



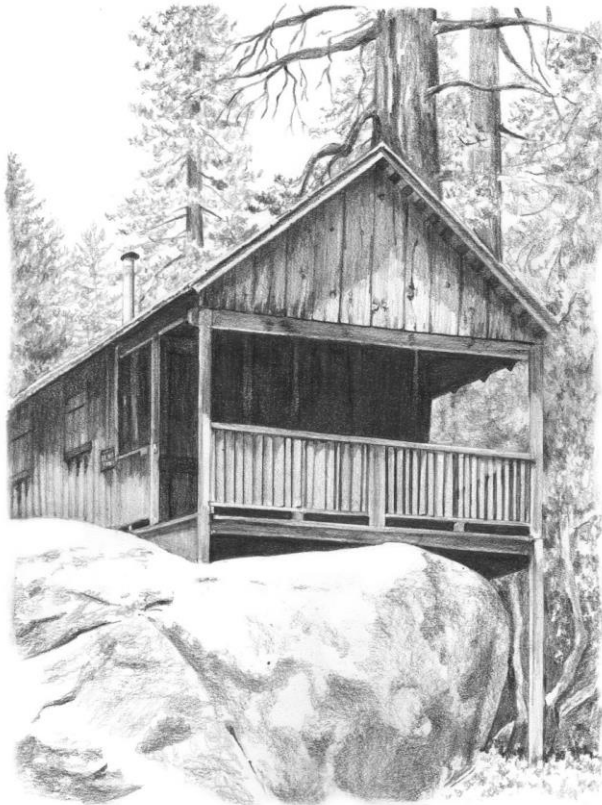
Historic Wilsonia

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 #9 December 2023

In this issue you are invited to:

- Make a tax-deductible donation to strengthen Wilsonia's status as a historic community on the National Historic Register
- Share your cabin stories for publication on our website and in our newsletter
- Participate in a new Video History Project to preserve the stories of Wilsonia cabins and community



"The French Cabin" from *The Cabins of Wilsonia* by Jana Botkin

Help Preserve Wilsonia for Our Children and Grandchildren

By the late 1960s, Wilsonia was a thriving community of over 300 cabins. During the 1970s and '80s, approximately one third of Wilsonia's cabins and all its restaurants, lodges and stores vanished. Years of dedicated work by Wilsonians through the Wilsonia Historic District Trust resulted in Wilsonia being designated as a "historic community" on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. This began the effort to preserve our cabins and our community.

Today, 210 Wilsonia cabins remain, 162 designated as "historic contributors." Historic contributor status is essential to maintain Wilsonia as an historic community. After more than a year of study and consideration, the Wilsonia Historic District Trust Board voted to create a final amendment to our Historic District Application, allowing us to

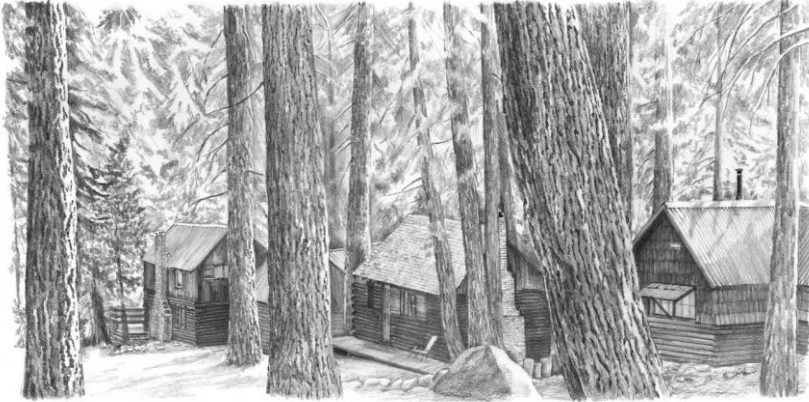
designate additional cabins as historic contributors. We have engaged the Historic Resources Group, our original application partner, to assist us with this process. We will do much of the work ourselves and we estimate the cost of this project to be approximately \$15,000. Our WHDT board members have pledged \$2250 to this effort and have received an additional \$1000. We are well on our way and invite you to consider making a donation to support this important effort. The Wilsonia Historic District Trust is a registered 501c3 organization and all contributions are tax-deductible. You may donate via our website: <https://wilsonia.org/> or mail a check to the Wilsonia Historic District Trust:

BJ Spitze, Treasurer
1484 S. Frankwood Ave.
Sanger, CA 93657

An Invitation to Gather and Share Wilsonia Stories

Many of you know Wilsonia publishes two newsletters. The Wilsonia Times keeps us up to date with social activities, meetings and Wilsonia events. 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.

