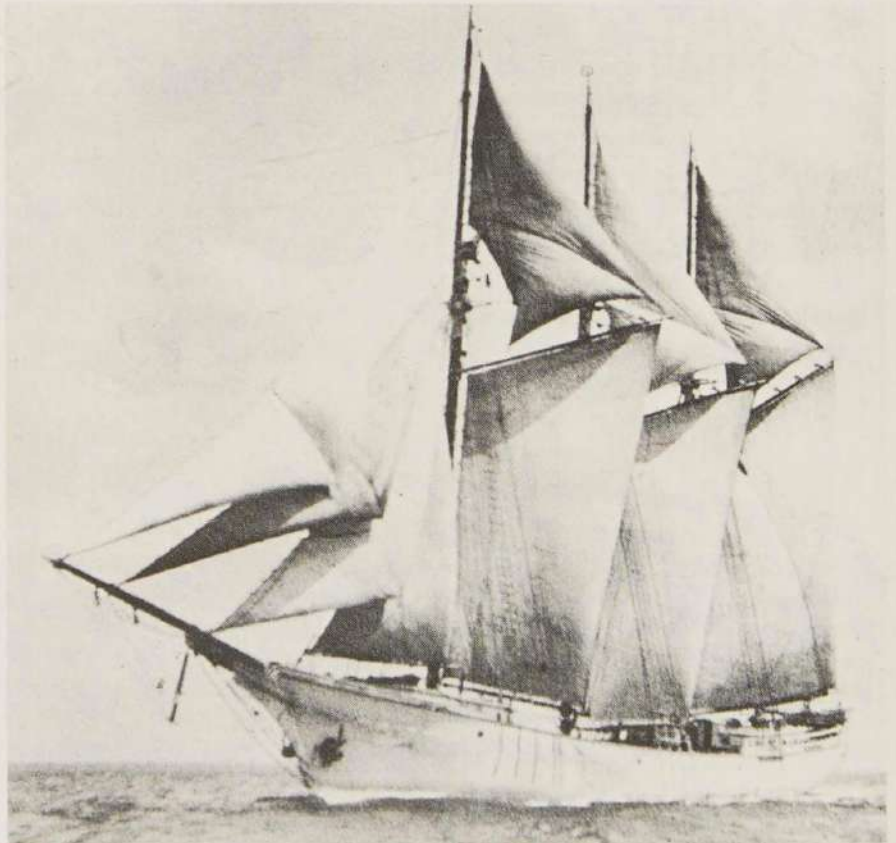
The *Priscilla Alden's* hull is rather boxy and slab-sided, almost barge-shaped, because of her purpose as a cargo carrier. Even so, Alden has managed to give her considerable shape with the raking transom, slight tumblehome, graceful sheer, and flaring clipper bow, accentuated by the pronounced steeve of the bowsprit, which has an outboard length of 48 feet. With the present energy shortage, commercial sail may be returning, and if so, there may still be a place for vessels with the same purpose as this three-master. Sailing cargo ships of the future probably will not at all resemble Alden's design. No doubt they'll be ugly by comparison.

Opposite: *Priscilla Alden's rig allows a variety of sail combinations and keeps each sail a reasonable size. In the long term, squaresails cause less strain on the hulls of sailing cargo carriers, but Alden fitted this fore-and-after with vang tackles to hold the booms steady and to prevent flying jibes. (The Rudder, January 1918) The body plan shows a wall-sided hull with the accent on function, but the profile view shows how graceful something that is functional can be. (Courtesy John G. Alden, Inc.) It can be seen that most of the vessel's volume was to be used for cargo. With full holds, the low main deck might be frequently awash in heavy weather, but the quarterdeck is well raised for dryness and safety. (The Rudder, January 1918)*





