



A HISTORY OF 80 COUNTY ROAD 406

CABIN IN THE PINES

BY GENE AND RHONDA RONCONE

Cabin in the Pines

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by

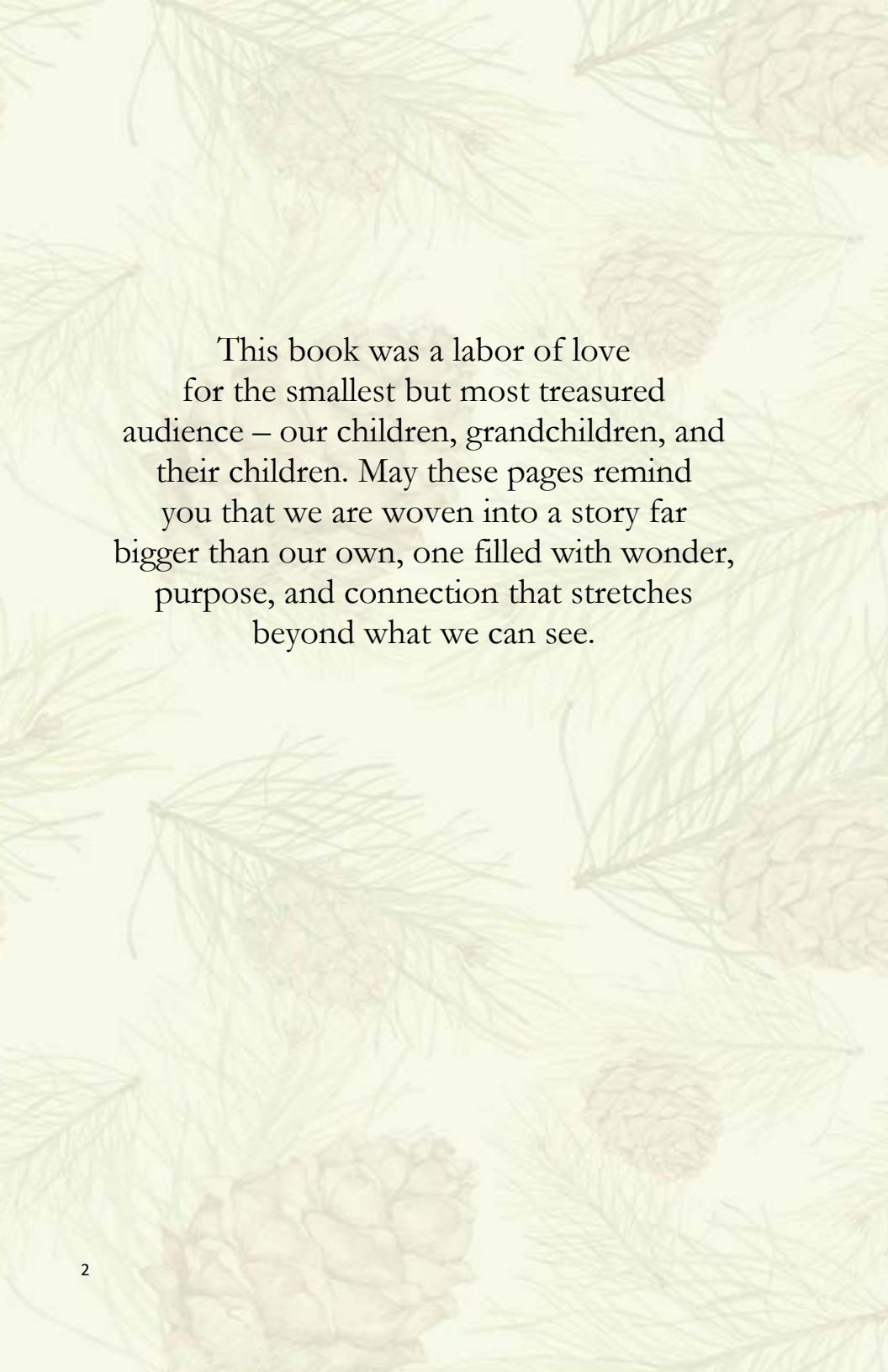
Gene and Rhonda Roncone

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The cover image of this book was beautifully captured by Cuchara resident and gifted photographer, Jeff Stovall. Jeff caught this image in the forest as the storm was clearing over Bear Lake in Cuchara, Colorado. His eye for the natural beauty of this region brings the spirit of Cuchara to life. To enjoy more of Jeff's stunning work, visit www.cuchara.photography.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gene and Rhonda Roncone are devoted grandparents whose greatest joy comes from making lasting memories with their growing family. Their lives are filled with love, laughter, and a deep sense of purpose as they cherish every moment with their children and grandchildren. Their eldest daughter, Nicole, is married to Gio Polanco, and together they've brought two incredible boys into the world — Geno and Luca. Morgan, their middle daughter, and her husband Caleb McNaughton have added to the joy with three energetic and loving sons: Micah and twin boys, Judah and Levi. The youngest of the Roncone daughters, Lindsay, is married to Joshua Polanco and has given the family their only granddaughters, the sweet and spirited Eliana and Aubrielle, as well as another grandson named Elias. While the family deeply misses their beloved son Geno, who passed away from cancer in 2016, his memory continues to inspire them. They honor his life by living theirs fully — cherishing one another, creating meaningful traditions, and looking forward to the day they'll all be reunited in heaven.



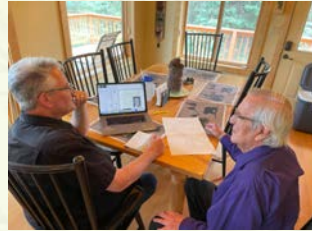
This book was a labor of love
for the smallest but most treasured
audience – our children, grandchildren, and
their children. May these pages remind
you that we are woven into a story far
bigger than our own, one filled with wonder,
purpose, and connection that stretches
beyond what we can see.

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Special Thanks

One of the challenges of writing history is navigating the tension between oral tradition and written records. Over time, memories fade, names and dates become blurred, and stories are reshaped—sometimes conflicting with what's found in official documents. At the same time, even historical records can contain errors, vague references, or puzzling details. The past, it seems, wears more than one voice. Historians refer to these inconsistencies as “discrepant narratives.” In compiling this book, I worked diligently to conduct historical research, verify details with those who know this history best, as well as use advanced online fact-checking tools.



