



# Historic Wilsonia

The Newsletter of the Wilsonia Historic District Trust

Published by the Wilsonia Historic District Trust for all Wilsonia cabin owners, their families, and friends. Issue #12 December, 2024

## In this issue you are invited to:

- Read about our efforts to bring additional Wilsonia cabins into “historic contributor” status.
- Enjoy a story by Sheri Parkinson about the history of clubs in Wilsonia.
- An invitation to share your cabin stories for publication in our newsletter.
- Participate in our Video History Project to preserve Wilsonia stories.

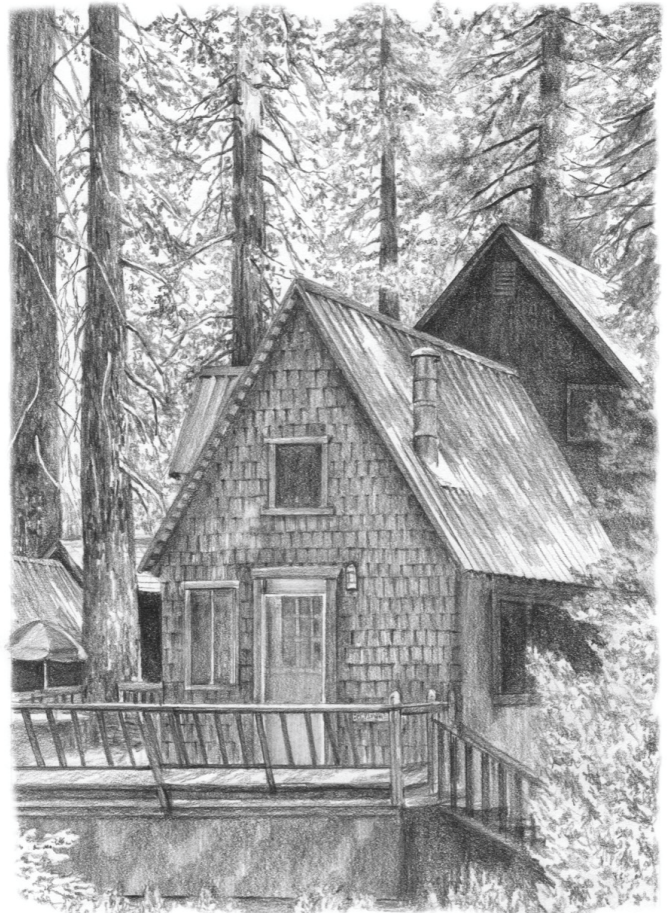
**Do you have a Wilsonia bear story?**  
Our upcoming May issue of *Historic Wilsonia* will feature stories of bears in Wilsonia. If you have a story to share, see page 4.

## 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. Today, 211 Wilsonia 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. Thanks to the generosity of Wilsonia residents and friends, we have raised \$15,880 to support this effort. Our team has done the meticulous work of updating our cabin database, identifying potential historic contributor cabins, and creating a complete photographic record of Wilsonia cabins and natural features. **Sincere thanks to BJ Spitze, Carley Metcalf, Bob Foster, Drew Sorensen, and Bob Preston for the countless hours they have dedicated to this effort!**

We are now engaged with our partners at the Historic District Resources Group in preparing our application amendment to be submitted to the California State Office of Historic Preservation in the coming year. We will continue to keep you informed of our progress.





# Clubs in Wilsonia, Then and Now - Sheri Parkinson

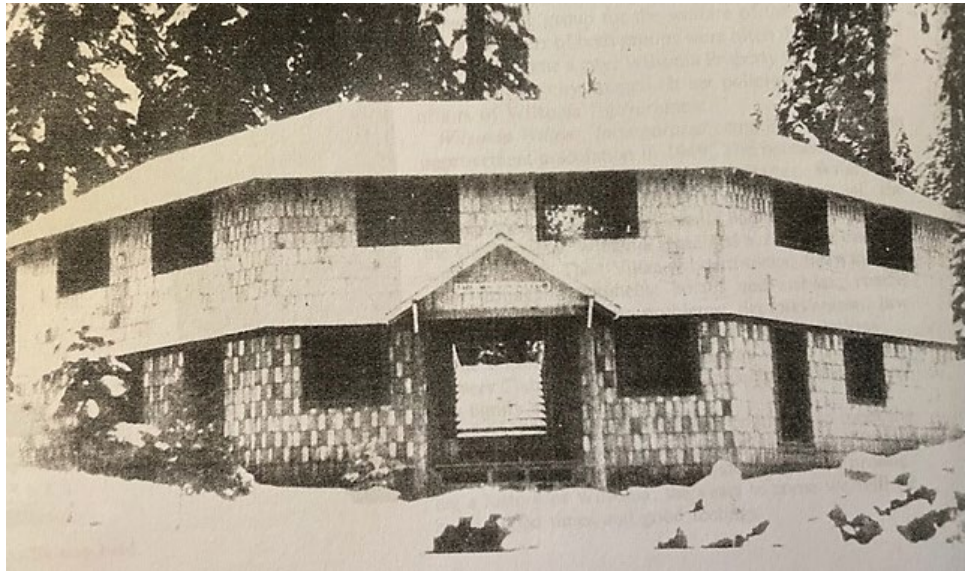


1920s entrance to Wilsonia from the south. Today's parking lot is at the left, gas station left of center, President Wilson portrait in center, Cedar Lane to the right.

