



The Wilsonia News

Published six times a year by the Wilsonia Historic District Trust for all Wilsonia cabin owners, their families and friends. Volume 1, Issue 3, May 2021. Jim Spitze, Editor; Doug Bartsch, Designer.
To contact us, send an email to wilsonianews@wilsonia.org

THE EDITOR'S COLUMN – Issue #3! This could become habit forming. The WHDT Board of Directors thanks our readers for their many kind emails in response to our first two issues.

The Wilsonia News is an informal, relaxed little newsletter intended to inform but also to some-times amuse Wilsonia's cabin owners, their families and friends. We will always do our best to be timely, thorough, and accurate. Our issues are not copyrighted. Readers may freely copy and reuse our content. New in this issue:

- News about an “in process” project to develop and issue to all cabin owners a **Wilsonia Roster**
- A note on a possible **Wilsonia Museum** in one of the Wilsonia cabins owned by the NPS
- All you might want to know about the **Sierra Masonic Family Club**
- All you might want to know about **Restoring Your Cabin** and working with the NPS.
- A paragraph and photograph regarding the **Wilsonia Corral**

and in every issue:

- A combined & consolidated WHDT+WVI calendar of **Upcoming Events**
- Our ever-expanding list of **Recommended Wilsonia Service Providers**
- An update regarding any of our Board-approved projects
- A story from one of Fern Tripp's Wilsonia books
- An extract from **Treasures en route to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks**
- A concluding cartoon or something similar (this time, a “Who is this?” quiz)

Three brief comments: **ONE** – The WHDT Board of Directors is elected, not appointed, and so are its officers. **TWO** – The WHDT is an authorized recipient for tax-deductible Wilsonia-related donations. Donations to the WHDT may be designated for a specific project if wished but undesignated gifts are preferred. According to the IRS, designated gifts must be used by the recipient for the specified purpose or returned to the donor. Diversion to other purposes can only be made with the donor's in advance permission. **THREE** – While the WHDT Board of Directors has never had any trouble finding new members to serve, if you or any Wilsonia cabin owner is interested in being a part of this highly collegial, energetic group, please let our President, Drew Sorensen know and he will keep you in mind should one of the current members retire (sort of an informal “waiting list”).

WE BEGIN ON A SAD NOTE – [with thanks to Jean Faszhholz for this material] Mildred Haycraft (Dede) Virgo who retired from WHDT's Board last year, passed away on Easter Sunday. We will miss her independent and spunky spirit. Dede's family purchased their cabin in the Masonic Tract

over 80 years ago and she learned to walk there. She told wonderful stories of her youth, especially of her brother and his friends and their antics, including a tale about him almost blowing up their outhouse!

Dede and her husband Gib were active members of the Sierra Masonic Family Club and Dede was proud to represent it on our Board. A good home has been found for her beloved cat, Misty.

THE WILSONIA ROSTER – Carley Metcalf, one of WHDT’s two new Board members, has started working on a **Wilsonia Roster** and already has in-hand most of the information needed for a 1st edition. Content will be (1) person’s name, (2) Wilsonia cabin address, and (3) email address. Usage will be explicitly limited to “non-commercial” (a restriction found in many club rosters). Hardcopies might be available at the many Wilsonia 4th of July weekend events. **TO OPT OUT** - If you would like to not have your email address and/or telephone number included, just ask Carley at rustyacres93@gmail.com and she will make sure to exclude it while still including your name and cabin address.

THE WILSONIA MUSEUM – The following is hugely preliminary ... While the WHDT was the primary funder of the current wall display cases of historic materials in our clubhouse, we have long discussed the idea of a *real* Wilsonia Museum. Now that might actually happen. The NPS has suggested that if we were to prepare and submit to them a proposal to use – for a WILSONIA MUSEUM – one of the current NPS-owned cabins in Wilsonia, that the NPS might look favorably on such a proposal. Several “Friends of WHDT” have already volunteered to serve as docents to enable us to keep the building open (perhaps every Saturday from 9am-3pm during the summer) and one family has (very preliminarily) suggested they might provide an endowment the interest on which would fund some of that annual maintenance expenses. This is a long, long way from becoming a reality. Issues such as ownership, initial building restoration funding, physical access requirements, etc. will all have to worked out. It may not prove feasible but this writer believes there is a chance and the end goal is too worthy not to take the first steps ...