Examples might include: The Clubhouse Museum and Library, cabins and areas once used for



Cabins on Hazel Lane from [The Cabins of Wilsonia](#) by Jana Botkin

commercial purposes, childhood memories, favorite hikes and many more. See page 3 for a wonderful Wilsonia story.

You are invited to share your suggestions, ideas, and stories with our writing team. Below are our members with their own Wilsonia “biographies” and their email addresses. You’re welcome to find their phone numbers and addresses in the Wilsonia Community directory as well.

Sheri Parkinson teebars@yahoo.com

began her love of Wilsonia through her husband Ty’s family. His great-grandfather built a cabin in 1926 for Ty’s grandmother (now called Camp Wasted). His parents bought their present cabin in 1965, and Ty and Sheri purchased it from them in 2000. They have spent many hours working on it. They spend almost every summer weekend in Wilsonia and count their grandchildren as the 6th generation to be so lucky. Sheri has served on the board of Wilsonia Village Incorporated for six years and has just joined the Wilsonia Historic District Trust Board.

Jean Faszholtz texasjeanfasz@gmail.com

Jean began her Wilsonia experience as a young child, when her parents purchased their cabin in the ‘40s. She worked all through high school and college at the Wilsonia Lodge and later headed thirteen Cabin Tours. She has retired from the Wilsonia Historic District Trust Board but is still very active as the keeper of the Clubhouse Museum and Library.

Sue Speth sueaspeth@hotmail.com

Sue’s Grandpa Rush and Grandma Alice Martin came up the mountain in a horse-drawn wagon in the 1930s so that Alice and her children could camp near a stream all summer, while Rush worked the ranch in the hot valley. Albert Martin, their eldest, purchased The Tumble Inn where all the Martin family still gather. Sue’s Mom, Nancy (Martin) Speth purchased the 1920s Beinhorn/Roth Cabin in 1977, known as “The Speth Spot” at the end of Fern Lane. You’ll meet Sue’s son Isaac Palmisano as he collects Wilsonia family/cabin stories.

Doug Bartsch doug.bartsch@fresno.edu

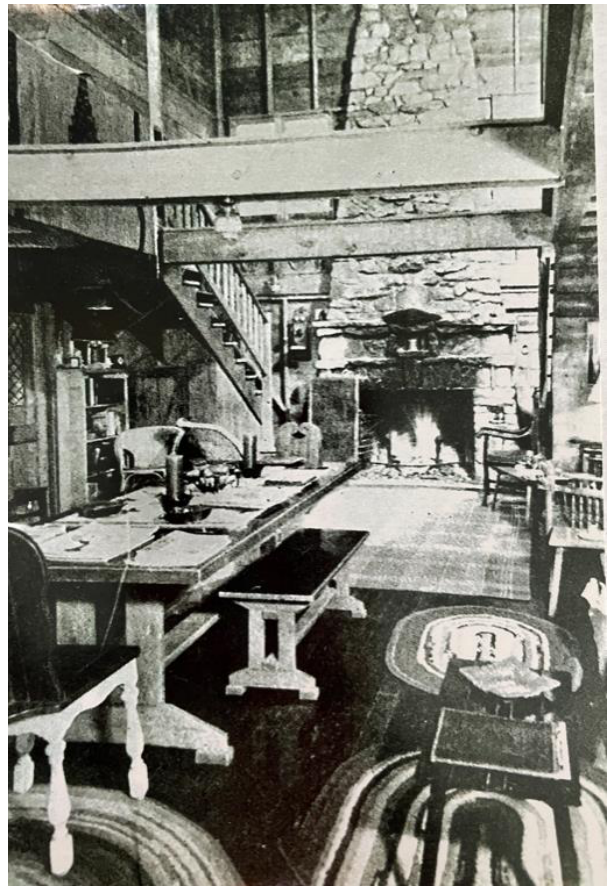
Doug grew up in a family that spent a lot of time at Sequoia Lake and camping in Sunset campground. In 1966 his family purchased a cabin in Wilsonia. In 2017, Doug and his wife Susie purchased a historic Wilsonia cabin on Manzanita Lane, and their family has been restoring it ever since. Doug is the current President of the Wilsonia Historic District Trust.

