



Published by the Wilsonia Historic District Trust for all Wilsonia cabin owners, their families, and friends. Issue #13 March 2025

In this issue you are invited to:

- Read about our efforts to bring additional Wilsonia cabins into “historic contributor” status.
- Enjoy a story about the buildings that once stood on the edges of what today we call “the parking lot” along Park Road
- Information about purchasing a Wilsonia Historic District Trust bronze plaque for your cabin
- An invitation to share your cabin stories for publication in our newsletter
- Participate in our Video History Project to preserve Wilsonia

Wilsonia Historic District Trust Summer Events 2025

June 28 10:00 a.m. Wilsonia Nature & Wildflower

Walk July 19 4:00 p.m. Meet and Greet

August 30 5:00 p.m. Taco Salad Night

**Do you have a
Wilsonia bear
story?**
Our upcoming May issue of *Historic Wilsonia* will feature stories of bears in Wilsonia. If you have a story to share, see page 7.



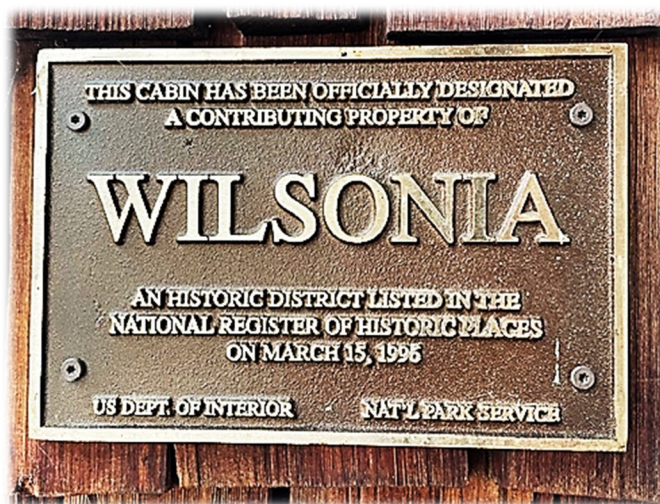
Wilsonia’s Historic Status Update

In the early 1990s, a dedicated group of Wilsonians created the Wilsonia Historic District Trust, resulting in Wilsonia being designated as a “historic community” on the National Register of Historic Places.

At one time, over three hundred cabins stood in Wilsonia. Today, 211 cabins remain, 162 designated as “historic contributors.” A year ago, the Wilsonia Historic District Trust began the work necessary to designate up to seventeen additional cabins as historic contributors through a final amendment to our original application, further securing Wilsonia’s historic status for the future. Wilsonians donated \$15,880 to support this effort. **We are pleased to announce that we will soon be submitting our application to the California State Office of Historic Preservation.** Again, we thank Wilsonians for your support. We will continue to keep you informed regarding this effort.

Wilsonia Historic District Trust Bronze Cabin Plaques

Wilsonia cabins that are designated as historic “contributing properties” are eligible to display a Wilsonia Historic District Trust bronze plaque. If you wish to inquire about your cabin’s status as a historic contributing property or would like to purchase a plaque for your cabin, please contact Drew Sorensen at dsorensen102@gmail.com.



Today's Parking Lot was Once Wilsonia's Bustling Business Center

Sue Speth and the
Historic Wilsonia Writing Team




The southern entrance to Wilsonia on Park Road leads to today's view from the intersections of Park Road, Cedar Lane, and Lilac Lanes.

