42 County Road 406, 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, 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 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, the United States claimed Colorado in 1848. By 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 wagon. In 1905, under the Homestead Act of 1862, he secured 160 acres 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 transferred 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

According to the Huerfano County Clerk and Recorder records 42 County Road 406, Lot 17 in Pinehaven Resort #2, first appears in this record set on September 16, 1975, when Anna Mae Pierotti and Steve Pierotti conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to Leonard H. Walters and Linda J. Walters. Leonard H. Walters and Linda J. Walters held title from September 16, 1975, until November 6, 1979, when they conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to David E. Boone. David E. Boone owned the property from November 6, 1979, until sometime prior to August 1, 1991, at which point Paul Michael Villa and Jennifer Joan Villa are documented as owners through a recorded Deed of Trust dated August 1, 1991, confirming their ownership by that date. Paul Michael Villa and Jennifer Joan Villa remained owners until September 12, 2019, when the Estate of Jennifer Joan Villa and the Estate of Paul Michael Villa conveyed the property by Personal Representative's Deed to Jessica Leiser. Jessica Leiser held title briefly before conveying the property by Warranty Deed on October 16, 2019, to Barbara J. Thompson and Omer (Tom) Thompson, who have held title from October 16, 2019, to the present.

Ownership Timeline

- Anna Mae Pierotti and Steve Pierotti → prior to September 16, 1975
- Leonard H. Walters and Linda J. Walters → September 16, 1975 – November 6, 1979
- David E. Boone → November 6, 1979 – prior to August 1, 1991
- Paul Michael Villa and Jennifer Joan Villa → by August 1, 1991 – September 12, 2019
- Jessica Leiser → September 12, 2019 – October 16, 2019
- Barbara J. Thompson and Omer (Tom) Thompson → October 16, 2019 – Present

Our Cabin

Constructed in approximately 1979, the cabin at 42 County Road 406 reflects the late twentieth-century phase of Pinehaven's development, when modest mountain retreats were being established for seasonal use. While the original builder is not known, the structure's materials and layout suggest a design typical of that era: practical, durable, and oriented toward family use rather than resort display. The exterior siding consists of locally milled cedar planks measuring approximately twelve inches in width, a material choice well suited to the regional climate and consistent with other cabins built in Pinehaven during the period. Cedar provided natural resistance to insects and weather while blending visually with the surrounding forested environment.

The property changed hands several times before being purchased in 2019 by Tom and Barbara Thompson from the daughter of Michael Villa. Mr. Villa had previously used the cabin as a vacation rental, indicating that by the early twenty-first century the structure had entered a new phase of utility within the valley's tourism economy. When the Thompsons acquired the cabin, it appeared to have undergone few major alterations since its original construction. The interior finishes were largely intact, offering insight into its initial design aesthetic and preserving the functional simplicity characteristic of mountain homes of its era.

The most distinctive architectural feature of the cabin is a rustic, true spiral staircase connecting the lower, main, and upper levels. This staircase serves as the sole access to the two upper bedrooms and functions as both a structural necessity and a defining visual element. Its presence suggests deliberate craftsmanship and an efficient use of interior space, allowing vertical expansion without enlarging the cabin's footprint. Such design decisions reflect the constraints and ingenuity often present in mountain construction during the late twentieth century.

In 2019, shortly after the Thompsons' purchase, the property entered a significant chapter shaped by regional and global events. The cabin had been acquired one year after the Spring Fire of 2018, which left visible burn scars in areas above Pinehaven. Although the cabin itself was not directly damaged, the landscape bore clear evidence of wildfire impact. In response, the Thompsons undertook substantial wildfire mitigation efforts, removing more than two hundred trees and extensive undergrowth, including Gambel oak. They also replaced aging railroad tie retaining walls with stone and installed a culvert at the north driveway entrance to improve accessibility and drainage. These improvements aligned the property with contemporary safety standards and reflected the evolving stewardship responsibilities of mountain homeowners.

The cabin also became a full-time residence during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 through 2022. During that period, professional work and secondary education were conducted remotely, allowing the family to reside in Pinehaven year-round. Their daughter, Claire, transferred to La Veta High School and graduated in 2022 in a class of twelve students. Her graduation celebration, held on May 22, 2022, coincided with a thirteen-inch snowfall, a reminder of the region's variable mountain climate even in late spring.

Wildlife encounters have formed another defining aspect of the cabin's lived history. In one notable incident during the summer of 2020 or 2021, a two-year-old bear cub damaged a kitchen window screen and attempted to enter the house during the early morning hours. Such events underscore the cabin's location within an active wildlife corridor and illustrate the balance between habitation and habitat that characterizes Pinehaven living.

Today, the cabin continues to function primarily as a seasonal retreat, though its period as a full-time residence demonstrated its adaptability. The Thompsons have expressed the hope that the property will remain in their family, serving future generations as a place of refuge from urban life. From its cedar siding and spiral staircase to its recent mitigation efforts and pandemic-era residency, the cabin stands as a representative example of Pinehaven's ongoing story: a modest mountain structure shaped by environment, adaptation, and careful stewardship.

This cabin reflects the broader history of Pinehaven: late twentieth-century development, careful adaptation to environmental realities, and continued use as a family refuge within the Cuchara Valley. For additional historical context and related research, 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.