

36 County Road 402 - Cuchara, Colorado 81055



Centuries before cabins appeared in the Cuchara Valley, this mountain corridor was an untamed expanse of pine forest and open meadow. The Mouache and Capote bands of the Ute Nation hunted here seasonally and regarded the twin summits of the Spanish Peaks as sacred landmarks. Over time, explorers, settlers, and governments each claimed and redefined the land, leaving layers of cultural and political history that still shape the region today.

Five Flags Over Cuchara

Long before cabins and roads dotted the Cuchara Valley, this land lay within the seasonal hunting and sacred grounds of the Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan peoples. The Mouache and Capote band of the Ute considered the Spanish Peaks sacred, and even today arrowheads surface in the soil after rains, whispering of their long presence. In the late 1500s, Spain claimed the region as part of New Spain, governed from Santa Fe, leaving a cultural imprint in language, faith, and architecture that endures in southern Colorado. When Mexico gained independence in 1821, the land shifted again, though Mexican influence in the remote frontier was limited. Lawlessness and conflict marked the era. From 1836 to 1845, the Republic of Texas claimed the Cuchara Valley in its ambitious northern reach, though it never truly governed here. Still, the ties with Texas remain, many Texans still own cabins in the valley, escaping summer heat for mountain air. Finally, after

the Mexican-American War, the United States claimed Colorado in 1848. By 1876, Colorado became the 38th state. The Cuchara Valley, with its Spanish Peaks rising above, had already passed under five different flags, each leaving fingerprints on its evolving identity.

Homesteading the Future

One of the earliest written chapters of Pinehaven's story began with Union Civil War veteran John L. Powell. Born in Pennsylvania in 1834, Powell marched with the 8th Kansas Infantry through the hardships of the war. Afterward, like many veterans seeking renewal, he moved west. In 1896 he and his family arrived in the Cuchara Valley by covered wagon. In 1905, under the Homestead Act of 1862, Powell secured 160 acres just north of Cuchara. The Act required settlers to live on the land, cultivate it, and build a home; in return, they received ownership. Powell's homestead fulfilled these requirements, and his perseverance planted the seed of what would one day become Pinehaven. He lived out his years in La Veta until his death in 1920, leaving the land to his children.

The Birth of Pinehaven

In 1943, Powell's son Charles sold the family land to John C. Vories, who dreamed of transforming the rugged property into a mountain resort. With vision but limited resources, Vories named the land "Pinehaven" and began designing cabin lots along what would become Road 402. He saw the forest as "heaven among the pines," and his plans laid the foundation for the community's identity as a retreat in the high country. Health challenges eventually forced Vories to leave Colorado, but before he did, he passed his dream into capable hands.

That man was Steve Pierotti, a native of Huerfano County and close friend of Vories. Pierotti had grown up tough, an orphan by nine, managing service stations as a teenager, and later working in the coal mines. His tireless work ethic made him one of the largest coal dealers in the county. When Vories offered him Pinehaven for \$3,700, Pierotti borrowed from a friend and seized the opportunity. Through sheer determination and charisma, he sold lots, encouraged building, and helped bring Vories' dream to life. Under Pierotti's influence, Pinehaven became a thriving cabin community. Steve lived there until his death in 2017 at the age of 99, and his family remains part of Pinehaven today.

Building a Community

From Powell's homestead to Vories' vision and Pierotti's energy, Pinehaven grew from wilderness into a neighborhood. Steve Pierotti's son, Bob, carried his father's vision forward by leading Pinehaven's expansion up the mountain and ensuring its growth was both thoughtful and sustainable. With steady leadership, he guided the development of new roads, utilities, and infrastructure, while championing compliance with modern standards. His pivotal role in integrating Pinehaven into the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District secured reliable water and sanitation for generations to come. From community planning to the creation of the Pierotti

Pavilion, Bob's quiet dedication laid the foundation for a resilient mountain community whose strength endures to this day.

Cabins rose among the trees, families returned each summer, and traditions took root. Eventually, homeowners organized formally, creating the Pinehaven Homeowners' Association to care for roads, shared spaces, and community life. The Pierotti Pavilion, named in honor of Bob's contributions, became a gathering place where neighbors celebrated the very community he helped establish.