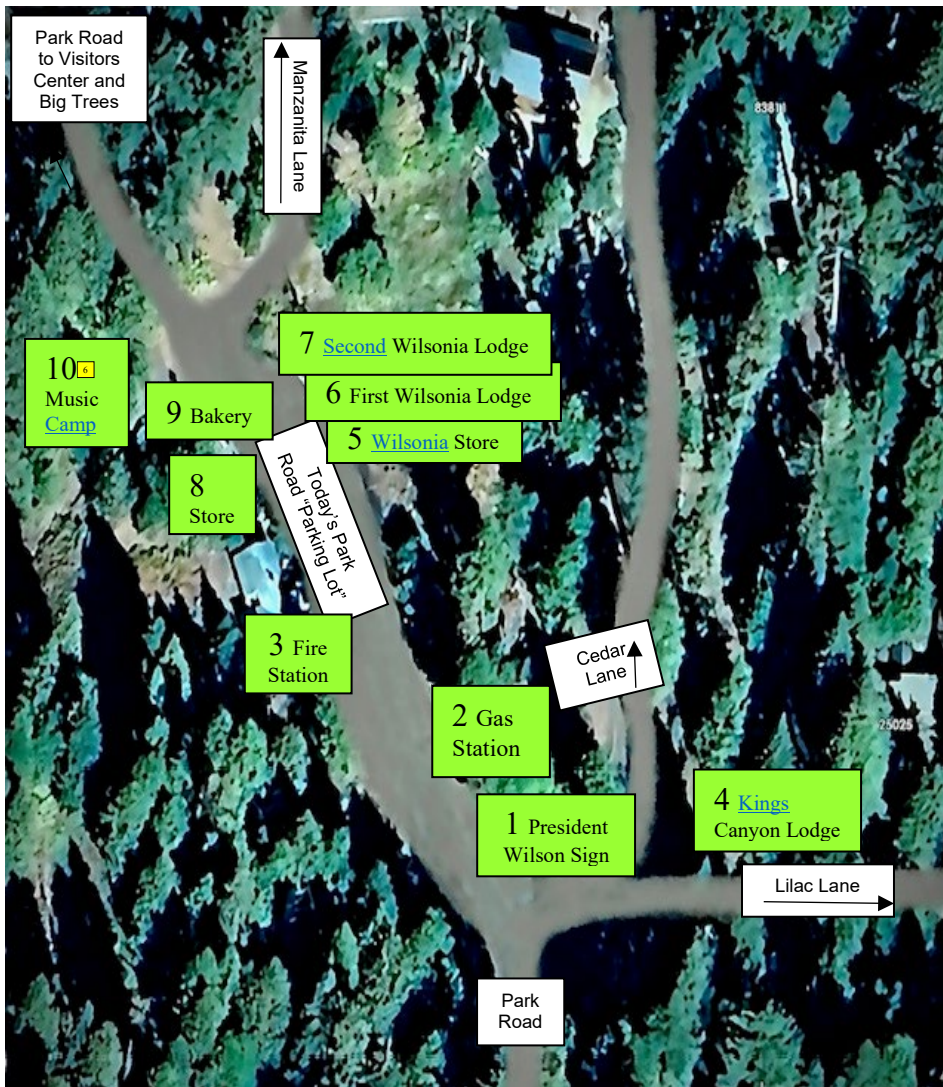
In July of 2024, the writing team for this newsletter toured Wilsonia to gather first-hand

recollections of Wilsonia during the 1930s and 1940s. We were accompanied by three experts who spent a great deal of their childhood and teen years in Wilsonia, **Pat Hillman, Jean Faszholz, and Gus Collin.**

The primary focus of our research was the buildings that once stood around today's Park Road parking lot.

We invite you to take a ride with us through this part of Wilsonia, **starting at the southern entrance to today's Park Road parking lot.**

 Click on a location on the map to see a historic photo of the building that once stood at each location.



