

108 County Road 405, Cuchara, Colorado 81055



Centuries before modern settlement, the Cuchara Valley was a remote expanse of pine forest and meadow, shaped by volcanic peaks and traversed by Indigenous peoples. The Mouache and Capote bands of the Ute Nation hunted here seasonally, following game through the mountain passes and valleys they regarded as sacred. In later centuries, Spanish explorers, Mexican settlers, and American prospectors each entered the region under different flags, leaving behind trails, place names, and cultural traces that still mark the land 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

Located along County Road 405, the Muirhead cabin represents a later phase in Pinehaven's ongoing history. Built between 1998 and 2000 by local contractor Paul Neldner, the home reflects a late-twentieth-century revival of mountain cabin design that emphasized craftsmanship, natural materials, and views. Its timber framing and wide decks reflect a builder's understanding that the value of a cabin lies in its integration with the landscape rather than in ornamentation.

Before Brian and Treva Muirhead acquired the property, it was owned by Frank Reeder and Keith Beckman, both of whom contributed to its maintenance and gradual improvement. In 2015, the Muirheads, encouraged by Charles Chauvin and assisted by local realtor Jimbo Wetzel of All Seasons, began searching for a retreat in the Cuchara Valley. Among the cabins they viewed, one stood out for its balanced combination of modern renovation and mountain authenticity. They purchased the property later that year, extending the community's story into a new generation.

Seeking both practicality and harmony with the existing structure, the Muirheads expanded the property in 2017 by purchasing an adjoining lot. Local craftsman Ed Halstead, recognized for his precision and quality, completed the addition in 2019. The project introduced a lower-level garage and upper-level master suite designed to blend seamlessly with the original construction.

The cabin's earlier uncovered deck had been limited by weather and sun exposure. The Muirheads redesigned it as a covered east-facing space that could be used throughout the year, transforming it into the property's most distinctive feature. The result balanced comfort with respect for the site's natural setting—an approach consistent with Pinehaven's broader tradition of modest, well-integrated mountain architecture.

Over time, the Muirheads developed personal traditions connected to both the cabin and the community. Among these were New Year's Eve gatherings with friends and family, often celebrated at The Timbers, a well-known Cuchara restaurant and meeting place that for decades served as a social hub for the valley. Though The Timbers no longer operates, its legacy remains part of Pinehaven's collective memory, carried forward through continued neighborly gatherings and shared seasonal rituals.

For the Muirheads, the cabin represents simplicity and renewal rather than luxury. Their approach reflects a recurring theme in the Cuchara Valley's settlement history—an appreciation for the quiet resilience of mountain life and the enduring appeal of its landscape.

Today, 108 County Road 405 stands as one chapter in a story that began with the 1905 Powell homestead. From the first settlers who carved out a living on the frontier to later generations who built cabins for rest and recreation, each era has added a new layer to Pinehaven's identity. The cabin's decks overlook not only West Spanish Peak but also a landscape shaped by centuries of human presence—from Ute trails and homesteader roads to modern forest lanes. Together, these histories form a continuum of stewardship and community that remains at the heart of Pinehaven and the greater Cuchara Valley.

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