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LONG TRAIL HOME

Author unknown

I have named this “Long Trail Home” to distinguish it from “Long Trail Lodge” at Mendon, even though it was better known by the latter.

“Long Trail Home” was located in Lincoln at the foot of Warren Mountain, with Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Davis proprietors. They were famous the length and breadth of Vermont for their entertainment of thousands of Long Trail hikers.

Mr. Davis was born in a log house about 1854, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Davis. Here I would like to relate a few stories about his mother before going on about “Nell” and “Hen” as they were known locally. One lady told of living near Mrs. C. Davis in about 1870. The lady’s mother didn’t like to have the children go far from home because of the density of the woods. She, however, told them they might go fishing along the brook by the Davis’s place. Mrs. Davis had a son who lived with her who had grown to be a young man. She came out, calling to the children, “You can’t fish there.” Whereon, they replied, “Our Mother said we could,” but Mrs. Davis insisted with, “But, that is for poor little Willie.”

Several remember Mrs. C. Davis’s fondness for flowers and how she would always give a bouquet to anyone who called. She would gather many herbs for various remedies. The one remembered by her great-granddaughter was steeping birch bark for sore throat.

Mrs. C. Davis would take her carpet bag, put her knitting into it and start off down the road. As she went, she would knit, the ball of yarn would fall out and be far behind her before she or any of the neighboring children would discover it. The children usually waited for some time before telling her. Her great-granddaughter remembers hearing them tell how she would knit all the way to church. She died in 1892 at the age of eighty-three.

Mrs. Nellie (Miner) Davis and Henry (Hen) Davis lived on the Gap Road about a half mile past the Goodyear place. In those days the road was not kept open in the winter.

Nell was a hard-working woman. She did all of her work without even a wet sink or running water to say nothing of any of the modern conveniences. She dried apples and pumpkins on a screen built around the stovepipe. At the time when they built the Warren-Lincoln pass in 1917, she had eighteen boarders, giving them their breakfast, putting up dinner pails, and had dinner for them at night. Besides housework, she often helped with the work outside. She waited on her husband too as is told in this story. They had callers to whom Hen remarked, "I wanted to cut wood today but Nell is washing so I had to stay home and help her. Nell—Get my tobacco so I can smoke."

Mrs. Clinton (Madge Bean) Pierce tells of one cold winter, Prince, the Davis's dog, came to her place. She took the dog in and thinking how lonesome it must be for the Davises, wrote a letter, telling all the news. This she tied to the collar and sent the dog home. Mrs. Davis was very pleased to receive this as it was the first connection she had had with others for many days.

Mrs. Davis was always happy in her home at the foot of the mountain.

In the early days, Mr. Davis would carry lumber to Bristol and Ferrisburgh with a team of horses.

They had a telephone which had a one-line connection to Warren. About this time, a gentleman by the name of Sargent traveled the state giving music lessons. The Davises would take down their receiver while a family in Warren did the same and they would listen to the music played over there.

In connection with the telephone, we have one of the stories showing Hen's kindness. A family in Waitsfield went on the mountain for a picnic. Two of the men hiked up the mountain but went too far and got lost. When they came out, they were in Lincoln. A family by the name of Murray kept them for the night. One member told Mr. Davis about it and he called the other member of the party, telling them that the men were safe.

Later they had the telephone removed and the line across the mountain is gone.

Lincoln at one time had big parades on the fourth of July. Hen would lead the parade, wearing a linen duster and a large white stovepipe hat, carrying a walking stick. About 1897, the Ladies Aid Hall was built and his interest in community affairs is again shown by working on the Hall with his team for four or five days. He set the trees out around the Maple Cemetery and by Davis's Grist Mill in 1898. One has only to see them to appreciate the beauty which he added.