The Osbourne Lodge

After two decades, a grand family cabin was transformed to become “Pierce’s Osburn Lodge.”

In 1922 Mr. Fred Osbourne, a building contractor from Fresno, built a summer home for his wife, Grace, and their three daughters to escape the summer heat. The location was at Sierra and Alta in the southeast corner of Wilsonia. It was quite luxurious, especially for a quaint place like Wilsonia. The house (or lodge) was large; two story with a more than adequate living/dining area or “Great Room” downstairs including a large rock fireplace, and a kitchen. There were several guest rooms upstairs beyond a balcony that spanned three walls and overlooked the living/dining area below with two ascending staircases. A concert grand piano stood at one end of the great room and there was plenty of seating for guests. This area would later become the lobby when it became a lodge for renters.

The WHDT Writing Team is gathering stories about Wilsonia, our people and our cabins. We invite your contributions!



Mrs. Osbourne was accustomed to an upper-class lifestyle and continued this in Wilsonia. Her chauffeur drove her up in her Pierce Arrow car and slept behind the kitchen between driving duties. She also brought up her Chinese cook who slept in the tank house. Guests raved about how good the food was. Surely other hired help was present as well. Numerous events, concerts, and lavish parties were held at the Osbourne Lodge with many famous visitors from the movie and music industries, Carrie Jacobs-Bond, Percy Grainger, and Charles

Wakefield Cadman to name a few. Evening performances were organized by Mrs. Osbourne. Some of her musically inclined guests helped with the summer Western Music Camp held in Wilsonia. According to Wilsonian Pat Hillman who was a child in the 1930s, “When a party, event, or concert was given, the neighbors had a great time watching the unusual and expensive cars drive through with the “invited” people in their beautiful clothes”.

Continued on page 4

The Osbourne Lodge from page 3

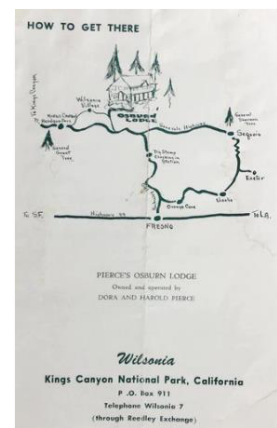
It was in sharp contrast to the way most Wilsonians dressed and lived in the village. No record has been found stating that Wilsonians were invited to the Osbourne Lodge.

The property passed through several hands before being converted into rental units. The name and the spelling of the name eventually changed from Osbourne Lodge to Pierce's Osburn Lodge in 1944 when it was owned by Dora and Harold Pierce.

On the grounds surrounding were 8 self-contained guest cabins, several sleeping cabins with detached bathrooms, and a tank house, all of which were used for guests. Barton Philpott was the carpenter responsible for building some of the cabins in the complex, each with its own name: Manzanita, Boyle, Christmas Tree, October 10, New Year, Fallen Tree, Guest, and Bide A Wee. In the 1950s, after it became a rental entity, the eight smaller cabins rented for \$70 - \$150 per week. They ranged from one sleeping room (The New Year Cabin) to a two-story cabin with three bedrooms (The Boyle Cabin).

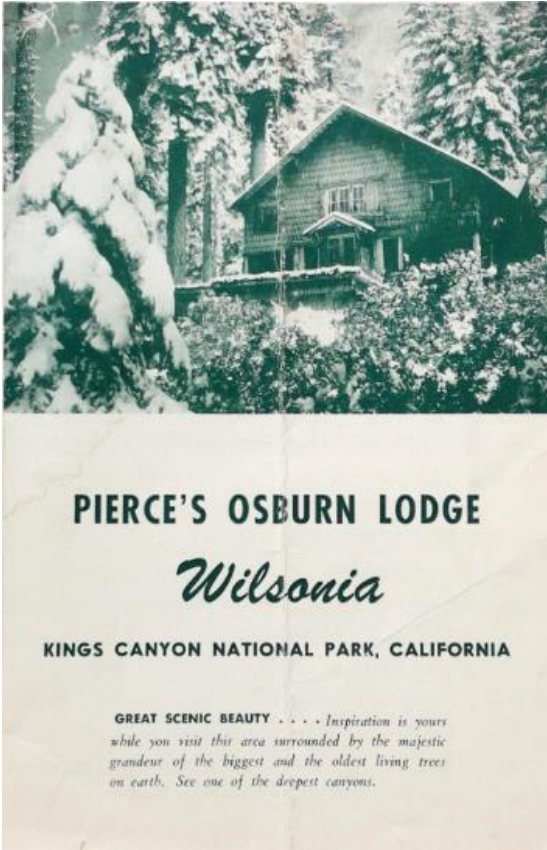


The complex eventually sold to the Government in the late 1960s as a last resort when no other buyer stepped forward. The owners were asking \$80,000. It was torn down shortly afterwards and Wilsonia residents were told that if they took anything from the property, they were NOT to reuse the item in Wilsonia. Today nothing remains but some broken pipes in the ground.