Wilsonia has always been a community-minded place and as the cabins began to multiply, the residents wanted something more. They wanted to be able to spend more time together and participate in various activities. First, a community-wide organization was formed, called the Wilsonia Club. Its goal was to raise money and to eventually build a clubhouse. There were 114 charter members of The Club and 150 cabins in the Village. The stated purpose of the organization was, "The promotion of social and material welfare of its members."

It was a proud day in Wilsonia when the dream of a clubhouse came to fruition in 1923. It was built on lots donated by Andrew Ferguson, the subdivider of Wilsonia. It was a beautiful building, built in an interesting octagonal shape. The center of the building was open and during festivities a campfire was

enjoyed there under the stars. It was built on a slope and the front portion of the structure afforded two fairly large rooms on the ground level. In one of these rooms Dick R. Wilson opened a store (1924) while the other room hosted a barber shop and a meat market. There was also an upper level. Around the perimeter of the building was a roofed dance floor where dances were held, always once and sometimes twice a week. These varied from square dances to ballroom and were held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The sign above the front door simply said, "THE WILSONIA CLUB."



Wilsonia's first clubhouse built in 1923 on the site of the current clubhouse.

Early in the summer of 1928 the beautiful building burned to the ground. Fortunately, it was on a calm night with scarcely a breeze blowing, so no cabins were affected. A replacement clubhouse was built on the same site as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this second clubhouse collapsed under snow in the winter of 1932-33. The resilient Wilsonians got together once again and built a third clubhouse, again on the same site. It is the one that remains today. Perhaps some of the wood from the previous clubhouse was recycled into the present one.

The three clubhouses were used over the years for many different activities and occasions. The theme always being, “to promote sociability among the people of the community and in every way possible enhance their welfare and happiness.” Some of the clubs that have considered The Clubhouse home were: The Wilsonia Club, Wilsonia Ladies’ Club later to be known as



The Wilsonia Clubhouse from The Cabins of Wilsonia by Jana Botkin

Wilsonian Women’s Club, General Grant Park Boosters Club, Wilsonia Property Owners’ Association, and Grant Grove Community Club. The Wilsonia Club later became known as Wilsonia Village, Inc. One purpose of the early clubhouses was to start and maintain a museum. Members pressed Washington for funds, but to no avail for a museum. They did, however, accomplish a few other goals, like better Park and Wilsonia signs, Park campfires, getting a ranger naturalist and educational director, and getting church services started, to name a few. The Ladies’ Club was having their August 14, 1945, meeting when they were interrupted, and the announcement made that the Japanese had surrendered, and World War II was over. What a glorious celebration followed!

Examples of some of the many other activities held in the Clubhouse besides meetings were: potlucks, sewing circles, quilters’ and crafters’ retreats, wedding receptions along with anniversary and birthday celebrations, a training center for ranger activities, music concerts, rolling bandages and sewing for the Red Cross during WWII, a library, a place for kids to meet and play games, fundraisers such as the silent auction, the pancake breakfasts, and the ladies’ tea, and now, finally, at least a partial museum. Many card games as well as board games, BINGO, and ping pong were played here.

The Clubhouse started as the center of Wilsonia activity and remains so today. Many fond memories were made here, and we hope many more are to come in the future.



