



## *Carl Lee Davis*

**1885-1970**

As Oregon began cutting its young teeth on timber and board feet were rapidly framing the economy, Carl Lee Davis and others like him were shaping the foundation of forestry in the West.

Solid, small town logging agreed well with Davis. Born in Minnesota in 1885, he was raised with timber on his mind. At sixteen, he started his career as a cruiser and compass man under the watchful eye of his father.

Oregon however lured him West. In 1909 he settled in the Coos Bay area. Again he joined a lumber company, C.A. Smith's. Smith, an early timber entrepreneur, and his partner, John Powers, proceeded to form the biggest logging operation of that time in the state.

Young Davis learned quickly and thoroughly, and was given responsibility for heading both the timber department and control of all tax matters for the company. For 19 years, Davis studied the details of logging and timber that had made success for Smith and Powers. During this time he met Fred Powers who would later be his partner in several ventures throughout their careers.

But time had come to end his apprenticeship. In 1928, Davis and Powers struck off on their own, establishing the Powers-Davis Logging Company. The common sense and hard work Davis knew so keenly resulted in their business' hardy survival during the long depression years.

By 1935 the Powers-Davis Logging Company was eager to expand. A lumber mill was acquired and opened in Sweet Home. This town was already becoming a booming timber site. The well-run mill prospered. Eleven years later, in 1946, the company merged with the Santiam Lumber Company, with Davis becoming secretary-manager for the concern. Later they would expand into the Lebanon area. Davis would also live to see the company become part of Willamette Industries, in March, 1967.

This partnership began other ventures. There was the Powers-Davis Terminal Company of which Davis was president for 15 years. Since timber dollars had always been linked to finance, the Bank of Powers was opened in Coos Bay, and later moved to Sweet Home. Davis was vice president of the Bank of Sweet

Home for three years. At the end of this period, in 1942, he and Powers sold it to the First National Bank of Oregon, enabling it to open a Sweet Home branch.

Davis' deep-rooted knowledge of forestry and finance made him valuable to Oregon's timber industry. Willing to share, yet preferring to stay out of the limelight, Davis agreed to serve as State Forester, only temporarily until Governor Sprague, in 1940, could make a permanent appointment. He held the position several months.

Quiet and unassuming, his love of forestry permeated his life. When the forestry building burned, he ardently helped sponsor a new building. Throughout his years he had helped

timber grow. Yet he never shed his solid, small town demeanor. People trusted his word. Preferring to be the sustaining force behind others' leadership, every action Davis took was well thought out.

Davis had not chosen higher education for himself, but he realized its value. He was a constant reader and eager to glean new ideas from others. Retiring in 1951, he was to live 19 more years. His community interests included the Elks, Waverley Country Club, Arlington Club and for many years as a member and director of the Oregon Historical Society. Because of Davis, Oregon's forestry has benefited...a proud result of his more than 50 years commitment to a timber career.