



*Published by the Wilsonia Historic District Trust for all Wilsonia cabin owners, their families, and friends. June, 2022*



## Celebrate 25 Years of Wilsonia's Historic Status

July 2, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.  
Wilsonia Clubhouse

Join us at the Clubhouse for a celebration of Wilsonia's continuing status as one of our nation's historic communities. We will gather to enjoy refreshments, a multimedia presentation featuring some long-time Wilsonians who have experienced this special place through much of Wilsonia's history.

You are invited to the annual  
Wilsonia Historic District  
Trust

### *All-Wilsonia Meet and Greet*

July 16, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.  
At the Collin Cabin  
Corner of Manzanita and Fern  
in northwest Wilsonia  
*Beverages and appetizers will be served*



**THE WILSONIA DIRECTORY** - Carley Metcalf and her team continue their work on a Wilsonia Directory. Content will be: (1) Wilsonia cabin address, (2) owner/contact name, (3) phone number(s), (4) email address. Usage will be explicitly limited to "non-commercial."

Carley's team plans to continue to contact each cabin owner this summer to obtain all the necessary information and permission. If you choose not to be a part of the directory your information will not be included. All participating cabins will receive a copy of the directory when this project is completed. This community project will benefit all cabin owners in time of a crisis or emergency. Thank you to the owners who have sent their information to us already.

If you have any questions or concerns or want to schedule a meeting with a team member, please feel free (and encouraged) to contact Carley via her email [rustyacres93@gmail.com](mailto:rustyacres93@gmail.com) or by phone at 559-573-4700.



# A Bustling Mountain Community

## Early Businesses in Wilsonia

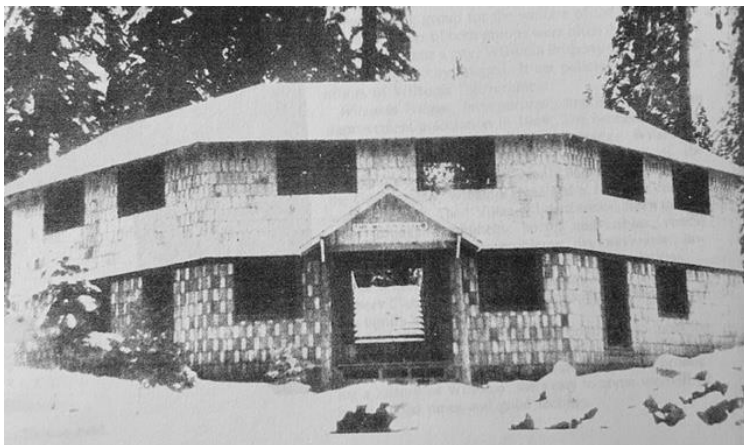


Sources:

- *National Register Nomination for Wilsonia Historic District*
- *Wilsonia, Yesterday, Today and Forever – A Scrapbook by Fern Tripp*
- *The President's Village, by Tim Christensen*

Following centuries of Native American presence in and around present day Wilsonia, hunters and trappers made their livelihood in the area beginning in the 1870s. The early 1890s saw the removal of most of the property's magnificent Sugar Pine trees by the Smith Comstock Lumber Company. Logging in this area was ended in 1895 and beginning in 1900, new owner E.O. Miller opened the area to campers, largely people from the Valley seeking relief from the summer heat. Some of these campers built wooden platforms upon which to pitch their tents for extended stays into the beginning of autumn. Miller's campground continued to be a camping destination through 1917. In 1918, new owners, Andy and Arza Ferguson named the property "Wilsonia" after President Wilson and real estate became the prime business in the area. Ferguson subdivided most of the property into 292 lots and offered them for sale at \$50 each. Over the next few years lot prices increased to \$125, \$200, then \$400.

Logging  
Campground  
Grocery Stores  
Horseback Riding  
Barbershop  
Meat Market  
Bakery  
Dairy  
Chicken/egg Ranch  
Gas Station  
Horseback Newspaper delivery  
Restaurants  
Guest Rooms  
Chinchilla Farm



Wilsonia's first grocery store was opened in 1924 in the octagonal Wilsonia Clubhouse. Located in the same location as the current Clubhouse, the new structure also housed a barber shop and meat market. The Clubhouse had an open central area where campfires were held. Around the perimeter of the building was a covered dance floor and band stand where live bands from the valley performed once or twice weekly during the summer.

*After the original Clubhouse burned in 1928, a new building was built in the same location. This building collapsed under heavy snow during the winter of 1932-33. Club members built back this building which still stands.*

A horse rental and pack train business was started in 1925 by Dick and Velma Wilson, a horse ranching family from the Hanford area. In addition to their stable and horse rentals, the Wilsons operated the store in the Wilsonia Clubhouse. Soon a small dairy was established in the Big Stump area with cattle grazing in the meadows and a small bottling operation in a tent atop one of the large stumps. The milk came by wagon to Wilsonia and Grant Grove. Just south of Big Stump a chicken farm operated to provide fresh eggs for Wilsonia residents, employees, and visitors to the "General Grant" National Park. Between 1925 and 1932 a bakery operated at the western edge of the present-day Park Road parking lot.



When the original Clubhouse burned in the summer of 1928, the Wilsons built an entry and walk-up window into their cabin's front bedroom so that they could continue to sell groceries. A new Clubhouse was built on the same location.

