225 Road 401, 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 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 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

Built in 1950, the cabin at 225 Road 401 holds the distinction of being the second cabin constructed in Pinehaven, even predating the Cuchara Chapel. Its original owners envisioned a modest mountain retreat, just 1,000 square feet in size, complete with an old woodburning stove for cooking and an icebox for refrigeration. The fireplace, built from river rocks hauled from the river below, remains one of its most enduring features. Over the decades, this cabin has grown and transformed—today it encompasses over 3,200 square feet across two stories, with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a generous deck overlooking the forest.

The Gordons acquired the cabin 27 years ago from a couple in Kansas, who had reluctantly given it up when long trips became too difficult. For Dixie and Bruce Gordon, the cabin quickly became more than a summer retreat. It was a place of family bonding with their four children, a gathering spot for friends, and a launching point for countless adventures. Some of their earliest memories involve the long drives from Oklahoma City, which always felt like a pilgrimage to their mountain haven.

Wildlife encounters have colored the Gordon family's story. One memorable incident involved a bear wandering onto the property, immortalized in a prize-winning photograph entitled 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.' Other memories include lively community events, holiday parades, and the sight of the American flag stretched across Main Street each July 4th. The Spring Creek Fire of 2018 left an indelible mark when flames came

close enough to burn a neighbor's porch mat, reinforcing both the risks and the resilience that define mountain living.

Inside the cabin, personality abounds. Art from local shows decorates the walls, while taxidermy tells stories of outdoor adventures—a moose head, a bear rug from Maine, an elk given by a friend, and even the first deer taken by Dixie's father in 1947. Together these artifacts blend history, heritage, and humor. The large deck has hosted gatherings of up to 100 people, reflecting the Gordons' deep commitment to hospitality. Over the years, they also immersed themselves in the broader Cuchara community. Bruce tended bar at the Timbers, while Dixie organized social events for the private fishing club. These roles cemented friendships and rooted them more deeply in the rhythms of valley life.

Today, the cabin at 225 Road 401 continues to embody both continuity and change. It is larger, more modern, and more comfortable than its 1950 beginnings, yet it still carries the spirit of its early builders and the families who loved it. Each expansion and every memory etched into its walls has transformed it into more than a house—it is a legacy. For the Gordons, the cabin remains a treasured retreat, an anchor in the community, and a living piece of Pinehaven's unfolding story.

The story of 225 Road 401 is one of endurance, growth, and community. From its humble beginnings as Pinehaven's second cabin to its present form as a spacious retreat, it reflects not just the passage of time but the love and care invested by generations of owners. Each chapter—from its rock fireplace to its bear encounters—adds to the larger history of Pinehaven and the Cuchara Valley.

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