BRASS PLAQUES – The WHDT will be ordering a small supply of brass plaques for those Wilsonia cabins that have been designated as officially “Historic” by the keeper of *The National Register of Historic Places*. If you have such a cabin but don’t already have one of the brass plaques proclaiming its historic nature, and would like to purchase one, please contact Gus Collin at wilsonianagus@gmail.com. We don’t know the price “for sure” yet but you should expect it to be around \$175 each (maybe a bit more). If you are unsure of your cabin’s historic natures, any of the following members of our Board of Directors can tell you: Drew Sorensen (President), BJ Spitze (Treasurer), Bob Foster (Secretary), and Gus Collin (Vice President). The wording on the plaques is: This cabin has been officially designated a contributing property of **WILSONIA** an historic district listed in *The National Register of Historic Places* on March 15, 1996 US Dept. of Interior Nat’l Park Service.

Ye Olde Combined and Consolidated WHDT+WVI Calendar of Upcoming Events

[Because of COVID all dates are tentative]

May

- May 29th – 4-6pm: Dollar Dog Takeout Meal & Clubhouse Open House hosted by WVI Board and the Fire Committee (clubhouse)
- May 30th – 11am: The annual (sort of) Wilsonia Duck Race at Hazel & Lily Lanes; 1pm: Meeting of WVI Board of Directors (clubhouse), open to all

June

- June 12th – **Black-Pot Cook-off** at the Burgin’s cabin; **2pm** cooking begins, **5pm** meet & greet with new Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks Superintendent, Clay Jordan, **6pm** Black Pot judging and Potluck Dinner, sponsored by the **Wilsonia Advisory Team (WAT)**
- June 26th – Clean-up Day, 8am-5pm with a 12noon potluck lunch at the Burgin’s cabin for the clean-up participants.
- June 27th – 1pm: WVI Board of Directors meeting at the Burgin’s cabin, open to all

July

All 4th of July info is highly tentative. Issue #4 in late June will have the FINAL info.

- July 3rd – **9-11am Wildflower Walk** –, led by Susan Stocking Harper; meet at clubhouse steps, hosted by WHDT
- **Grand TRADITIONAL 4th of July Parade** – all are welcome to participate; contact Gus Collin if you have any questions wilsoniagus@gmail.com and at **1:30pm** another one of our community’s grand traditions, an **Ice Cream Social** – Hosted by Jean & Debbie Faszholz
- July 12th – 16th: **Quilters & Crafters Retreat**; starts at the Clubhouse. For more info contact Mel Peters dicknmel@netptc.net or Penny Burgin chuckpen@gmail.com For info regarding the Pine Cone Wreath or Cross projects, contact Carley Metcalf rustyacres93@gmail.com
- July 17th – **Meet & Greet Wine Evening** at the Collin’s cabins; 3-6pm; the Boards of both WHDT and WVI invite the Wilsonia community to meet Wilsonia’s leaders and hear (briefly we hope) about what they are doing for our beloved community; hosted by the several Wilsonia families, six as this goes to press, others welcome, the more-the-merrier. Two rare Jeroboam bottles of fine wine have been donated along with almost a case of some of California’s finest wines. Rumors are emerging of some truly *gourmet* nibbles, free and open to all
- July 24th – WVI “**Taste of Wilsonia**”; a fundraiser, tickets \$20 each, for reservations and more info, contact Neal Mixer nealmixer@gmail.com

August – with more details in our end-of-June issue

- August 7th – **1pm** WVI Board of Directors meeting (clubhouse), open to all, **6-7pm** BBQ Dinner, **7-8pm** WVI’s annual General Meeting & election of members and officers
- August 14th – **10am WAT Business Meeting**, in the clubhouse; NPS representatives will be in attendance for Q&A; open to all and “all” are very much invited
- August 21st – **1-3pm: WHDT Educational Event** – Brief talk and book signing with author Jim Spitze on *Treasures en route to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks*; the 4th in Jim’s distinguished series of books on California history topics (the 2nd & 3rd having been published by The Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley); at the clubhouse
- August 21st – **8pm Wilsonia Treasure Hunt**, Moonlight Edition

September – with more details in our end-of-June issue

- September 4th – **6pm Fiesta d’Taco** led by Jean Faszholz and her friends with encouragement and support from the WHDT, at the clubhouse
- September 5th – **8-11am Pancake Breakfast** at the clubhouse, **1pm WVI Board of Directors meeting** at the clubhouse, open to all

NEXT YEAR(!)

July – with details in later issues as the planning for this Spectacular Event evolves ...