I'm especially grateful to **Angie Glover** of the Huerfano County Clerk's Office whose expertise and repeated assistance in locating and interpreting archival records proved invaluable. **Bob Pierotti**—an original Pinehaven developer and key figure in the community's formation—generously reviewed the manuscript, met with me several times, and helped clarify important details.¹ And **Ron Jameson**, whose family has deep roots in the Cuchara Valley, offered thoughtful feedback that strengthened the richness of this book.²



I deeply appreciate their insights and share their passion for preserving the legacy of this remarkable place.

1

Heaven Among the Pines

When singing about his discovery of the Colorado mountains, John Denver claimed he came home to a place he had never been before.³ That's how my wife and I felt when we stumbled upon Cuchara, Colorado. While traveling west on Highway 160, we saw a scenic highway sign pointing south called *Highway of Legends* (Highway 12). We turned around and decided to explore the unknown.

After climbing up and out of the high desert, Highway 12 dropped us into an oasis of rushing rivers, lush green forests, and the hidden valley called Cuchara. After repeated visits, we fell in love with this little village and started looking for a cabin to purchase. We finally found the perfect one in the Pinehaven community, nestled in the forest at the foot of Raspberry Mountain.



The phrase "Pinehaven" implies a touch of heaven among the pines. The Ponderosa, Limber, Lodgepole, and Bristlecone

pinos of the area evoke a peaceful and nature-filled setting. Each Ponderosa pine around our cabin feels like a sentinel guarding memories not yet made — and stories nearly forgotten. We found what we considered the perfect cabin to share with our children and create unforgettable memories with our grandchildren.



Being a curious soul, I started doing research on this place that I loved. You may be wondering why a person would write a small book about an obscure cabin in the forest. There are several reasons.

History is Fragile

Oral traditions and personal experiences can evaporate in a single generation. Once the people who lived are gone, so are their stories — unless they're preserved. Records may have existed but were never maintained — paper decays, languages

die, and archives are lost. When storytellers die without sharing those stories, knowledge dies with them. I want my family to know why this forest is so special and to feel connected to those who have forged its history. I want the cabin to speak.

Now is Shaped by Then

The present is always a product of the past. In almost every area of our lives, we are building on foundations laid by those who have gone before us. Cuchara has a rich history of gritty and hard-working homesteaders who suffered pain and experienced joy while taming the land. I have an appreciation for this special village and the people who fashioned the ground beneath us. Knowing history isn't just behind us – it lives through us, I want to document the forces that continue to shape the future.

