



THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY OF
WILSONIA
WAS DESIGNATED A HISTORIC DISTRICT
AND LISTED IN THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
ON MARCH 15, 1990
BY DEED OF EMPOWERMENT N.C.P. 1484-285-200

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 #10 March, 2024

In this issue you are invited to:

- Make a donation to strengthen Wilsonia’s status on the National Historic Register
- Make plans to join us for WHDT *Meet and Greet* with a fun Wilsonia History program at the Clubhouse
- Enjoy a story by Jean Faszholtz about working in the Wilsonia Store in the 1940s and ’50s
- 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

Help Preserve Wilsonia for Our Children and Grandchildren



Drawings from The Cabins of Wilsonia
by Jana Botkin

In the early 1990s, the dedicated work of a 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, 210 Wilsonia cabins remain, 162 designated as “historic contributors.” Historic contributor status is essential to maintain Wilsonia as a historic community. The Wilsonia Historic District Trust has begun the work necessary to designate additional cabins as historic contributors. We are nearly half-way to our goal of raising \$15,000 to support this effort. The Wilsonia Historic District Trust is a registered 501c3 organization and contributions may be tax-deductible. You may donate via our website: <https://wilsonia.org/> or mail a check to the
Wilsonia Historic
District Trust:

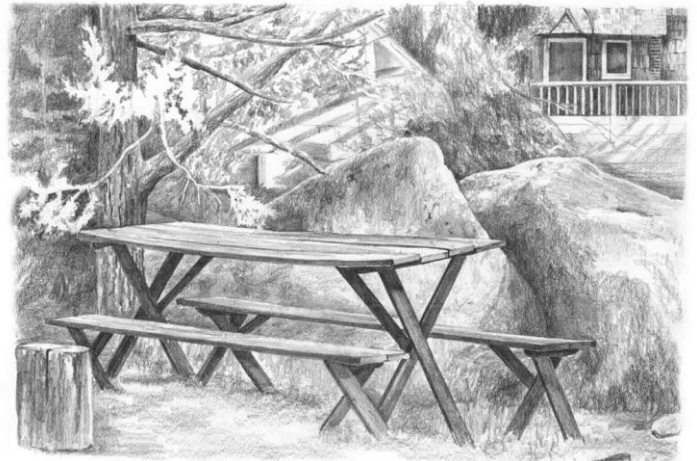
BJ Spitze, Treasurer
1484 S. Frankwood Ave.
Sanger, CA 93657

You are invited to the annual
Wilsonia Historic District Trust
All-Wilsonia Meet and Greet

July 20, 2024, 4:00-5:30 PM
at the Wilsonia Clubhouse

Near the corner of Lilac and Presidents Lanes
in central Wilsonia

*Beverages and appetizers will be served
(you’re welcome to bring something if you’d like :o)*



Working at the Wilsonia Lodge in the '40s and '50s

Reminiscences of Wilsonian Jean Faszholz

My folks purchased our cabin on Willow (Aufweidersehen) in 1945 and I spent every summer there. In 1948 when I graduated from the 8th grade at Zion Lutheran School in Terra Bella, I



Drawing from *The Cabins of Wilsonia* by Jana Botkin

was ready to begin earning some spending money and began working at The Wilsonia Lodge.

A typical morning preparing for work in our family cabin meant splashing ice-cold water on my face. We had no water heater of course and heating water on our 2-burner electric hot plate or starting a fire in the wood stove to warm water was way too much trouble. Thank you, Uncle Fred Oltman who owned “Mike and Ike” cabins, across Willow, for installing a kerosene water

heater and primitive shower in one of his sheds. He would light it up at least once a week and I enjoyed a glorious, warm shower. A quick comb through my hair, a bit of lipstick and zipping up the snazzy, white seersucker uniform with two pockets to hold the nickel and dime and rare quarter tips completed my morning ritual. A short walk down Lilac took me past the tiny guest house on the corner of Presidents Lane and Lilac, presently the Mendoza cabin. The diminutive grandfather was always in the yard tapping away with his tiny hammer on some amazing project. You can still see remnants of his work bench, the bridge over his dry creek bed, the face carved in the gate post and decorations imbedded in the concrete of the fireplace for the steam sauna in his cabin. I walked past quietly so as not to disturb the elves I was sure were sleeping upstairs. I next had to pass the Touch of Holland Restaurant and Bar and their terrifying barking Doberman.

