

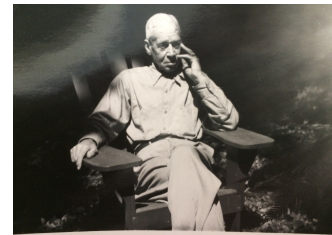


The Eldridge/Davis Cabin, Brightwood, Oregon

In the late 1910s or early 20s, an enterprising gentleman from Portland by the name of Neal purchased several acres of logged-over land along the west bank of the Salmon River at the point where Boulder Creek tumbles down the steep hillsides of Wildcat Mountain to meet it. It was an area of wildflower and fern-filled meadows, interspersed by enormous stumps from the old growth Douglas fir, western cedar, and hemlock which the loggers had harvested. (The remains of three of those old growth stumps dignify the front yard of the cabin today).

Mr. Neal's motive was to set up a vacation ground where families from Portland could spend some of their summer out in the countryside at modest expense. And it was indeed *out in the country*—the road up from Gresham was mostly dirt, with stretches where cars travelled on tracks of lumber laid like a railway in the roadbed. It took 5 hours from Portland, and was an adventure—my mother recounted passing small bands of Native Americans along the roadside, and if your car fell off the “track,” mighty efforts were required to get it back up on the road. Mr. Neal wanted to create a family friendly community, a “club in the country”—hence the origin of “Mt. Hood Country Club” and the road into the area which bears the name today. He did indeed create a community, which came to include a “clubhouse,” located on the banks of Boulder Creek. It had a dance floor, a community kitchen, and eventually an adjoining stable, which allowed families to bring their horses up for summer rides on the logging roads and many mountain trails which existed in those days.

At first, families came to Mr. Neal's “country club” and camped—not exactly “glamping”—My mother recalled coming up when she was seven, (in 1920), camping with her mother, who was a bit of a “Kentucky southern belle,” and her father, a quiet zen-like Missourian, right on the bank of Boulder Creek, and bathing in its icy waters. About then, Mr. Neal began subdividing his property and selling small lots for families to build their own cabins, and my grandfather, Charles Eldridge, took up the challenge. But perhaps unlike some of the others, he took it up literally, and built the cabin with his own hands, around 1921 or 22. He did a pretty good job—it's still there today, in good shape (thanks to loving maintenance through the years)—one of the oldest cabins “on the mountain,” and the only property still in the hands of one of the original families of the “country club”! (It is pretty remarkable to think that he built it not more than 70 years after the last of the Oregon Trail pioneers came across the Barlow Trail, not more than a mile away!).

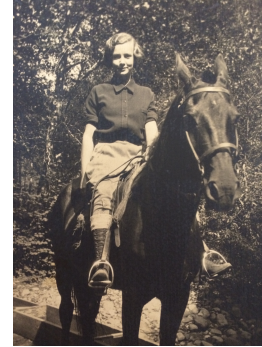


So, the life of the cabin began, with my grandmother Kitty's complaint to my grandfather, ***“Charles, why did you build the cabin out in this meadow? We'll never have any shade!”***





What a gift my grandfather made to all of us—my mother Charlotte Eldridge Davis lived to be nearly 94 and came to the cabin to spend a good deal of every summer for nearly 85 years. Everybody knew and loved her — “the Queen of Brightwood.” She recalled her one of the last remaining members of the for whom the community of Welches is father and she were friends with the who had the crazy idea of starting the golf Welches, which is now “The Resort at the Before she met my father, she was engaged the family that built the cabin on the opposite meadow, and she and her beau Carl, used to their horses on the network of trails through surrounding mountains, my mother aboard Blackie.



her — “the friendship with Welch family, named. My Bowmans, course at Mountain”. to the son of the hike and ride t h e her horse

It is the alchemy of this funky cabin that my grandfather built, that has instilled in four generations of our family a profound respect for nature, coupled with a sense of adventure and love of the out of doors. His gift has served us well, but we are now a family scattered and living out of reach of this magical place. We have a deep sense of gratitude to this family ground, but now it is time for new people to experience its charm, and to learn to love the magnificent beauty and adventure which this area offers for those willing to get out and seek it!

Gary Eldridge Davis