

The Barber Family Cabin History

90 County Road 402, Cuchara, Colorado 81055



What if you stood in the Cuchara Valley centuries ago? The air would still smell of pine, but no cabins or roads would break the silence. You'd see Ute hunters on horseback, Spanish explorers pushing north, or maybe hear the distant clink of miners' tools — depending on which flag was flying that decade. If the mountains could talk, they'd tell stories no textbook ever could.

Five Flags Over Pinehaven

Long before Pinehaven cut roads into the mountain, this land lay within the seasonal hunting and sacred grounds of the Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan peoples. The Mouache band of the

Ute considered the Spanish Peaks sacred, and even today arrowheads surface in the soil after rains, reflecting 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 from Spain in 1821, the land shifted again, though Mexican influence in the remote frontier was limited. From 1836 to 1845, the Republic of Texas claimed the Cuchara Valley in its northern reach, though it never exercised effective governance here. After the Mexican-American War in 1848, the United States claimed the region as unorganized territory. In 1861 it was designated as the Colorado Territory and in 1876, Colorado became the 38th state. The Cuchara Valley had already passed under five different flags, each shaping its evolving identity.

Homesteading the Future

One of the earliest documented chapters of Pinehaven's story began with Union Civil War veteran John L. Powell. Born in Pennsylvania in 1834, Powell served with the 8th Kansas Infantry. In 1896, he and his family arrived in the Cuchara Valley by covered wagon. In 1905, under the Homestead Act of 1862, he secured 160 acres just north of Cuchara. The act required settlers to reside on and improve the land in exchange for ownership. Powell fulfilled those requirements, establishing a homestead that would later form the foundation of Pinehaven's development. He died 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 envisioned a mountain retreat community. Vories named the land Pinehaven and began subdividing lots along what would become Road 402. Health challenges eventually required him to leave Colorado, and he sold the project to Steve Pierotti. Pierotti, a Huerfano County native and experienced businessman, purchased Pinehaven for \$3,700. Through persistent effort, he marketed lots and encouraged construction, transforming Pinehaven into a viable cabin community. He remained connected to the area throughout his long life, passing away in 2017 at the age of 99.

Building a Community

Under subsequent leadership, including that of Bob Pierotti, Pinehaven expanded thoughtfully. Roads, utilities, and infrastructure improved over time, including integration into the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District. The establishment of the Pinehaven Homeowners' Association

formalized shared stewardship of roads and common areas. The Pierotti Pavilion became a central gathering place, reflecting Pinehaven's transformation from isolated lots into an organized mountain neighborhood. Today, Pinehaven remains a close-knit community shaped by layered history and careful management.

History of Ownership

County property and deed records trace the ownership of 90 County Road 406 through the years.

- 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), 1947-1968
- Cabin constructed and occupied by Jack & Ellen Boyd, 1968-1974
- Ed & Ona Barber and Tom and Maxine Barber 1974-2025
- Tom and Maxine Barber, 2025 - Present

Barber Family Ownership (1974 - Present)

The A-frame cabin at 90 County Road 402 was constructed in 1968, during the early years of Pinehaven's development. Built by Jack and Ellen Boyd from Meade, Kansas, it reflected the simple mountain architecture that became popular throughout Colorado during the 1960s. Rustic, practical, and welcoming, the cabin embraced the natural landscape rather than competing with it.

Its design also presented some unique challenges. Like many A-frame cabins, the sharply sloping walls created beautiful interior spaces while limiting usable room upstairs. The second floor originally contained only a toilet, leaving much of the home's potential unrealized. Yet even then, the cabin possessed qualities that made it memorable.

Native stone gathered from the surrounding area was incorporated into both the cabin's interior and exterior, giving it the appearance of having naturally emerged from the mountainside. Inside, an impressive fireplace built from local stone from Raspberry Mountain became the heart of the home, while matching stonework on the exterior staircase leading to the back deck added another distinctive touch. Perhaps the most unexpected feature was tucked high along the back wall: stained-glass windows rescued from a church in Dodge City, Kansas. When afternoon sunlight streams through the colorful glass, it fills the cabin with warm hues that seem almost magical against the mountain backdrop.

Everything changed in April 1974.

Tom and Maxine Barber purchased the cabin with the assistance of realtor Bob Pierotti, son of Pinehaven developer Steve Pierotti. The sale came during the community's formative years, when many of the original lots and cabins were finding their permanent owners. What the Barbers could not have known that spring was that their purchase would become far more than a vacation property. It would become the gathering place for generations of their family.

Over the next five decades, the Barbers carefully transformed the cabin while preserving its original mountain character.

Rather than replacing the A-frame's distinctive personality, they embraced it. Through thoughtful renovations, they reimagined the interior to maximize every available inch of space. The cabin eventually grew into a comfortable four-bedroom retreat while retaining the charm that first drew them to it. Unlike many A-frames that rely on spiral staircases, theirs features a steep traditional staircase leading to two upstairs bedrooms and a full bath, creating a layout that better accommodates family gatherings.

Outside, Tom found one of his greatest joys.