History Provides Context

History often reveals why the world is the way it is — from borders and beliefs to conflicts and customs. Understanding the 'why' often brings clarity to the 'what'. We live in a world that thinks history begins the day we walk into a room, buy a house, or start a new job. But the village of Cuchara and the Pinehaven community are the product of the courage, sacrifice, love, loss, dedication, and even pain that thrived in the past. Trying to exist separated from that context robs us of gratefulness and a true sense of community. Author William Faulkner said it best writing, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."⁴

Unforgettable Stories

Scenic Highway 12 isn't called *Highway of Legends* for nothing. Every mile is steeped in the kind of beauty and history that inspires unforgettable stories. From homesteaders who crossed the Continental Divide in covered wagons to gunslingers and Wild West adventures, Cuchara is a treasure chest of stories. It boasts the danger and peril of conflicts with nature, tribes, oppression from powerful coal companies, train tracks forged through the Rocky Mountains, and explorers blazing trails that have become today's paved roads.

My wife, Rhonda, and I love this valley so much that we decided not to rent out the cabin. We want it to be available at any time to share with our adult children and grandchildren. I want my kids and grandkids to know the cabin as a place of adventure, rest, peaceful bliss, and lasting memories. Knowing the over 500 years of history and the stories behind this wonderful place will give them a greater appreciation for the things that matter most.



In short, the desire to understand history springs from a deep human need for identity, meaning, and connection. We didn't write this book just to tell a story. We wrote it to leave a trail — one our grandchildren can follow whenever they need to remember who they are and where they came from.

2

Flags Over the Forest

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.

We often think of the East Coast as the birthplace of international expansion and territorial acquisition. The New England states are associated with global conflict and colonization. However, despite being in the center of North America and surrounded by unforgiving wilderness, Colorado has a surprising international history.

Astonishingly, the little village of Cuchara has been part of several nations and indigenous territories over time. Five different sovereign nations have flown their flags over the forested land that would become Cuchara.⁵



Indigenous Nation (Pre-1500s – Present)



The Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan peoples inhabited this region for centuries. Cuchara lies within the traditional territories of the Ute people, especially the Capote band. These native nations maintained seasonal migration routes and hunting grounds throughout the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Like other Ute groups, the Capote were traditionally hunter-gatherers relying on game and wild plants. Later, they incorporated horses into their culture after European contact.⁶ They moved around with the seasons and considered Cuchara's Spanish Peaks to be sacred territory.⁷

The Ute presence still whispers through the Cuchara Valley, if you know where to listen. Ron Jameson, whose family once owned the Yellow Pine Ranch, shared a memory from his boyhood days—mucking out horse stalls in the old barn and unearthing Ute arrowheads and spear points hidden in the soil. “Our ranch in the valley must have been a favorite Ute campsite”, said Jameson.⁸ Pinehaven patriarch Bob Pierotti also told me stories from his childhood about heavy rains unearthing Ute arrowheads on dirt roads and trails.⁹

Spanish Empire (Late 1500s – 1821)

In the late 1500s, Spain claimed large swaths of the American Southwest, including present-day southern Colorado, as part of New Spain. Cuchara was part of the Provincia de Nuevo México, administered from Santa Fe. The culture, language, and architectural roots of the Spanish Empire still run deep in southern Colorado. Spanish expeditions, trails, trade routes, missions, and forts were sprinkled through southern Colorado, and as close as Cuchara and La Veta.

Mexican Republic (1821 – 1848)

After gaining independence from Spain through the Treaty of Cordoba, Mexico inherited Spanish claims, including what is now Colorado. The region that includes Cuchara remained under Mexican control until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Mexican control over these northern territories was limited due to distance and resource constraints. The area became known for lawlessness, Indian conflicts, and for being an unforgiving and rugged wilderness.

Republic of Texas (1836 – 1845)

The Republic of Texas was born out of a revolution against Mexican rule and existed as an independent nation from 1836 to 1845. The Republic wrote its own constitution modeled after that of the U.S., created its own currency, raised a small army, and functioned as an independent nation with Sam Houston as President. The Republic of Texas claimed territory extending deep into present-day Colorado, including Cuchara. However, this declaration was disputed and the Republic of Texas was never able to govern as far north as they had hoped.

The cool, high-altitude climate and winding river running through the Cuchara Valley made it a summer retreat for many Texans seeking to escape the scorching heat of the Lone Star State. Even today, many of the



cabins in Cuchara and the Pinehaven community are owned by Texans. Occasionally, in restaurants in the Cuchara Village, one can hear a group of Texans laughing it up with playful banter and dreaming about restoring the republic. The phrase “Remember the Alamo” is still in the minds of a few Cucharans.