# *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](mailto: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**

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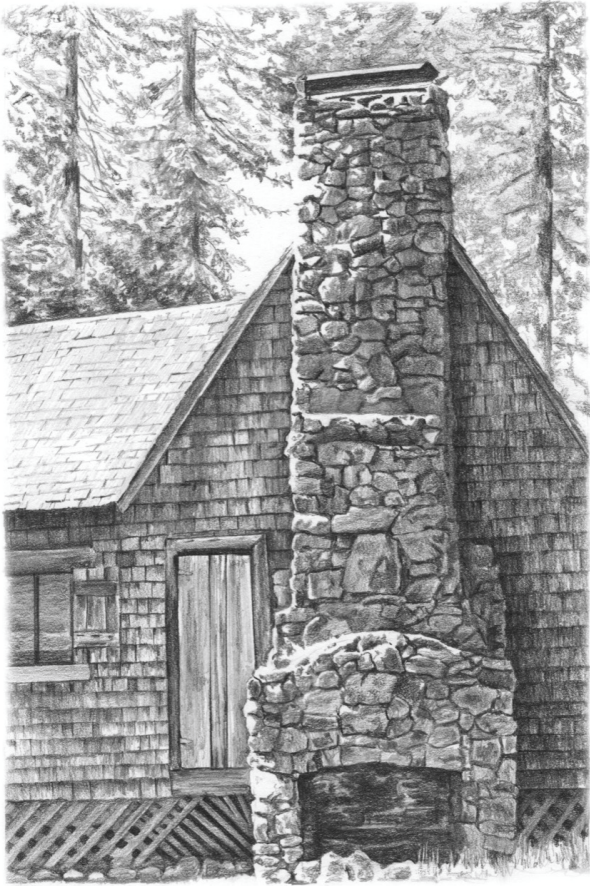
Sue Speth [sueaspeth@hotmail.com](mailto:sueaspeth@hotmail.com)

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**Please Visit our Website:** [www.wilsonia.org](http://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](http://www.wilsonia.org).

## The Wilsonia Historic District Trust Directory

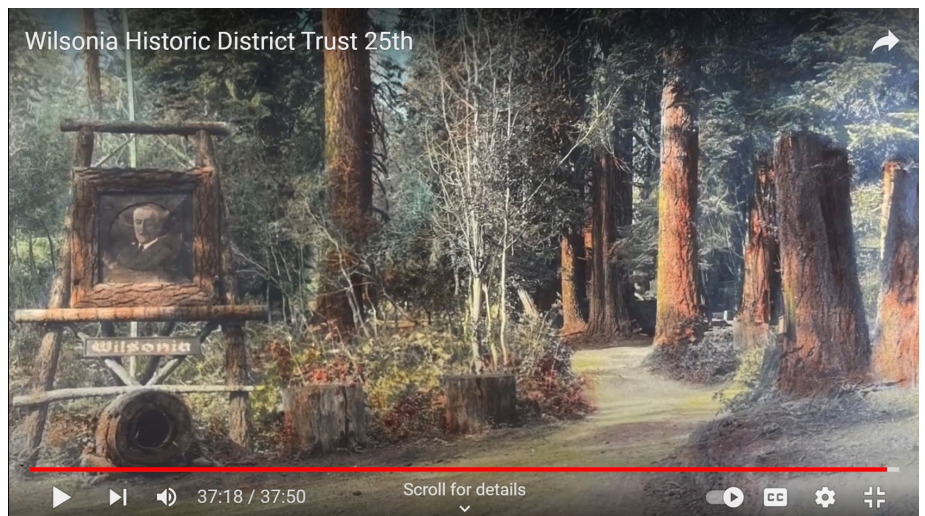
Under the leadership of board member Carley Metcalf, and with the diligent assistance of B.J. and Jim Spitze, our directory was completed this year and most Wilsonians have received their directory. The aim of our directory is to allow cabin users to



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](mailto:carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org) or 559-573-4700.

## Historic Wilsonia Video

To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> 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

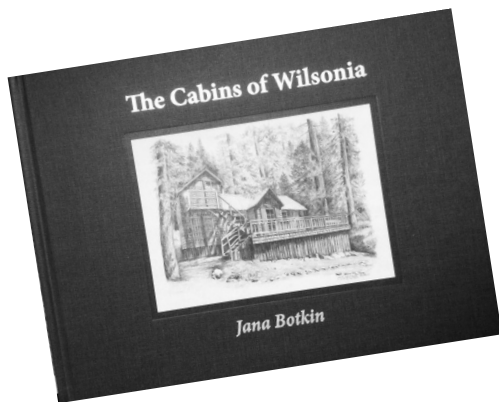
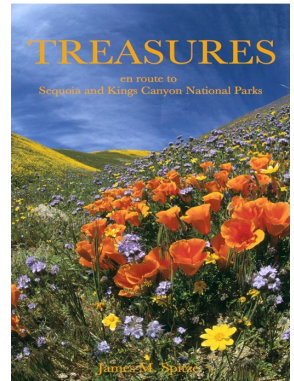


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJXATI5c-EM>

## 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](http://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](mailto:doug.bartsch@fresno.edu)

Drew Sorensen – Vice President [dsorensen102@gmail.com](mailto:dsorensen102@gmail.com)

Sheri Parkinson – Secretary [teebars@yahoo.com](mailto:teebars@yahoo.com)

BJ Spitze – Treasurer [bj.spitze@wilsonia.org](mailto:bj.spitze@wilsonia.org)

Carley Metcalf – Director, [carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org](mailto:carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org)

Rick Carlstrom—Director [rickcarlstrom53@gmail.com](mailto:rickcarlstrom53@gmail.com)

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