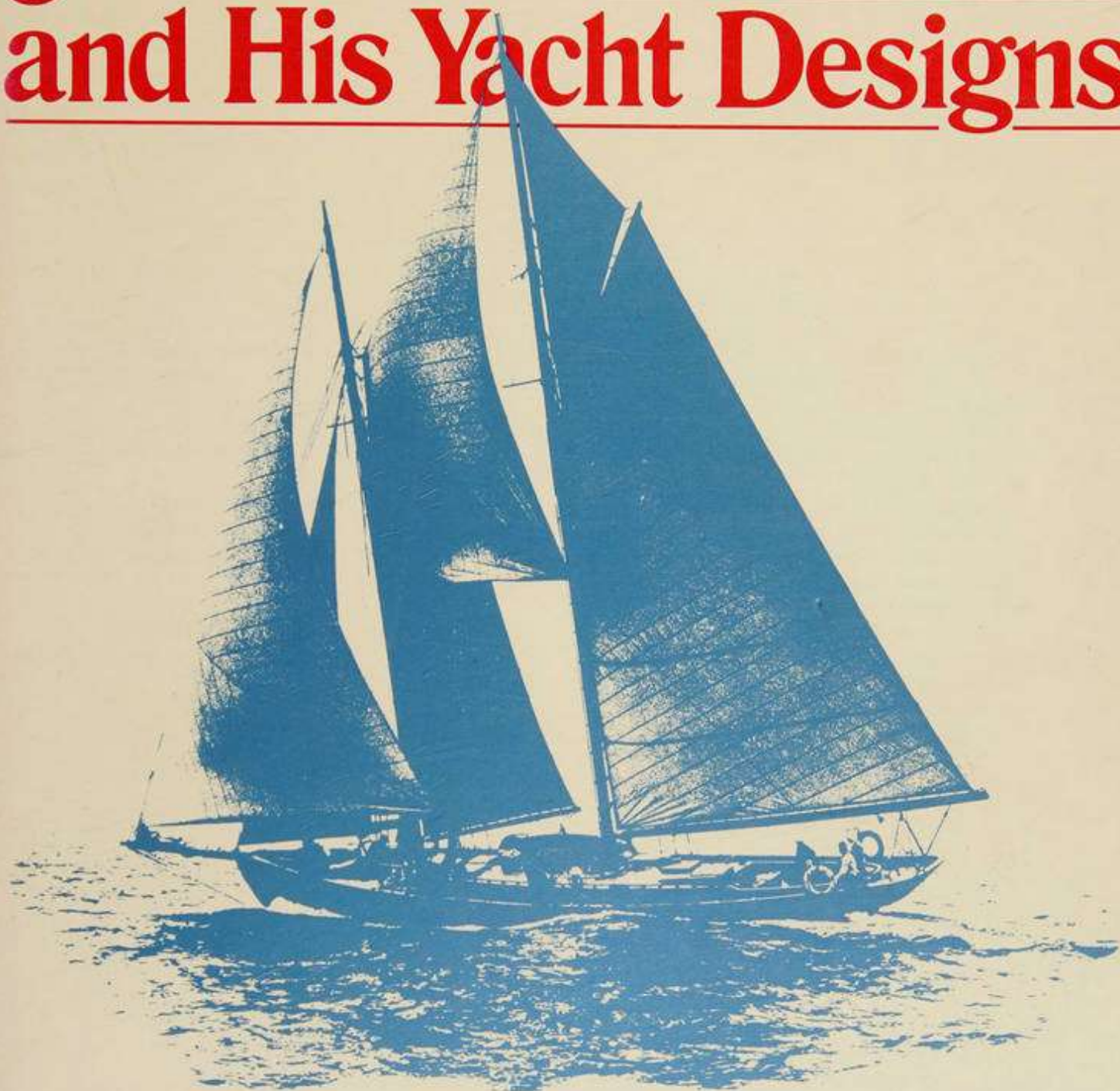
The construction plan shows how heavily the Priscilla Alden was built. Note the particularly heavy ceiling shown at the turn of the bilge on the midship section plan. Although a propeller aperture is shown, the vessel was not fitted with an engine until she became a yacht. (The Rudder, January 1918)



Priscilla Alden under whole sail. (Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., Mystic, Connecticut)

JOHN G. ALDEN

and His Yacht Designs



Robert W. Carrick • Richard Henderson

FOREWORD BY DONALD G. PARROT • INTRODUCTION BY OLIN J. STEPHENS II