- July 2nd – **25th Anniversary Celebration** of the founding of the Wilsonia Historic District; a dinner+program event at the clubhouse

THE SOUND SYSTEM PROJECT – The Wilsonia Historic District Trust is currently raising money to purchase a top-notch, state of the art, public address and video system. This will be purchased from and installed by NTM Productions out of Visalia. Nathan McGuigan is the owner and has completed more extensive projects up and down the San Joaquin Valley. Highlights of the system include: Tannoy DVS8 speakers (6); QSC PLD4.2 4 channel power amplifier; Shure BLX24R/SM58 wireless handheld microphones (2); Optoma Technology HD146X Full HD projector; and other high quality accessories. WHDT believes this will be a welcome addition to our beloved Clubhouse and allow for all attendees to hear and/or see any presentation equally well no matter where you are seated. In addition, any extra tax-deductible dollars raised will go towards the purchase of a portable sound system that may be used all around Wilsonia at various events such as those held by our partner organizations in the Masonic Tract. To see the entire bid (not including the portable system), please go to www.wilsonia.org

As of 04/21/21, \$5,726.00 of the required \$10,000 has been donated. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to this worthy cause, you may donate electronically by visiting WHDT's website www.wilsonia.org or you can write a check payable to WHDT and send it to BJ Spitze, WHDT Treasurer, 1484 S. Frankwood Ave., Sanger, CA 93657. Many thanks to those of you who have already contributed to this important project.

RECOMMENDED WILSONIA SERVICE PROVIDERS – We invite all readers to submit their recommendations. We expect this list to “grow & blossom” and to become a “go to” source. Here is the current list:

- Estrada Tree Service, Tree Removal and Trimming, Gilbert Estrada, 559-393-3607, two quite positive recommendations.
- Mark Vetter, general contractor, numerous quite positive recommendations, 559-259-9538. He often has a waiting list.
- Paul Finck, general contractor, similar reputation to Mark Vetter, 559-358-5797. He too often has a waiting list. finckwilsonia@gmail.com
- Tee Zee Painting – Many happy Wilsonia customers. Eddie Romero, 559-270-1558
- For other help with cabin restorations: Zamora Electric, Richardson Flooring (get details from Doug Bartsch)
- Willies Chimney Service of Clovis, CA, 559-593-0444, good work and much less expensive than others. [might be a bit “dated” as work was done four years ago]
- The Coffee Shop at Clingan’s Junction, fine scones and an excellent avocado on bagel sandwich, well worth picking up a few while en route; friendly personnel.
- Jana Botkin “I use pencil, oil paint, and murals, to make art people can understand, of places and things they love for prices that won’t scare them. I do custom art and love to draw cabins.” www.cabinart.net 559-561-7606
- Sequoia Outdoor Power, just off Highway 180, 0.1 mile south on Alta Ave.; repairs to outdoor gas/does; powered lawnmowers, etc. 559-840-7174 fast, competent, friendly, inexpensive. One of the owner’s sons is the *Chairsaw Artist* behind the wooden bears seen in Wilsonia.
- Doug Hoopes of D&H Pest Control; comes once a year to Wilsonia (end of June or early July); sprays for carpenter ants; already serving seven Wilsonia cabins; office address is 1187 N. Willow, suite 103, Clovis, CA, 559-974-5707

Some service providers charge for travel time. If you need help with something (chimney?), let the editor know and he will keep a list of those having similar needs. If a service provider were to know that he could do several jobs while here, he might reduce the travel time fee; perhaps divide it equally.

THE SIERRA MASONIC FAMILY CLUB (WHO, WHAT, WHY) – by Rick & Karen Carlstrom

The origin of the Sierra Masonic Family Club began in 1919. A group of men, primarily from Dinuba, began negotiations with a “Mr. Ferguson” for the purchase of twenty acres of land, comprising the extreme Northeast corner of Wilsonia. The sale was completed in 1921. The piece of land was surveyed that summer and officially recorded with Tulare County in 1925. The early maps showed forty lots, plus a large playground area that now serves as the Masonic Club common grounds, currently used for various gatherings and events. There are also reservation areas that serve as the western buffer along Hazel and the eastern edge with the KCNP, as well as along the creek that passes through the grounds. In 1924, twenty-four lots were sold, and soon twenty-four cabins were built. The bylaws of the Masonic Club allow for members ownership of the individual cabins, along with a 1/24th interest in the entire property. From the beginning, the Masonic Club members have practiced organized community efforts to improve the property. The roads were built by the membership and have always been maintained by the membership. The County of Tulare has never done any constructions, maintenance, or paving of the private roads.