Johnny Akin was one of the ten or so original investors who built (1946) and ran The Wilsonia Lodge. His daughter, Dorothy Akin Lockwich and her husband Pete were the managers of the restaurant, grocery store and nine hotel rooms. I was hired as a dishwasher and general “flunky.” The next summer I was promoted to waitress and worked that position till 1955 when I graduated from college, married, and then moved to Houston in 1956.

Dorothy and Pete had 4 little kids and lived in the cabin directly above and behind the Lodge. Mornings began with their cute kids and I eating hotcakes while sitting on the stools closest to the kitchen. I insisted Pete add a window shade so I didn't have to watch customers stand outside the door, looking longingly at us eating breakfast and begging to have the door unlocked so they could have their coffee before the 8 a.m. opening. One customer offered to make the coffee if I would just open the door.

“Working at the Wilsonia Lodge” continued from page 2

I usually worked a split shift during the busy breakfast and dinner times. It was hard to keep waitresses. They came up from the valley, complained there was nothing to do in Wilsonia for fun, and would just quit and not show for their next shift. I will never forget the time I arrived for work to find a waitress had quit and found a ride back to the valley. Every booth and stool around the horseshoe shaped fountain was filled and customers were standing behind each stool waiting. That job sure taught me a lot about a good work ethic, being organized and keeping my cool. It also taught me that people can easily be hoodwinked. Fresh trout was on the menu, but when ordered what this really meant is that I ran next door to the store and got a box of frozen trout which were probably farm raised in Colorado! I would often “bone” the fish for the customer who had no clue how to do it and maybe get a couple of quarters as a tip. On the other hand, Pete Lockwich was a butcher and provided lots of fresh meat for both the restaurant and store.



The Wilsonia Lodge

During the 1930s a retail store and gas station were open for business along Park Road. There the store operated until 1942 when it burned to the ground. There was no store in Wilsonia until 1946 when a third store building (pictured) was built in the same location, funded by a group of Wilsonia property owners. This building remained in operation until it was destroyed by fire in 1959. Another store was built on the same spot incorporating the same chimney.

The Wilsonia Lodge fountain was noted for thicker, yummiier milkshakes than at Grant Grove so I would occasionally look out the window to see a whole troop of hungry kids from Sequoia Lake coming to get one. Those were also the years the handsome college boys were hired to dig out gooseberry bushes to control the spread of White Pine Blister Rust. They were commonly known as the “BRC” boys. They loved milkshakes and I would sneak extra scoops of ice cream into theirs. In response, the BRC boys wrote a “love song,” probably something about Jeannie with the light brown hair, and serenaded me during a campfire program. I was both embarrassed and thrilled.

Evening entertainment was campfire programs, playing records, playing cards and square dances that were called by Walt and Lil Smith. None of us girls ever had to worry about not

“Working at the Wilsonia Lodge” continued from page 3

having a dance partner because those BRC boys were all there. The Wilsonia Lodge was also a regular hangout for sitting outside and reading magazines and comic books.



Along with my restaurant shifts, I worked in the grocery store from time to time. After years of pursuing it, a liquor license was finally secured but I wasn't old enough to sell alcohol. I would have to leave the store and run up to the Lockwich cabin so Pete could come make the sale. The liquor license “enforcer” finally amended the rule so that when alcohol was part of a sale, I could enter the charges into the cash register and the customer would lean over the counter and push the final key. Do you think this was legal? My guess is that Pete was friends with the “inspectors” because we always knew when they were coming and would put on our hairnets and clean “extra good.”