United States (1848 – Present)

Mexico lost Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico due to weak control over its northern frontier, internal instability, and U.S. expansion. The Texas Revolution and U.S. annexation led to the Mexican-American War, and Mexico’s defeat in 1848 forced it to cede the territories in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The region became part of the Territory of New Mexico, and later in 1861, the Territory of Colorado. In 1876, Colorado was admitted into the Union and became the 38th state, exactly 100 years after the Declaration of Independence.

Like much of the West, Huerfano County saw violence typical of frontier regions with gunfights, Native resistance, and labor-related armed conflict. Its history is layered with cultural clashes, mining conflicts, and the gritty ambition of westward expansion.¹⁰

Just up the road from Cuchara, Walsenburg (the county seat) and La Veta, were known as rough towns with saloons, gambling halls, the Fransico Fort, and periodic violent disputes between settlers, miners, and lawmen.

Present Day Cuchara

Nations may rise and fall, but the Cuchara River has flowed steadily through each chapter — a silent witness to centuries

of change. Today, Cuchara retains its identity as a quiet mountain village with deep historical roots – from Indigenous tribes and Spanish land grants to potato farmers, campers, and skiers. Fingerprints of the five flags that have flown over this forested area are still visible. Its history reflects cycles of boom and bust, yet the enduring theme is one of small-town resilience and a dedication to preserving the beauty that defines Cuchara, Colorado.



3

Cuchara Camps, the Catalyst for Growth

You step off a dusty wagon, the scent of pine and woodsmoke thick in the air. Around you, canvas tents flap gently along the Cuchara River, children chasing each other on narrow trails, and George Mayes waves from the porch of a rustic lodge, offering a hand and a promise: “You’ll sleep better here than you have in years.”

Pinehaven’s growth owes much to what came to be known as the Cuchara Camps in the early 1900s. Back then, rows of canvas tents lined the Cuchara River, drawing in visitors eager to escape the summer heat. Stories of the valley’s breathtaking beauty and refreshingly cool mountain air quickly spread, sparking a wave of excitement that helped put the Cuchara Valley on the map.

Early 1900s: The Birth of Cuchara Camps

In 1906, George Alfred Mayes saw more than just land when he purchased the old W.J. Gould Ranch—he saw the potential for a mountain haven. Mayes and his wife moved to

Cuchara for his health in 1908 and founded “Cuchara Camps” – a summer resort intended to capitalize on the area’s



beauty and cool climate.¹¹ By 1911, his vision had come to life as Cuchara Camps, a thriving summer retreat nestled in the cool Colorado high country. Mayes turned a truck into an advertising billboard he used to promote the Cuchara Camps.¹² The truck was covered with posters promoting Cuchara as a medicinal antidote, scenic treasure, and perfect place for a summer home.

Mayes transformed the property into a rustic paradise, stocking the lakes with fish, expanding the ranch house, renting cabins, and offering guests everything from camping gear to guided adventures. He introduced burros and saddled horses for scenic mountain rides. Over time, the simple canvas tents gave way to cozy cottages with sleeping porches and outdoor amenities. In those early years, guests arrived by carriage or wagon, but even as cars began rolling in, the charm of a trail ride on horseback remained a beloved part of the

experience.¹³ The goal was to keep tourists happy so they might purchase land or cabins of their own.

In 1916 a U.S. Post Office named “Cuchara Camps” was established, cementing the name of the area for several decades. The post office name was later shortened to just “Cuchara” in 1957, when “Cuchara Camps” evolved into a more permanent village.¹⁴

Mid-20th Century: Gradual Development

Throughout the 1920s–1940s, Cuchara Camps changed hands and evolved. Mayes himself died in the 1930s, and subsequent proprietors continued the resort business.¹⁵

There is a unique historical connection between Cuchara Camps and Pinehaven through the Powell family. In 1931, Charles Rutherford Powell—son of Charles Lloyd Powell, the original homesteader of the land that would later become Pinehaven—was reported by the local newspaper to have purchased Cuchara Camps.¹⁶ As time progressed, the name “Cuchara Camps” eventually became Cuchara and evolved into a quaint mountain village.