Personal Memories of “Pierce’s Osbourne Lodge”

A 2007 email exchange between Wilsonian Jean Faszholz and Morro Bay artist Randee Ward (a former Pierce’s Osburn Lodge employee)



From Jean to Randee

Aug 25, 2007

Hi Randee,

Remember us? We were the couple who have the cabin in Wilsonia and were so amazed that you both knew the area so well and that you, Randee, had actually worked at Osborne Lodge. We came back to the shop a couple of days later and purchased the work you did of “Jean’s rock” as everyone who knows me calls it. We will enjoy it so much back in our home in Houston.

We recently had our annual “campfire night” at Wilsonia and I chatted with another longtime resident of Wilsonia (Laura Kiser) and told her the story of meeting you. She remembered the Pierces (or was it Pearses) very well. Her cabin was across from the Lodge. She would chat with Mr. Pierce while he was hanging out the wash....and she attended their “cocktail hours”....or was it afternoon teas...ha! Do you remember those events? She also visited them at their lovely home....I think somewhere on the coast. Mrs. Kiser said that when Mr. Pierce died and Mrs. Pierce could no longer keep up the lodge she tried and tried to sell it but got no offers....so finally had to sell it to the government....so that why it was torn down. Those are now empty lots and part of the national park. She also mentioned the quality of furnishings in the lodge and cottages and that she wanted so badly to buy a rug but that all the furnishings and items were sold in “a lot” and went to a man who ran nursing homes....He bought everything for \$2500!

From Randee to Jean

Aug 28, 2007

Hi Again!

Yes, of course I remember you. I’m sorry I wasn’t able to respond to you right away, but I’m so glad you emailed me. The info you passed along in your email was very interesting and put a gigantic smile on my face! ...The “Jean’s rock” tidbit (hilarious) your friend Laura Kiser knowing the Pierces (it was a ritual to hang the wash every day at just about the same time), their “cocktails hour”...yes, I remember all that.

I too visited their home. It was close (a 5 min. drive) to where I lived. They lived in San Marino and I lived in Pasadena when I applied to work at the lodge (1965). I went with my friend to meet and talk with them – and then again my family and I spent several days up at the lodge to “see” what we would need to take that was needed in that old water tower that was to be my home for the summer. Of course, my parents wanted to meet them to be sure everything was good before we finalized that I would work for them. We became great friends that summer and they hold a very special place in my heart. I went back to visit them several times after that summer I worked for them – but then lost touch. :(

The trip where my family stayed up there at the lodge with the Pierces is a very special memory. We actually stayed with them in their home/the main lodge. The layout, the furniture, the huge fireplace...their big eating table downstairs, all wonderful. The view out every window, the beautiful meadow filled with tiny flowers, the clothesline with sheets blowing in the wind, the old water tower...My hikes up behind their property where I used to take in all the beauty....Mike and I actually got engaged up there and spent part of our honeymoon up there.

I can’t get over the fact that Dora had to sell the lodge to the government. That was the one thing they never, ever, wanted to do. To know it was torn down just “kills” me. Many years back we drove up the road just as we drove to it for the first time to see the main lodge, cabins and water tower but nothing looked familiar. Being torn down and all the growth changed “the look” I remembered. The always say you cannot go back. But it is locked in my memory – it was a huge part of my experiences. And, I LOVED IT!



We Are Wilsonia, A Video History Project

Collecting family cabin pictures and stories will continue in 2024. When you see Wilsonian Isaac Palmisano walking around with his camera equipment in May or July, he's on his 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

We look forward to hearing from you anytime. An interview doesn't have to be in person. How about a call or zoom during the winter months?

Example excerpt: "My Grandpa brought my Grandma and kids up the mountain in a wagon every summer to camp in the cool, while he worked in the hot valley."