I met several “characters” who are worth mentioning. The restaurant had one chef who was very neat and nice, but she held a wad of snuff in her mouth and regularly spit into an empty milk carton while working. There was another chef who made terrific soups but would spend his days off down in the valley, guaranteed to return to work with a heavy-duty hangover. I remember the fierce, angry glare he gave once to customers who sent their hamburger steaks back to the kitchen because they were so raw that they were still “mooving.” At the end of the Wilsonia Lodge was a room near an outside stairway. One summer this room seemed to always be occupied by a very nice, pretty lady who rarely left the room. My married friend Rita with bleached blond hair and bright red lipstick waited tables with me and during slow periods would sit me in a booth and tell me about the birds and the bees. Rita also explained the lady who stayed at the Wilsonia Lodge in the last room on the corner near the outside stairway to me.



Jean and Lorine in front of the “tiny log cabin” on Cedar Lane.

My Terra Bella girlfriend Lorine and I worked and bunked together for a couple of summers. When our one-bedroom cabin was full of family we would stay in the tiny one bed log cabin next to the Lockwich place. This small dwelling and the Lockwich cabin burned in 2016.

The original Wilsonia Lodge, where I worked, burned in the late ‘50s and a much more attractive and inviting location was rebuilt on the same foundation. I bet many of you have stories about that Wilsonia Lodge, restaurant, and store! I often reminisce about finishing my work shift and walking back up Lilac in the evenings, enjoying Elvis blaring from the juke box of the “Touch of Holland” restaurant. I was so excited to arrive at work one summer to find that Pete had purchased a used juke box for our restaurant. Only one problem, no matter what song was selected, the juke box would only play Wimoweh by Pete Seeger’s band, The Tokens. I can still hear it.





An Invitation to Gather and 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

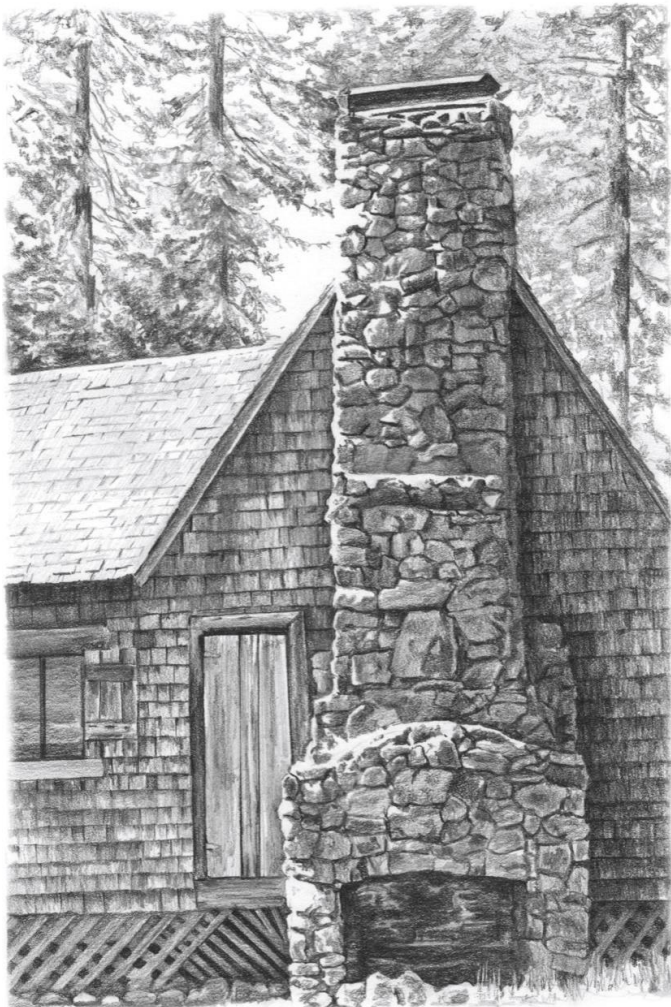
Historic Wilsonia Writing Team

Sheri Parkinson teebars@yahoo.com

Jean Faszholz texasjeanfasz@gmail.com

Sue Speth sueaspeth@hotmail.com

Doug Bartsch doug.bartsch@fresno.edu



Community directory as well.