Cuchara’s growth through the 20th century was shaped by the village we know today. In time, small and cozy cabin communities began to emerge, and the Spanish Peaks development brought even more momentum.¹⁷ Local newspapers speak of burro rides, Saturday night dances, impromptu talent shows, musicals, and masquerade parties, all by kerosene lamp light.¹⁸ A 1936 news report also shows Charles R. Powell (son of Pinehaven’s original homesteader) purchasing a power plant to electrify the Cuchara Camps resort.¹⁹ When I tried to pinpoint the location of the old

dance hall and mentioned a newspaper report about a “power plant” supplying electricity, Fire Chief Ron Jameson—whose family roots in the Cuchara Valley go back seven generations—burst out laughing. “Power plant?” he said. “Those were two hand-crank generators shoved into a shed the size of a walk-in closet—right about where the Cuchara Yacht Club sits today. And I’m pretty sure one of 'em needed a coffee break every now and then.”²⁰



In 1964, the paved Highway 12 (“Highway of Legends”) over Cuchara Pass was completed, improving access and accelerating the valley’s growth. These projects laid the groundwork for Cuchara’s modern infrastructure and continued appeal as a mountain retreat.²¹



1980s–2000: The Rise and Fall of the Ski Resort

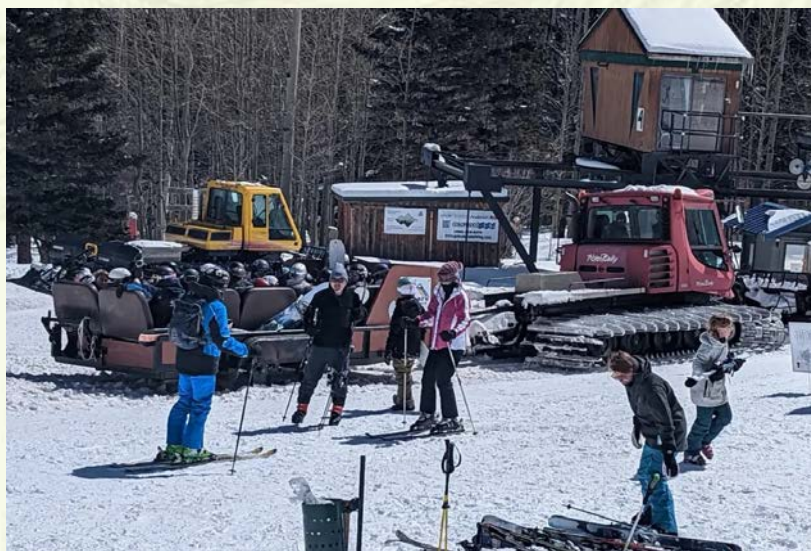
The 1981–1982 ski season brought new energy to Baker Mountain with the grand opening of the Panadero Ski Area. With two double chairlifts and a rope tow, it quickly became a winter favorite.

As the seasons passed, the resort grew—adding more lifts, snowmaking machines, and even the cozy Baker Creek restaurant. But behind the scenes, challenges loomed. Financial struggles, shifting ownership, and unpredictable snowfall made it difficult to stay afloat. After years of ups and downs, the once-bustling ski area closed its doors for good in 2000, leaving behind memories of fresh powder and mountain adventures.²²




2017–Present: Community Renewal and Cuchara Mountain Park

In 2017, the Cuchara community came together with a shared dream—to breathe new life into the beloved ski area. Their efforts paid off when they secured the 50-acre base of the former resort, giving rise to the Parker-Fitzgerald Cuchara Mountain Park. Today, under the care of the nonprofit Panadero Ski Corporation, the park is being reimaged as a vibrant, year-round hub for outdoor adventure. From beginning the repair of Lift 4 to reintroducing skiing, snowboarding, hiking, and more, the spirit of the mountain is alive again—fueled by passion, perseverance, and a deep love for Cuchara.²³



The development of the Cuchara Camps was a catalyst for the growth and reputation as the valley's evolution grew from a rustic mountain retreat to a cherished community hub. From canvas tents to chairlifts, from burro rides to nonprofit



renewal—Cuchara has always been a place of reinvention. Each generation finds its own way to fall in love with this valley. And somehow, the Spanish Peaks always say yes.

4

A Homesteader's Dream

The wind tugged at John Powell's coat as he surveyed the land just north of Cuchara. It wasn't much—just forest, rock, and possibility. But to a Civil War veteran with nothing but grit and a government promise, it looked like the future.