Mr. Davis liked a joke as well as anyone. At one time some thought he was having deer illegally. So the Game Warden went up, made a search but found nothing. Mr. Davis asked him to stay to dinner as was his cordial custom to anyone who was there. The Game Warden did so, enjoying the meal but feeling uneasy about the deer situation, remarked, "Hen, I believe that was venison that we had for dinner." Hen's answer was "Would you like to see where that meat came from?", took his guest through the cellarway and out into the pasture where there was a dead horse, that he had been cutting meat off for the hens. I don't think any more need be said about this.

During deer season, they always had lots of boarders. It was during one of these times that a joke was played on Hen. He had taken his gun and gone hunting, only to put the gun against the tree and go to sleep. Some of the boys built a fire near him. I think you can imagine the feeling he had when he heard the crackling.

Another incident that shows his humor, was when he and one of his neighbors had a controversy over two hogs that they killed. He claimed that his weighed the most because he had fed it Kilborne's grain while his neighbor had fed his Buell's grain, but neither one would commit themselves on the age of the hogs. They had a great of deal fun kidding each other over the affair.

Prince, the dog, was a great favorite of the family. He had two fried eggs for breakfast, would sit by the table or at it. Prince always went to the Center with his master, riding beside on the wagon seat. Here, he always received an ice cream cone from Hen. The children stood around and watched. I do not know whether they had more pleasure in seeing the dog eat the ice cream or if they had had it themselves.

Another story of Prince is told when a neighbor was helping Mr. Davis tap the maple trees. "Hen," he said, "Prince barks as if he was chasing a bobcat." About that time the dog came over the hill but instead of chasing, he was being chased by a bobcat. Hen's remark to this was "That's funny, I never saw that happen before."

At one time he peddled butter. He was noted for his maple sugar, which Mrs. Davis made, and he gave a good share of it away.

Many who knew them have probably forgotten the dances which they had at the house on the Gap. I'm sure that Mr. Davis enjoyed himself as much as the guests. One young man arrived there at night on his travels and wished to lodge for the night. He was asked if he wanted supper but declined because of lack of money. Hen asked, "What Boy!

You've got to eat, haven't you?" Several days later the boy was seen coming back to pay his bill.

Mr. Davis was especially interested in the Long Trail and the Pass. He staked the trail out when it was started about 1912. They would have from fifteen to twenty "trailers" at a time, coming from every state in the Union, the Philippines, Africa, and many other parts of the world.

Many is the time, when two or more people have met outside of the state and spoken of Vermont, one would ask, "Do you know "Hen" Davis?" The reply would be yes and often the only person in Vermont that they did know.

Henry would bring the hikers to Lincoln Center for fresh provisions, to make telephone calls, or to leave them for their journey home by train.

They had many notable people stay there. They sent gifts to the Davises at Christmas and throughout the year. These consisted of rubber boots from a United States Rubber representative, Fortune magazine, raincoat, wool sweater and many other articles.

The Green Mountain Club never failed to have pictures and articles about them in their folders. Herbert Congdon (writer and photographer of Vermont historic buildings) took pictures of them also and when he shows them, he always speaks highly of their hospitality.

Mr. and Mrs. Davis were married sixty-four years. At one of the receptions held for them, Mr. Davis wanted Bay Rum on his hair. Mrs. Davis was unable to find any but used lemon extract and he never knew the difference.

On their sixtieth anniversary his remark was "I expect to live another fifty years." At the sixty-second, he replied, "Sixty years is too long to live with any woman." However the statement may sound, it was not meant in that manner as they were very happy together.

Hen was a man who did not believe in doctors or medicine. He never had a doctor except when he had pneumonia and then did not take the medicine given him.

When asked by his grand-daughter if he had ever worn glasses, he answered with, "Do you see that woman over there on West Hill, well, I can tell you the color of her eyes."

I believe in an account of their sixty-second anniversary, summarizes their character when it relates, "They still entertain hikers in the friendly fashion, which has brought Long Trail enthusiasts back year after year to their simple farmhouse."



A Long Trail hiker poses with Henry C. "Hen" Davis, Bertha Davis Smalley , Nellie Miner Davis and young Gertrude Smalley on the front porch of their house in Lincoln, VT.