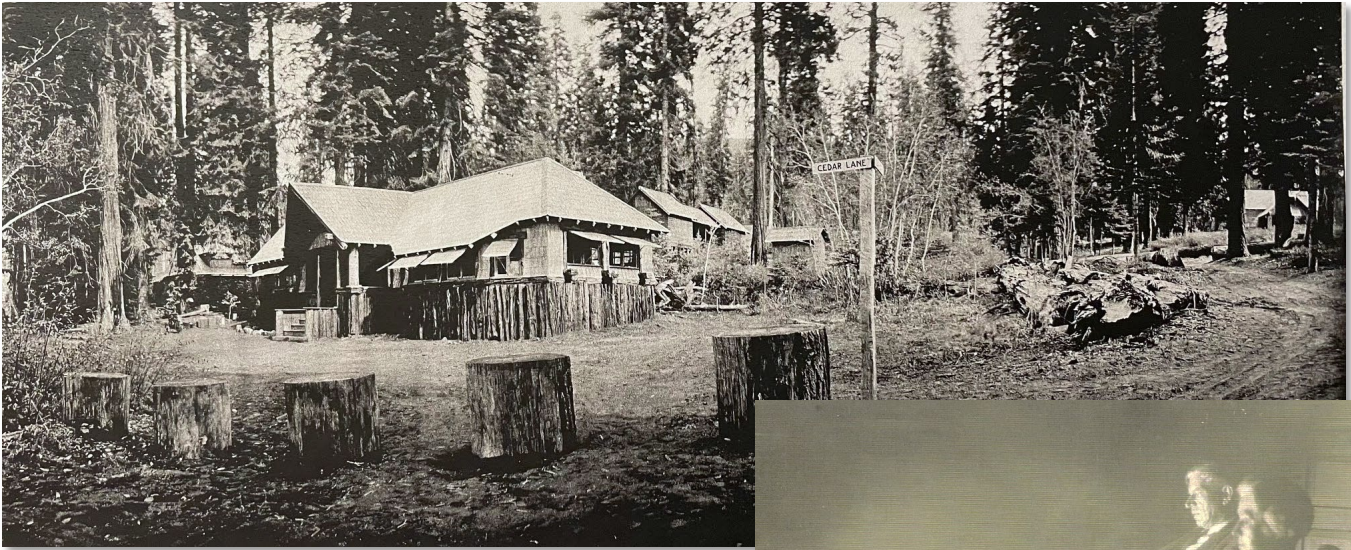


The southern entrance to Wilsonia on Park Road led to the intersection of Park Road, Cedar Lane, and Lilac Lanes (circa 1925)

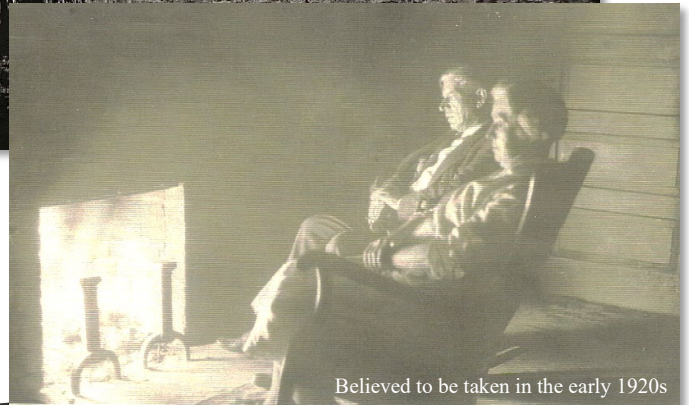
1. We'll start in what was the main "parking lot" after you enter Wilsonia through the southern entrance. Here's a photograph of where the President Wilson sign was during the 1920s.
2. For a time beginning in the 1920s, a gas station was operated just up the road from the President Wilson sign.
3. Today at this location is the Boss family cabin. The southern section of this building was originally Wilsonia's firehouse, operated by the Tulare County Fire Department. It even had its own fire truck.

During the 1920s-1940s, all visitors traveled through Wilsonia on Park Road to reach General Grant National Park, the "big trees" sequoia grove, and Kings Canyon.





4. Facing east from the President Wilson sign was the cabin of Andy and Arsa Ferguson, original developers of Wilsonia (circa 1925).