Today, Pinehaven stands as more than a scattering of mountain cabins. It is a close-knit community, bound together by its layered history, its natural beauty, and its people's love for the land. The Spanish Peaks still tower over the valley, silent witnesses to centuries of change, from the passage of flags and empires to the persistence of families who found here not just land, but home.

History of Ownership

The land that Pinehaven occupies today began as part of the American homesteading era. In 1905, the property was granted under the federal Homestead Act to John L. Powell. After Powell's death, the land remained in the family and was held under the executorship of his son, Charles R. Powell.

A new chapter began in 1943 when John C. Vories purchased the property from the Powell family. Captivated by the beauty of the mountain setting, Vories envisioned a small cabin community retreat where visitors could enjoy the quiet forests and cool summers of the Cuchara Valley. He called his dream "Pinehaven." Poor health soon forced Vories to leave the area, and in 1947 he sold the property to his friend Steve Pierotti.

Under Pierotti's leadership, Pinehaven began to grow. Cabins gradually appeared along the mountainside as the resort expanded and families returned year after year. In 1978 the community reached an important milestone when Pinehaven was formally incorporated.

By the early 1970s, individual lots within Pinehaven were being conveyed to private owners as part of the community's continued growth.

Ownership Timeline

- John L. Powell (original homesteader), September 11, 1905-1920
- Charles R. Powell (son of John L. Powell), 1920-1943
- John C. Vories (Founder of Pinehaven), 1943-1947
- Steve Pierotti (Pinehaven Visionary), 1947-1973
- Marie A. Shook, prior to August 20, 1973
- James D. and Sarah A. Stebbins, August 20, 1973–unknown

- Larry D. and Geraldine H. Palmer, by 2008– 2024
- Timothy D. and Karen B. Carr, December 5, 2024–Present

Our Cabin

Tucked along County Road 402, where the road begins to lean gently into the rhythm of the mountain, stands one of the early cabins constructed in Pinehaven. It does not rise dramatically above the trees but instead settles quietly into the landscape, becoming part of it rather than standing apart.

Built in 1965, the cabin emerged during a time when Pinehaven was still forming its identity. For many years, it was carefully maintained by the Palmer family and became widely known as the “Palmer cabin.”

The craftsmanship reflects both attention to detail and a creative effort to bring the surrounding forest into the design. The front porch is supported by six substantial wooden posts, each individually hand-carved with ornate detailing. Along their length, a continuous spiraling pattern wraps upward around each column, creating a subtle sense of movement within the wood. This swirling effect transforms the posts from simple structural supports into defining architectural features, reflecting a level of craftsmanship uncommon in modern construction.

A winding staircase leads to the lower level of the cabin. Its carefully formed wooden steps are enclosed within a glassed corner that opens to a sweeping ninety-degree view of the surrounding forest, visually extending the interior into the landscape beyond.

The most recent chapter of the cabin’s history began in December 2024, when Timothy Carr and Karen Carr purchased the property.

Their first journey to the cabin was far from picturesque. Snow and ice lingered on the road following a recent storm, and the mountain had not yet released its hold on winter. With a two-wheel-drive truck, a U-Haul loaded with furnishings, and cautious optimism, they began the climb up the access road. The first attempt failed. So did the second. Only after installing tire chains did the third attempt succeed. Yet once inside, the Carrs immediately recognized they had found the right place.

The life of the cabin today differs from earlier years, but its purpose remains consistent. It continues to serve as a place of gathering and retreat, where time slows just enough to be noticed. The Carr family visits frequently and shares the cabin with family and friends.

That distinction is meaningful. It preserves the original spirit of Pinehaven, where cabins were intended for relationship rather than transaction. It maintains a sense of connection that defined the community from its earliest years.

In the end, the cabin stands as both a reflection of Pinehaven's past and a continuation of its future. It has been shaped by those who came before and is now carried forward by those who have arrived. Like Pinehaven itself, it is not defined by a single moment, but by the accumulation of many.

* This summary condenses five centuries of history; full research notes, sources, and citations can be found at at www.CabinInThePines.org.