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.

Drawing from [The Cabins of Wilsonia](#) by Jana Botkin

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

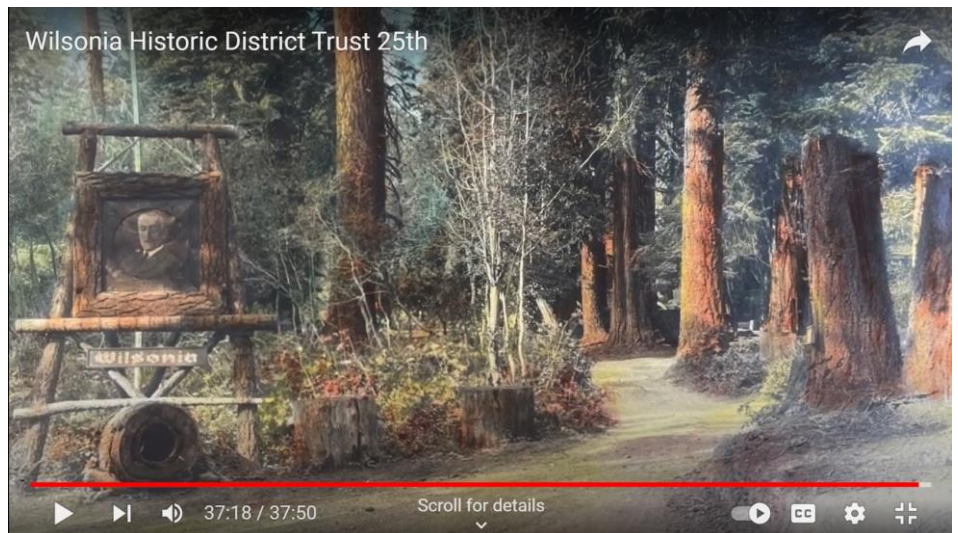


The Wilsonia Historic District Trust Directory

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.

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

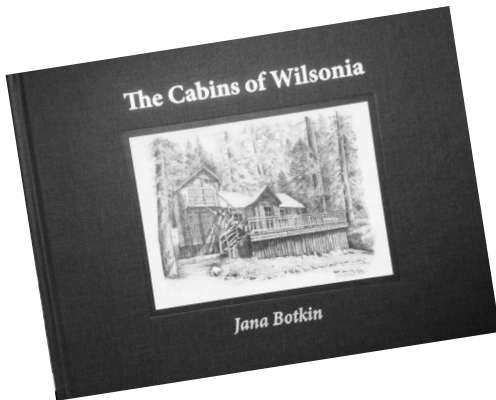
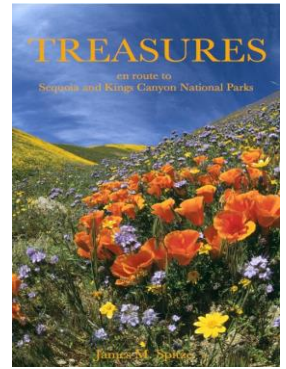


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJXATI5c-EM>

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, 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

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

Drew Sorensen – Vice President dsorensen102@gmail.com

Bob Foster – Secretary bob.foster@wilsonia.org

BJ Spitze – Treasurer bj.spitze@wilsonia.org

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

Rick Carlstrom—Director rickcarlstrom53@gmail.com

Sheri Parkinson- Director teebars@yahoo.com