Believed to be taken in the early 1920s

THE FERGUSONS, FOUNDER OF WILSONIA

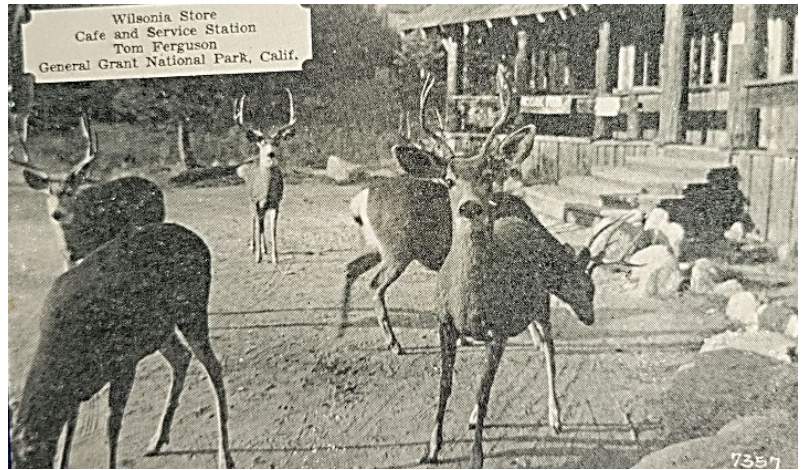


Postcard circa 1960

During the 1950s this cabin became the Kings Canyon Lodge and was operated through the early 1970s by a couple from Holland - it was also known as the "Touch of Holland." The lodge offered guest rooms and a cozy restaurant.



5. The first store in Wilsonia was opened in 1924 by Dick and Velma Wilson. It was located in the original Wilsonia Clubhouse. After the clubhouse building burned during the summer of 1928, the Fergusons designated property on Park Road and built Wilsonia's first store/café and service station.



6. The original store/café operated until it burned to the ground in 1942. Wilsonia had no store through the remaining years of World War II. In 1946 a group of Wilsonians joined resources to build the new **Wilsonia Lodge**. In this postcard photo, the store was on the left, the restaurant on the right, and guest rooms were on the second floor. There was a covered porch in front of the store with a bench and a rack of comic books, newspapers, and magazines. The restaurant had tables with chairs and a counter with barstools. Cars could park right up close to the porch of both the store and restaurant.



1940s Post Card of the Wilsonia Lodge built in 1946

7. The Wilsonia Lodge burned in February of 1959 and a new building was constructed that summer on the same location, incorporating the chimney of the previous building. Again, the was store located on the left, the restaurant on the right, guest rooms on the second floor, and the rack of comic books, newspapers, and magazines were on the porch outside the store.



8. For a brief time, there was another small store directly across the street from the Wilsonia Lodge (no photo available).

9. During the years 1925-1932 Wilsonians could walk to a bakery for freshly baked bread and molasses cookies. The bakery was located across from the store/restaurant and near the fire station. Eventually this bakery building was moved just up Park Road and today is the Medina cabin.



10. During the 1930s, the “Western Music Camp” was operated across Park Road from the Wilsonia Lodge. The camp was led by a Fresno high school music teacher, Major Earl Dillon.



The camp featured a stage and cabins for campers. For three summers, Pat Hilman and her sister walked each day from their Whitney Lane cabin to attend the camp. Pat recalls that one of her teachers was well known in the San Francisco Bay area and played a wooden flute.

We Are Wilsonia, A Video History Project



Collecting family cabin pictures and stories will continue in 2025. When you see Wilsonians Isaac Palmisano, Drew Sorensen, and Doug Bartsch walking around with camera equipment, they may be on their way to sit on someone's front porch to film and record an interview. *If you want to share a story, please get in touch with us by contacting WHDT vice president Drew Sorensen* dsorensen102@gmail.com



Do you have a Wilsonia bear story?

Our upcoming May issue of *Historic Wilsonia* will feature stories of bears in Wilsonia. If you have a story to share, please let us know!

