575 County Road 401 Cuchara, Colorado 81055

A 500 Year History

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. From that point forward, Pinehaven Incorporated managed the continued development of the area and the sale of lots to private owners, shaping the mountain community that exists today.

The County Recorder search results show that on November 16, 1979, Steve Pierotti and Anna Mae Pierotti conveyed the property by warranty deed to Robert Hockaday and Fanchone Shackelford Nicholson. On that same date, a writ reflects the transition from Shackelford

Nicholson and Robert Hockaday to Evelyn and Howard Pyle, indicating that the Pyles became the next owners of record. On February 4, 1985, Evelyn and Howard Pyle conveyed the property by warranty deed to Marjorie G. Marty. A decade later, on September 8, 1995, Marjorie G. Marty transferred the property to Adam R. Depweg, Yvonne Jill Depweg, Joy F. Sellers, and Robert D. Sellers. The search results then show that by November 25, 2008, Frances E. Oney and Ted W. Oney Jr. held title and conveyed the property by warranty deed to Gerald G. Morgan Jr. and Teri A. Morgan, who are the most recent owners identified in the attached record summary. Because the provided search-results page does not include the deed by which the Oneys acquired the property, their exact beginning date of ownership cannot be determined from this document alone.

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 – 1978
- **Pinehaven Incorporated**, 1978 – 1979
- **Robert Hockaday and Fanchone Shackelford Nicholson**, 1979
- **Evelyn and Howard Pyle**, 1979 – 1985
- **Marjorie G. Marty**, 1985 – 1995
- **Adam R. Depweg, Yvonne Jill Depweg, Joy F. Sellers, and Robert D. Sellers**, 1995 – before 2008
- **Frances E. Oney and Ted W. Oney Jr.**, before 2008 – November 25, 2008
- **Gerald G. Morgan Jr. and Teri A. Morgan**, November 25, 2008 – present

Our Cabin

The cabin located at 575 County Road 401 stands on a steep mountain lot within the Pinehaven community. According to the current owners, Jerry and Teri Morgan, the structure was built in the early 1980s, although the identity of the original builder is not known.

The placement of the structure on a sharply sloping site required careful construction planning. The building rises several levels above the hillside, creating a tall interior living space that extends more than two stories. The structural beam supporting this large open area likely required lifting equipment to install due to the height of the frame and the limited accessibility typical of mountain construction sites.

One of the defining architectural features of the cabin is a large exterior stone fireplace that extends along the outside wall and rises approximately three stories. This prominent masonry feature contributes both to the visual character of the structure and to its durability in the mountain environment.

Prior to the Morgan family's ownership, the property was associated with the Depweg family, who were believed to have operated restaurants in the area. During the mid-2000s the cabin encountered a significant challenge when the septic system failed. The malfunctioning system prevented the property from being sold and eventually contributed to a foreclosure process around 2007.

After the foreclosure, the Olney family, who owned a nearby cabin below the property, acquired the structure with the intention of renovating it and returning it to the market. The Olneys carried out extensive interior improvements that significantly altered the layout of the cabin. Two small bedrooms on the main floor were combined into one larger bedroom, and the kitchen and dining areas were reconfigured. Floor coverings were replaced throughout the interior, walls were repainted, and new appliances were installed. Exterior landscaping and visible structural elements were also refreshed to improve the overall appearance of the property. During the same period Pinehaven was connected to the Cuchara Water and Sanitation District sewer system. This infrastructure improvement resolved the septic issues that had previously complicated the property's sale. Following the renovation work, the Olney family placed the cabin on the market in 2008.

Jerry and Teri Morgan purchased the property in the fall of that year and closed on the cabin in November 2008. When the Morgans acquired the property it contained no furniture because it had been prepared for resale. They traveled to Pueblo to purchase the initial furnishings needed to make the cabin functional. Over the course of two long days they selected furniture and household essentials and transported them to the cabin from Pueblo and Amarillo.

Since that time the Morgan family has used the cabin primarily as a seasonal mountain retreat. They typically spend approximately ten weeks each year at the property between May and October. The cabin has hosted numerous family members, friends, and occasional spiritual retreats over the years. The Morgans refer to the cabin by the Spanish name "El Capullo," meaning "the cocoon."

For the family the cabin represents a place of rest, renewal, and transformation away from everyday routines. Family traditions have become an important part of the property's history. Each summer the Morgan family gathers in Pinehaven for the Fourth of July celebration in nearby Cuchara. Grandchildren participate in the community parade and enjoy the annual barbecue dinner at the Yellow Pine Ranch. These traditions reinforce the role of the cabin as a gathering place for multiple generations of family members.

The property has also experienced events that reflect the realities of mountain life. In 2018 the Spring Creek Fire forced evacuations throughout the Cuchara Valley, including Pinehaven. The Morgan family left the area uncertain whether the cabin would survive as the fire approached the community. The fire was eventually stopped near the edge of Pinehaven, and the property remained unharmed.

Wildlife encounters have also become part of the cabin's story. In the summer of 2009 a bear entered the cabin through a window on the deck connected to the living room. The animal opened

the refrigerator, consumed food and a soft drink, and exited through another nearby window, breaking the glass during its escape. The incident caused limited damage but became one of the memorable stories associated with the property.

Inside the upper level of the cabin, small doors lead to attic-like storage spaces that have become favorite hiding places for the Morgan grandchildren. A sleeping loft above the master bedroom provides another distinctive feature of the interior layout and has become a preferred sleeping area for younger family members. Through regular seasonal use, family gatherings, and community traditions, the cabin continues to contribute to the living history of the Pinehaven neighborhood.

The cabin at 575 County Road 401 reflects the broader evolution of Pinehaven from a mid-twentieth-century resort concept into a lasting mountain community. Constructed in the early 1980s, renovated during a period of infrastructure improvements, and sustained through years of family gatherings and seasonal use, the structure represents one small chapter in the continuing history of Pinehaven and the Cuchara Valley.

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