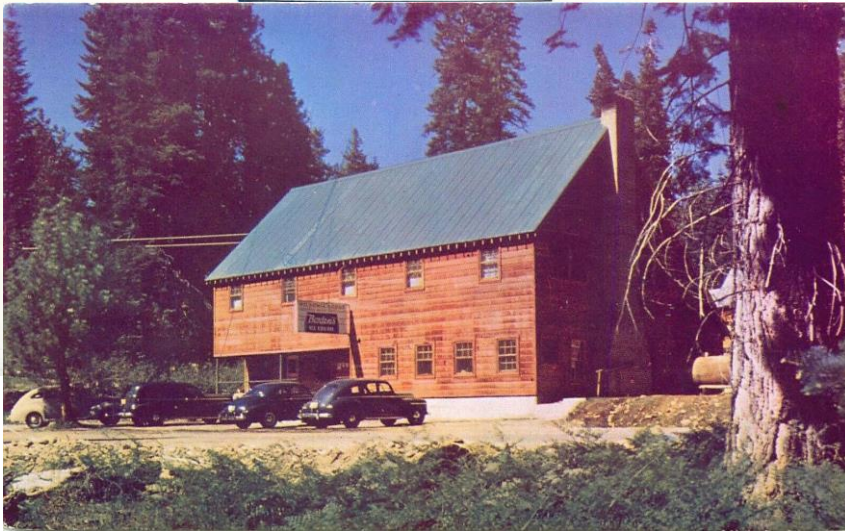
Wilsonia Clubhouse- 1933  
Illustration courtesy artist Jana Botkin



C1287—WILSONIA LODGE  
 A vacationists and tourists Haven! Lo-  
 cated ½ mile off Highway 180 in  
 Grant Grove National Park. Lodge,  
 Coffee Shop, Market.



Kodachrome Reproduction by  
 Mike Roberts Studios Berkeley 2, California



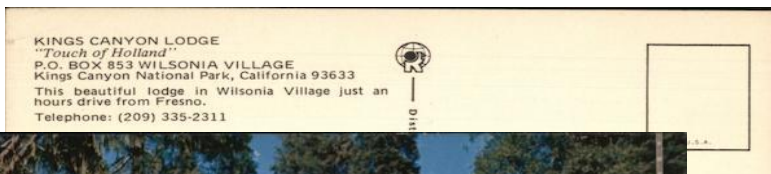
1940s Post Card of the Wilsonia Lodge built in 1946

Andy Ferguson built a new store building on a lot along Park Road, the entry route to General Grant National Park.

During the 1930s another retail store and gas station were open for business along Park Road and the Fresno Bee was delivered on horseback by Dottie Wilson. Around the same time the former chicken ranch was converted to a chinchilla farm. 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 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.

**Rebuilt in 1960, the Wilsonia Lodge included a store, a restaurant, and guest rooms.**  
 Post Card - 1960

The Wilsonia Lodge and the nearby Kings Canyon Lodge “Touch of Holland” (incorporating Wilsonia’s first cabin owned by Andy and Arza Ferguson in the area of the present-day dumpsters) provided meals and nightly accommodations to Wilsonians and Park visitors. By the early 1990’s, these properties had been purchased by the government and the buildings removed.



**Kings Canyon Lodge, designated by its Dutch owners as the “Touch of Holland”**  
 Postcards - 1960

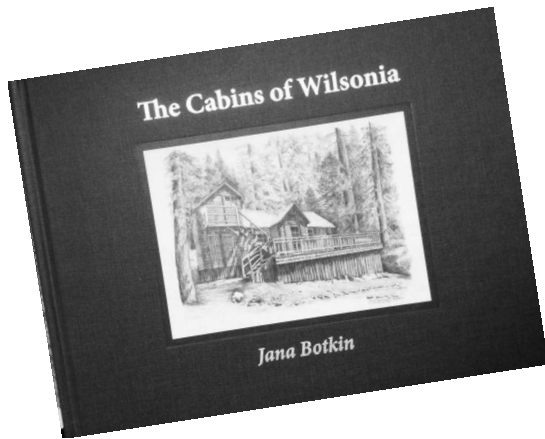
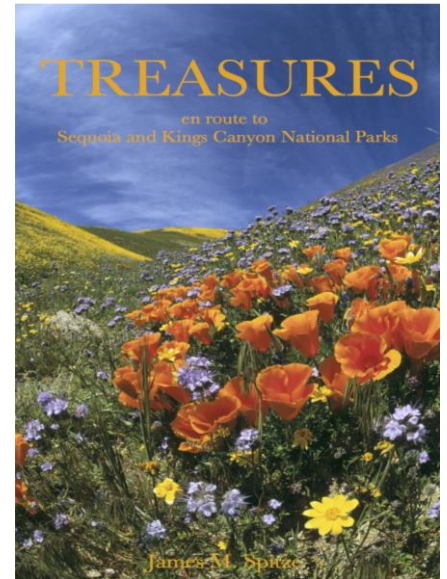




## Add to your cabin library...

### *TREASURES en route to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.*

Wilsonian **Jim Spitze**, one of WHDT's pioneers and founding editor of this newsletter, has created this fabulous historical guide to our own 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. Copies will be available for purchase at WHDT's anniversary celebration on July 2.



### **The Cabins of Wilsonia**

by Artist Jana Botkin

Available now - \$50.00 (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 totally 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.

### **Board of Directors**

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

Bob Foster – Vice President [sam186@aol.com](mailto:sam186@aol.com)

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