An Invitation to Share Wilsonia Stories

The **Historic Wilsonia** newsletter publishes information about the history of Wilsonia, its cabins and owners. The WHDT Writing Team is gathering stories about Wilsonia, our people and our cabins. You are invited to share your suggestions, ideas, and stories with our writing team. These are our members and their email addresses. You're welcome to find their phone numbers and addresses in the Wilsonia Community directory as well.

Historic Wilsonia Writing Team

Sheri Parkinson teebars@yahoo.com

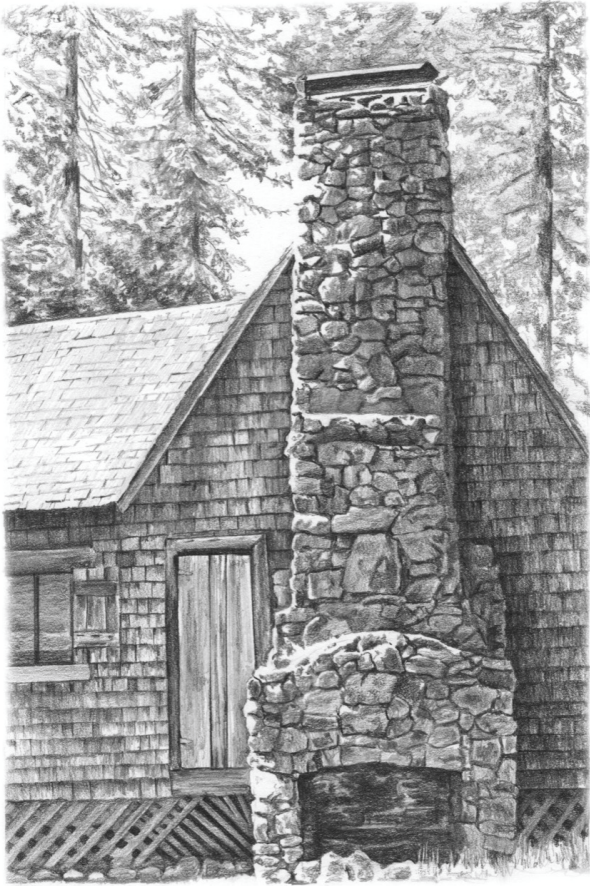
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Sue Speth sueaspeth@hotmail.com

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Please Visit our Website: www.wilsonia.org

Our website is a resource to learn about the Wilsonia Historic District Trust, our purpose, history, and current activities. You will also find past newsletters and other items of interest.



Historic Preservation Guidelines

The designation of Wilsonia as a Historic District is not permanent. A substantial percentage of our still-standing cabins must continue to be historic in nature. If a cabin is modernized so that it no longer has a historic appearance, it will no longer qualify as a “historic contributor.” For information regarding specific guidelines for historic cabin preservation, and if you are considering a remodel or add-on, go to www.wilsonia.org.

The Wilsonia Historic District Trust Directory

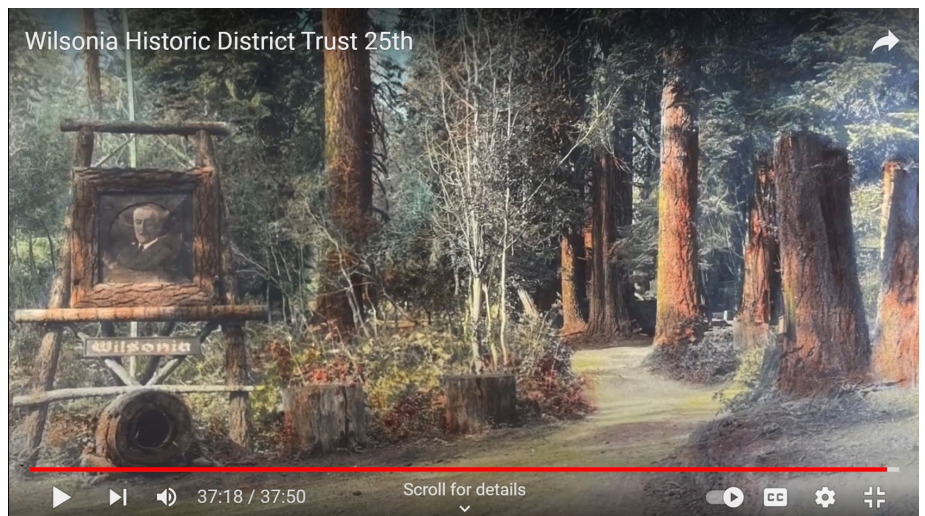
Under the leadership of board member Carley Metcalf, and with the diligent assistance of B.J. and Jim Spitze, our directory was completed last year and most Wilsonians have received their directory. The aim of our directory is to allow cabin users to