A spring along the extreme eastern boundary was boxed and sealed and the water was then piped to a pair of membership-built rock tanks. The water is then gravity-fed to all of the members’ cabins. To improve water pressure, a larger redwood tank was added in service the farthest uphill cabins. Combined, the tanks have over 25,000 gallons of water that can be used by the Fire Department personnel for fire control in Wilsonia Village. The spring has never gone dry, even in the most severe drought years and has continued to gush two to four gallons per minute. During the “Troubles” times of the 60s and 70s, the NPS made numerous efforts – without success - to survey our strong spring onto their side of the property line. This was to enhance the serving of their two million gallon water tank that takes care of Grant Grove. They then attempted to close our spring by setting off dynamite charges uphill. A hurled rock punctured the top of an unoccupied member’s cabin and the dynamiting was stopped.

The complete Sierra Masonic Family Club tract is cleaned and maintained by organized work weekends where each cabin has family representation. Work is completed to clean and prune the brush for fire safety, and to repair and improve the club’s common areas. Our club membership is proud to be a part of Wilsonia, and work with Wilsonia Village Inc. and the Wilsonia Historic District Trust in ongoing efforts to maintain our little slice of Wilsonia Heaven, and its history.

RESTORING A HISTORIC CABIN & WORKING WITH THE NPS – by Doug Bartsch

Wilsonia has been a home away from home for our family since 1966. I grew up coming to the Bartsch family A-frame (now the Cote cabin), Susie and I brought our children here as they grew, and their children in turn have known Wilsonia from their beginning.

For years Susie and I admired the old “Clapp, then Hall, then Rice Cabin” at the corner of Manzanita and Fern Lanes as we strolled through Wilsonia on our way to the Park headquarters. Our imaginations were sparked by this vintage cabin, guessing about its history as we looked at what appeared to be the original cabin with multiple additions.

When we first walked into the cabin during the summer of ’17 we realized that aside from the additions made in the 1940s, the cabin had been preserved largely as it was when it was built during the summers of 1933 and 1934. Owner Dan O’Lear enthusiastically shared stories of the original owners, the Clapps of Orosi, and of his family’s history at the cabin, originally named the “Sequoia Chief.” We decided to purchase the cabin and committed to its historic preservation and renovation to fit the needs of our growing family.

We had heard stories of the challenges faced by others in making renovations and improvements to properties within the national park, and in particular Wilsonia, listed on the National Register of Historic Communities. We talked to many of these Wilsonia residents in order to learn from their experiences. Our son, Nick, a construction manager and contractor with years of construction experience in Tulare County, was our thinking partner in the adventure. Further, we had the blessing of the hands-on help of our three adult children and their spouses, several wonderful sub-contractors, and the guidance of friends at the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park office. All of these partners made our journey efficient and an overall positive experience in spite of the dust and the critters. We share our story of blood (only a little), sweat (not a little) and tears (nearly none) in hope that it might be helpful to any of you who are considering renovation and improvement of your special place in Wilsonia.

Here's What We Learned

- 1 **The National Park Service is in full support of our commitment to preservation of Wilsonia as a Historic Community** and their staff is ready to help us navigate the process. Before closing escrow at the end of September, our first step was to meet with then Park Service representative Denise Robertson (our current representative is Elly Boerke Elly.Boerke@nps.gov) at the Park office in Three Rivers. Denise explained the planning and approval process, unique to properties within National Park boundaries and Historic Communities. We became aware of the need to include in our plans:
 - a. **Wilsonia Historic Preservation Guidelines**

<https://wilsoniavillage.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/whdt-historic-guidelines-as-project-070118.pdf>
 - b. **Wilsonia Project Proposal Form**
 - c. **National Park plan review – letter of approval** sent to the California Office of Historic Preservation – only in some cases depending upon the nature and extent of the modifications.
 - d. **Tulare County Resource Management**
 - i. Building Permits and inspections dependent upon nature and extent of the project.
 - ii. If permit(s) are required, inspections during construction will be needed)

We met again with National Park Representatives Denise and Juanita in December to present and finalize our proposal. All other communication in the process was done by email and telephone.

