

# The Story of a Shed

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In 1932 Chester E Davis Sr. built a small shed that he used as a mobile home of sorts. He built it to bring his family, including his six week old baby Ron Davis, from Moultonborough, New Hampshire, to Orange Grove, Florida for winters. Ten years later, in 1942, several months after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, fire Chief John Randall, in charge of the Civil Defense of Moultonborough, asked Chester to use that shed as an observation post to watch for planes.

This “shed” was really a pioneer mobile home. It worked very similar to the mobile home of today, only it was smaller. This small house was put on the back of a flatbed truck. It even had rounded edges, so the wind would not put too much resistance on it while moving. There was a chimney in back so that a wood stove could be hooked up to it when they were not traveling. Many things like canned goods were put in locked cabinets and chairs and cots were folded up so that the riders would not get hurt while traveling.

Chester Davis’ purpose in building the shed was to enable his family to travel to Florida so that they could work in the winter. Ron’s mother, father, and older brother rode in the cab, while six week old Ron, and his oldest sister rode in the “mobile home.”

There was a window up front so their mother could check on them while they were driving. At night, since there were almost no motels back then, they would pull over to the side of the road and everyone would eat and sleep in the back. When Ron’s grandmother heard of this trip, she was very upset. She did not like the idea of Chester and his wife bringing their six week old to Florida in the back of a truck. In that day and age it was very unusual to travel with a baby. She sent a letter of complaint to them saying that she should report the family for child abuse, but many men were leaving their families in the harsh times of the 1930’s, in search of work. Chester E. Davis, however, figured out a way to keep his family with him.

Although the 1930s were really hard on America’s economy, in New Hampshire, WWII brought great economic growth. Even though everybody had to make

certain sacrifices, the war effort in New Hampshire provided a great atmosphere for business. In 1945, only one business failed whereas in 1939 fifty businesses failed.

As their family grew and they wintered in Moultonborough, Chester Davis and his wife created a large homestead at the base of Red Hill. There they ran many operations to make ends meet. They ran a saw mill, and a shingle mill, harvesting lumber out of their wood lots. In the winter they harvested ice and using sawdust from the lumber mill, stored it for the summer. They could sell most of this ice to summer residents. In the spring they harvested maple syrup. In addition, they had livestock and crops.

This self-sufficiency helped a lot during WWII. During a time that many people did not always have what they needed, this family usually did. They could farm or make pretty much what-ever they found necessary. They would grow and can their own vegetables, harvest their own ice, make their own clothes, and make their own soap. Since sugar was being rationed, they used maple sugar instead. They could use their horses instead of trucks be-cause of the gas rationing. For fuel, they would burn wood. They would even give away the wood scraps from the lumber mill as cheap, but effective, firewood. By 1942, wood scraps were not the only things of theirs that were being used.

Almost immediately, all across the country, a civil defense was being set up. American civilians were doing their part to help their country during the war. In Moultonborough, Fire Chief John Randell, was in charge of Civil Defense. He wanted to use Chester Davis' shed to watch for planes. A post was quickly set up on a 24 hour watch with people sharing the rotations in four hour shifts. The post was moved around several different locations with a temporary phone line, connected to it whenever it moved. Its mobility made this otherwise difficult task easy.

The men on watch at the observation post had to report any planes they saw, whether it be foreign or American. If enough planes were seen, there would be an air raid where everybody would have to turn off the lights and pull down their to sided dark green shades. Then the fire chief would go around and if any light shown through, they would be fined. The post was placed on fields and on hills so

they had a good view. It was small inside the shed, but here was enough room for a table, a telephone, a log book and of course binoculars.

The story of the shed is very interesting. Today, it still stands outside Ron Davis' house. In its more recent years, it has served as a playhouse for young children. With its innovative beginnings, this incredible shed has a history of its own.