Designing and building the spacious rear deck became one of his favorite projects. From its vantage point, the deck frames an ever-changing panorama of the West Spanish Peak. Morning light, afternoon clouds, brilliant autumn colors, and winter snowfall all transform the same view into something new each season. It has become Tom's favorite place to sit with a book while the quiet whisper of the surrounding forest replaces the noise of everyday life.

A recently completed detached heated garage has added another chapter to the property's evolution, providing both convenience and additional space while allowing the cabin itself to remain the centerpiece of family life.

Yet buildings alone never tell the full story. The true history of this cabin lives in the people who have gathered beneath its roof: families celebrating Christmas mornings and Thanksgiving dinners, birthdays and weekend reunions, grandparents resting beside the fireplace, children racing through the woods, and grandchildren discovering the mountains for the first time.

The Barbers affectionately describe the property as a “generational cabin.” Tom’s grandmother and parents enjoyed time there, his children grew up making memories in it, and now his grandchildren and great-grandchildren are doing the same. In all, the cabin has been part of the family’s story for six generations.

One of the most enduring reminders of that family continuity still blossoms beside road 402. In 1975, Tom's grandmother planted irises along the road in front of the cabin. Because irises return from their underground rhizomes year after year, descendants of those original plants still bloom there more than fifty years later. More than fifty years later, their striking blooms and sword-like leaves continue to emerge each season, a living inheritance rooted in the mountain soil. Long after the hands that planted them are gone, the flowers still return, quietly marking another year in the life of the cabin and another season in the Barber family's story.

Their hope is simple: that the cabin will remain in the family for generations still to come.

The cabin has also become a gift shared with others.

Over the years, the Barbers have opened its doors to numerous young couples beginning married life together, allowing them to spend their honeymoons surrounded by the beauty of the Spanish Peaks. In doing so, they have extended the cabin's story beyond their own family, helping others begin lifelong memories in a place that has meant so much to them.

Winter brought another cherished tradition.

For years, family members filled the slopes of the historic Cuchara Ski Area just a few miles south down the road. Nearly everyone learned to ski there. After long days on the mountain, they would return tired, cold, and hungry, knowing exactly what awaited them. Tom's mother always had a pot of homemade chili simmering and ready to welcome everyone back. For the grandchildren especially, skiing and chili became inseparable parts of what "going to the cabin" meant.

Not every memorable weekend unfolded according to plan. One Easter Sunday remains legendary within the family.

It began as a perfect spring ski day. Then everything seemed to unravel at once. Tom suffered a hard fall on the ski slopes, separating his shoulder. One of the children had invited a friend who ignored repeated advice to wear sunscreen, leaving her lips and face so badly sunburned that she could only drink through a straw. While ski equipment was being returned, Tom was transported to the local hospital. As if the day needed one final twist, the family encountered a blizzard during the drive home.

Looking back, what felt like chaos at the time has become one of the family's favorite stories, retold with laughter whenever everyone gathers together.

The mountains have also reminded the Barbers that they are guests in a landscape shared with wildlife. Black bears have become frequent visitors over the years. One particularly determined bear wandered onto the back deck and discovered the hummingbird feeder

filled with sweet sugar water. Stretching upward, the bear happily drank until it had emptied much of the feeder while leaving quite a mess behind. Although eventually chased away, the unexpected visitor earned a permanent place in family lore.

Like nearly every Pinehaven family, the Barbers also experienced anxious days during the Spring Creek Fire of 2018.

While spending the Fourth of July holiday in Wichita, Kansas, they watched television coverage and online fire maps almost constantly. The wildfire advanced to within approximately a quarter mile of their cabin, placing the property in genuine danger. Like so many cabin owners, they could do little more than pray, wait, and hope. When Pinehaven was ultimately spared, their gratitude deepened their appreciation for both the community and the dedicated firefighters who protected it.

Their connection to Pinehaven extends well beyond their own property.

Maxine faithfully served for many years as organist at the Cuchara Chapel, becoming part of the spiritual life of the mountain community. Friendships flourished among neighboring cabin owners through game nights, picnics, dominoes, Sequence tournaments, and countless evenings simply enjoying one another's company.

The Barbers also invested significant time serving the Pinehaven Property Owners Association. Tom has served as president, treasurer, board member, and member of the nominating committee. Maxine currently serves as the association's treasurer. Their leadership reflects the volunteer spirit that has sustained Pinehaven for decades, where neighbors willingly invest their time to strengthen the community they love.

Today, when Tom sits quietly on the back deck reading while the sunlight moves across the face of the West Spanish Peak, he experiences something that is difficult to describe but immediately recognizable to anyone who has fallen in love with these mountains.

Kansas gave the Barbers many wonderful things.

But the mountains gave them something different. They offered quiet. Perspective. Friendship. Family traditions.

A place where generations could gather beneath towering pines and discover that the richest investments in life are measured not by buildings, but by memories.

After more than fifty years, the cabin at 90 County Road 402 stands as more than a well-loved mountain retreat. It has become a living family legacy, where each new generation adds another chapter to a story that began long before the first stone was laid and will, they hope, continue long after today's grandchildren become tomorrow's grandparents.

This summary condenses five centuries of history; full research notes, sources, and citations can be found at <https://www.CabinInThePines.org>.