- 2 **It was helpful to meet early with the staff at Tulare County Resource Management** before applying for permits. This helped us to better understand the process from the County point of view and to “make friends.” The staff was very helpful to us in attaining our permits and inspections throughout the process. We learned that the County would only issue building permits if we presented our National Park letter of approval with our permit application.
- 3 **Environmental health related projects can be expedited.** Our cabin’s antique septic system had failed completely so we needed a complete new system. Because this was an environmental health concern, the Park Service staff helped us with this project independent of the rest of our restoration and expedited the process. Our new system was completed in

under 60 days, before first snow. The septic system project involved system design, County review and building permit, and installation by a local contractor. In selecting a location, we sought the advice of a well-drilling company to ensure that we did not choose a site that might make a good location for a future well in the event that our current well ever fails. Digging for the new system required the presence of the National Park archaeologist during the backhoe work, just in case our property was the home of historic artifacts...it wasn't.

- 4 **Interior work needs no National Park or Historic Preservation review.** Our plans included a new electrical panel and wiring throughout, new plumbing and fixtures throughout, new flooring and some minor interior demolition and construction. As these were all work on the interior of the cabin, none of these changes needed National Park or State Historical Preservation review. We simply needed a County building permit and inspections.
- 5 **Visible exterior changes to the cabin required National Park Service and California Office of Historic Preservation review.** The exterior work that made visible changes to our cabin included:
 - Demolition of a front porch and portico that had decayed over time.
 - Construction of a new front porch, portico, and expanded deck.
 - Restoration of exterior shingled walls and window frames to their original condition and color.
- 6 **In a Wilsonia Project Proposal, more information is better.** In our *Wilsonia Project Proposal Form* we worked to overcommunicate. This minimized the need for back-and-forth communication and revision. We were explicit in our intent to preserve the historic integrity of the cabin. With regard to the expanded deck, we emphasized that we would use materials and colors that would be in keeping with the cabin's and community's historic look and feel. We provided sketches and marked up photos of what we planned to accomplish. All of this information was appreciated by the Park Service team and made for a smooth and efficient process.

In April of 2018 we received a letter of approval from the Park Service for our cabin construction projects. We took our letter straight to the Tulare County Resource Management office and applied for our building permit. A week later we picked up our permits and informed the Park Service staff that we had permits in hand and were ready to roll!

With the help of contactors Mark Vetter, Zamora Electric, Richardson Flooring, and painter Eddie Romero, our entire family including grandchildren and dogs was ready to move into our "work in progress" on July 4th. That morning we pulled in with our loaded U-Haul truck, went to see the Wilsonia 4th of July parade, and returned to move in. Our cabin wasn't finished but it was livable, our new home away from home. We still had a deck to finish, critters to expel, and countless repairs and improvements to make. As everyone in Wilsonia knows, when you have a cabin there's always another project to do.

Since the summer of '18 we've rebuilt our decaying back porch and restored a stone terrace on the west side. This summer we'll finish restoring the storehouse next to the cabin. This family project has been a labor of love for our family...it's a good thing that we love this kind of labor...most of the time! We love our cabin and our Wilsonia community. We're happy to share more of what we've learned with anyone that's interested. We look forward to seeing you this summer!

A WILSONIA FAMILY'S STORY – The following is from Fern Tripp's 1989 book, *Wilsonia, Yesterday, Today and Forever* (pages 20 & 21):

Memories of Early Wilsonia

Thelma (Collin) Ambrose

Andy Ferguson and his wife Arza were our family friends. Arza Patterson had grown up near the Collin family. When lots were opened up for sale in Wilsonia, Dad and his two sisters and their husbands were interested. The first that appealed to Dad had a spring and a creek. I remember the first time we all came to see it. We had to see the stream and spring and it meant going through snowbrush to get to it.

The roads were all in and ours was Willow Lane – there were willows on it, too. Our family became owners of 12 lots in 1919 and built two cabins. One was ours and one was for the two sisters. The lumber came from Neff's Mill in Pinehurst. The cabin had a kitchen, bedroom and living room, 12x12 –

the size of the lumber. There was a porch off the kitchen and a small front porch. The siding and roof were shingled. Our beds were outside with canvas available if it rained.

Dad was a County Supervisor and the road [to Wilsonia] was a county road, mostly in his district. It was well graded but a narrow lane with some passing spots and many curves. The way to be sure you didn't meet someone on a curve was to sound your horn and hope no one was coming. The road went through Dunlap and Pinehurst and it took us four hours from Sanger. Our cars were not speed burners.

Mother was the carpenter's helper as well as cook on a small wood stove. There was always a big pot of beans cooking. On wash days there was a large copper boiler to heat the water and a hand pump to fill the wash tubs with cold water.