Thank you! Sound Systems Purchased

In December of 2020, the Wilsonia Historic District Trust announced a goal to raise \$10,000 to purchase public address sound systems for our community. Thanks to all who have donated over the past three years. We are happy and grateful to announce that a sound and projection system have been installed in the Wilsonia Clubhouse, and a portable sound system has been purchased for events around our community. The purchase of these two systems totaled \$10,755.40. Both systems are now in use, entertaining and educating our community!



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 is complete! Many 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 in this project. If you have updates, corrections, or questions/comments, please contact Carley at carley.metcalf@wilsonia.org or 559-573-4700.

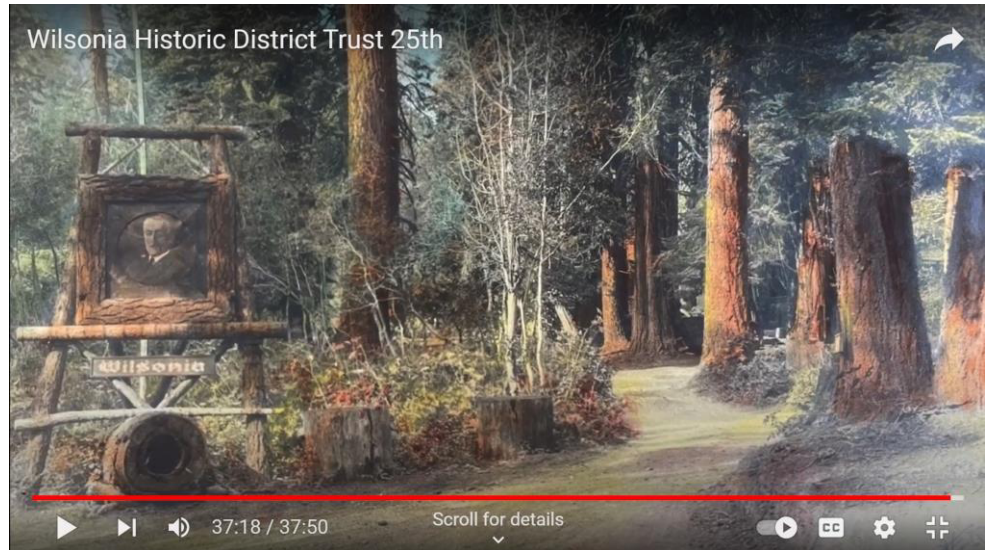


Please Visit our Website: www.wilsonia.org

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 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>

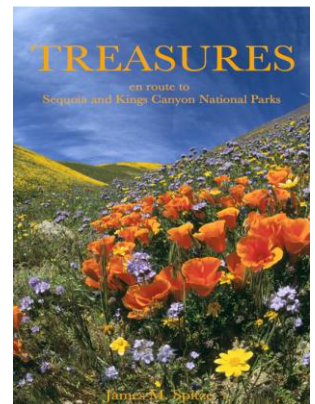
Historic Preservation Guidelines

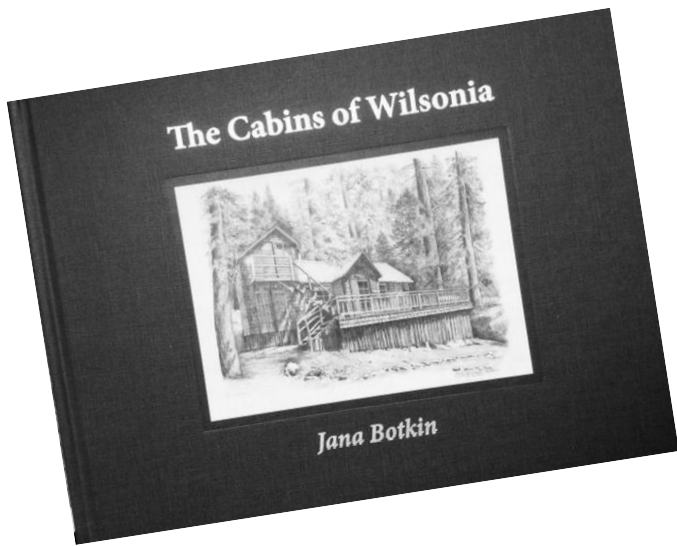
The designation of Wilsonia as a Historic District is not permanent. A large percentage of our still-standing cabins must continue to be historic in nature. If a cabin is modernized so that it no longer has a historic appearance, it will no longer qualify as a “historic contributor.” For information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

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, has 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

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