

144 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.

Our Cabin

The cabin at 144 County Road 402 was constructed in 1984 by Jimmie and Sandee Flenner. They purchased the land through a real estate representative and chose Pinehaven because of their strong appreciation for the area. The structure is a Pan Abode cabin ordered from Washington State, a prefabricated log system known for precision-milled components and solid wood construction.

Jimmie & Sandee Flenner personally built the cabin. They recall constructing every wall, installing each window and door, completing the garage, and decorating the interior. The visible log construction defines the architectural character of the home and reflects the Pan Abode design selected at the time of construction.

Since its completion in 1984, the cabin has remained under the ownership of the Flenners. It has served primarily as a seasonal retreat where family members and friends gather regularly. The owners describe it as their "heart home," emphasizing its personal significance and the continuity of stewardship over four decades.

In 2018, the Spring Fire approached Pinehaven closely. From both the front and back decks, flames were visible in the surrounding landscape. Although the cabin was not damaged, the proximity of the wildfire marked a significant moment in the property's history and underscored the environmental realities of mountain living.

Family gatherings remain central to the cabin's use. The Flenners continue to visit several days each year, welcoming friends and relatives. Wildlife activity, including the presence of bears, forms part of the cabin's lived experience and situates it within the broader ecological setting of the Cuchara Valley.

Over time, as Pinehaven has grown and evolved, the owners note that each visit introduces them to additional neighbors and friends. Many of these relationships continue to be treasured over the years. The cabin fits naturally within the Pinehaven community and reflects the spirit of recreation, friendship, and long-term connection that characterizes the area.

The Flenners express the hope that future generations will remember that the cabin was built by their own hands and has remained their heart home since 1984.

This micro-history situates 144 County Road 402 within the layered history of the Cuchara Valley and documents its construction, continuity of ownership, and role within the Pinehaven community. For full research documentation, visit www.CabinInThePines.org

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