Dad came up on weekends with lots of food and very often one or more of our friends. He would keep us entertained with various games. He cleaned off and leveled a spot where we could attempt a tennis game.

There were many flowers and ferns along the creek. For years, there were the cutest little animals living in holes along the bank. We found out that they were called "Mountain Beavers." Their little tails were flat but that was about the only resemblance to their namesakes. We had such fun watching them cutting ferns and dragging them down their holes.

Our main activity was going on hikes on several trails. Grandma, who was in her 70's, two aunts and three kids, Mom and the four of us would take brown-bag lunches and go, each carrying his own. We'd go to Huckleberry Meadow and after lunch we would pick berries in our bags. We didn't hurry but it was a day trip. Next day we had pies and they were most delicious. There were Ella Falls, Sequoia Lake, and Lookout Point. We would swim in the lake.

Mom was an excellent seamstress and would bring her sewing machine (not electric) and materials up and make our clothes for school and church. I remember one dress that I liked especially; a jumper of pongee silk with a blouse of all-over embroidery. My blouse was blue and my sister's was pink.

There were activities at the Club House and bonfires at Headquarters. Walter Smith was the caller for the square dances. The park rangers would join in our fun and we remember teasing one of our aunts about dancing with one of them.

One time, one of our high school teachers directed a play with the young people from the park, with my sister and me taking part.

Occasionally, we'd get horses from Mr. Wilson to ride. My sister, Mary, remembers that the horse corral was on the edge of a big meadow across from the Lodge. Mary and her two cousins

were given a chance by Mr. Wilson to take horses to the corral at the end of the day, but they must not let them run. It was a real treat that they appreciated.

There were different little stores that were opened for the summer selling mostly bread and milk. The Ferguson's had one and the Wilson's had one. When the sawmill at Hume Lake was working, there was a butcher shop at Indian Basin.

Our little brother, Phil, worked at the sawmill one summer. He and Walter Smith were there at the same time. They had fun talking about it much later.

THE WORDS THAT STARTED THE GOLD RUSH – As you might recall from Issue #1 of The Wilsonia News, Commodore Sloat won the boat race with British Admiral Seymour and on July 7th of 1846 California became part of the United States of America and not part of the British Empire. The following is an extract from *Treasures en route to Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks*:

A year and a half later, in January of 1848, James Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, east of Sacramento on the American River. Reacting to quickly spreading rumors, California's Military Governor, Colonel Richard Mason, visited the gold region and prepared a report - assisted by a young lieutenant, William Tecumseh Sherman, who drew a map of the California gold region. Gov. Mason's report along with 1st Lt. Sherman's map was sent to President Polk in late 1848.

On December 5, Polk presented his 4th Annual Message to a Joint Session of Congress. Several pages into his message, he said:

It was known that mines of the precious metals existed to a considerable extent in California at the time of its acquisition. Recent discoveries render it probable that these mines are more extensive and valuable than was anticipated. The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service who have visited the mineral district and derived the facts which they detail from personal observation. ... The explorations already made warrant the belief that the supply is very large and that gold is found at various places in an extensive district of country.

With those calmly stated but stunning words, the great California Gold Rush of 1849 began.

Sloat's "taking" of California on July 7, 1846, left the Mexican system of government and laws in place with local Alcaldes serving as town mayor, law giver, judge, and law enforcer – all rolled into one. To provide the growing number of miners with a "separation of powers" system of justice more like they had enjoyed in the eastern states, on June 3, 1849, Military Governor Bennet C. Riley called a Constitutional Convention that convened in Monterey with 48 representatives elected from around the state.

Some of the more prominent Californio representatives were Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (Sonoma), Pablo de la Guerra (Santa Barbara), José Antonio Carrillo (Los Angeles), and Antonio M. Pico (San Jose). [End of extract. The story of the truly remarkable 1849 Constitutional Convention will be told in Issue #4.]

THE WILSONIA CORRAL – For many years, a short walk beyond the south end of Chinquapin Lane there were several horse corrals where cabin owners kept their horses during the summer. There was no piped water so when the nearby creek was dry, those of us with horses there had to haul garbage cans of water down there close to daily. At some point in the 70s, the then park

superintendent decided our lovely old corrals had to go and they did. One thing survives as shown in the photograph below recently taken in the Editor's home.



AND IN CONCLUSION ... Question #1: Who are these people? Clue: each is from a family with over half-a-century of Wilsonia cabin ownership. Question #2: What are they doing? Clue: they are standing behind or next to a modern version of an Alaskan totem pole [sort of a non-clue; doesn't help much].