communicate in case of an emergency, and to foster community. Thank you to everyone for your support of this project. If you have updates, corrections, or questions/comments, please contact Carley at carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org or 559-573-4700.

Historic Wilsonia Video

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Wilsonia Historic District Trust, this video presentation was developed to tell stories of life in early Wilsonia, and of the importance of listing it in the Federal Register of Historic Places. You may view this entertaining and informative presentation by going to

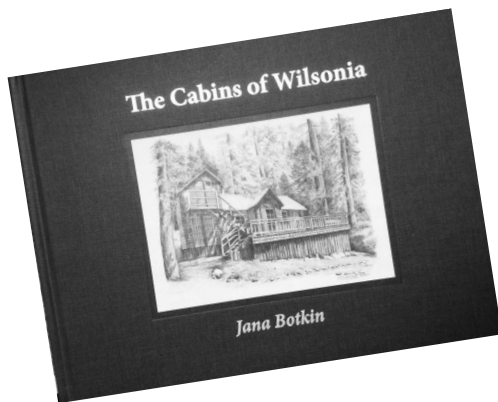
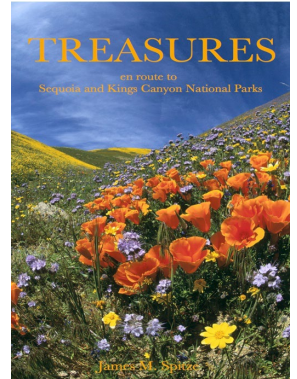


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJXATI5c-EM>

Add to your cabin library...

TREASURES en route to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Jim Spitze, one of our Wilsonia Historic District pioneers and the founding editor of this newsletter, created a fabulous historic guide to Highway 180. Hardbound with almost three hundred pages and 142 illustrations, this book is filled with stories and fascinating information about the people and geography that surround our route to Wilsonia and the National Parks. Proceeds from the sale of this book go to the **Sierra Gateway Trust** at www.sierragateway.org. Copies may be purchased by contacting Carley Metcalf at 559-573-4700.



The Cabins of Wilsonia

by Jana Botkin

Available now - \$40 (tax included)

Visit the Wilsonia Village Online Store at

<https://wilsonia-village.square.site/>

or contact Doug Bartsch—559-799-1584.

Wilsonia Historic District Trust

Mission: The mission of Wilsonia Historic District Trust is to preserve, interpret and perpetuate our community's history, unique quality of life, intense and long-term family commitment, and natural resources handed down over generations. Specific attention is given to the many cultural artifacts and natural resources which contribute to keeping Wilsonia a vibrant historic community.

Goal: The goal is to manage the affairs of the District Trust including but not limited to finances, the unique cultural artifacts, and assure the continuation of the ten decades of community interest.

Finances: Wilsonia Historic District Trust is financed solely by donations. We are an IRS Code 501(c)(3) corporation. Donations are tax deductible. The Board of Directors is responsible for the administration of all funds.

Wilsonia Historic District Trust Board of Directors

Doug Bartsch –President, doug.bartsch@fresno.edu

Drew Sorensen – Vice President dsorensen102@gmail.com

Sheri Parkinson – Secretary teebars@yahoo.com

BJ Spitze – Treasurer bj.spitze@wilsonia.org

Carley Metcalf – Director, carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org

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