Powell's new beginning started with a bold idea—the Homestead Act of 1862. This historic initiative was designed to spark westward expansion by offering 160 acres of land to anyone willing to build a life on the American frontier. To earn ownership, settlers had to:

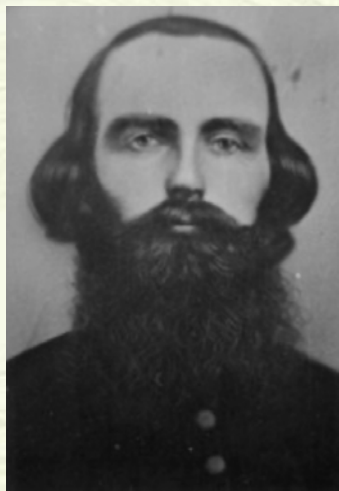
- Live on the land for at least five years.
- Build a proper home with an enclosed roof, at least one door, and one or more windows.
- Cultivate part of the land.
- Show proof of their efforts after five years.²⁴

In return, they received a land patent—a legal deed to call it their own. One such homesteader was John L. Powell, who in 1905, during President Theodore Roosevelt's time in office, was granted the land that would one day become Pinehaven.²⁵

John L. Powell: Union Civil War Veteran

John Lloyd Powell was born in Pennsylvania on April 23, 1834, and married Elmina Ellen Paget on December 16, 1860, in Clay, Missouri. They were the parents of seven children, six sons and one daughter.²⁶ John and his family moved to Kansas, where he was among the early volunteers to join the Union Army's Company A, 8th Kansas Infantry.²⁷ The 8th Kansas Infantry served in the Western Theater. It was known for enduring rough conditions, extensive marching, and engaging in combat and occupation duties across several southern states.²⁸

After the war, Powell relocated to the Cuchara Valley by covered wagon in 1896.²⁹ While specific details about his reasons for moving to La Veta are not documented, it was common for Civil War veterans to relocate westward after the war. La Veta, established in the 1870s, offered several agriculture, ranching, and mining opportunities, attracting many settlers seeking new beginnings. The town's development and the availability of land likely influenced Powell's decision to make it his home. John took advantage of the Homestead Act and received a grant in 1905 for the land that is now Pinehaven, located approximately 1.5 miles north from the center of the Cuchara Village on Highway 12.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



To all to whom these Presents shall come, GREETING:

Whereas, There has been deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Pueblo, Colorado

whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act of Congress approved 30th May 1862, "To secure Homesteads to actual Settlers on the Public Domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of John L. Powell

has been established and duly consummated, in conformity to law, for the East half of the South West quarter and the North half of the South East quarter of Section thirty - fourth in Township thirty South of Range sixty and West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, in Colorado, containing one hundred and sixty acres.

according to the official plat of the survey of said land, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General

Now Know ye that there is, therefore, granted by the United States unto the said John L. Powell

the tract of land above described: To have and to hold the said tract of land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said John L. Powell and to his heirs and assigns forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts, and also subject to the right of the proprietor of a vein or lode to extract and remove his ore therefrom, should the same be found to penetrate or intersect the premises hereby granted, as provided by law, and there is reserved from the lands hereby granted a right of way thereon for ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States.

In testimony whereof, I, Theodore Roosevelt PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these letters to be made patent, and the seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.



Given under my hand at the city of Washington, the eleventh day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and five, and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and thirtieth.

By the President:

T. Roosevelt

By J. M. McKean

C. H. Brush

Secretary.

Recorder of the General Land Office.

Volunteering for military service so early in the war may indicate that Powell was a brave man with strong convictions. He died on April 11, 1920 in La Veta at the age of 85, and was buried in a La Veta Cemetery.³⁰

After John L. Powell passed away in 1920, his children inherited the land. Though they did a bit of logging, the land remained mostly untouched. In 1922, the siblings deeded their interest in the land solely to Charles R. Powell. Charles was also the grandfather of local resident Dick Jameson, who was associated with the family that owned the adjacent Yellow Pine Ranch.

The Beginnings of Pinehaven

Years later, in 1943, Charles R. Powell, son of John L. Powell, sold the land to John C. Vories for \$1,500. Vories made a \$200 down payment, with the rest to be paid gradually—along with a share of profits from any future timber harvests. By 1948, the land was officially his.

John Vories had big dreams. He envisioned turning the rugged land into a peaceful resort—but lacked the funds to bring it to life. But he began planning and working with what he had. His first project? Designing a cabin area on a scenic hill overlooking what was then just a dirt road—now known as Highway 12. Describing the forest as “heaven among the pines”, Vories named the development Pinehaven. It was the first step in transforming Pinehaven from wild homestead land into the cherished community it is today.

Vories' Vision

John Calvin Vories was born on March 28, 1914 in La Veta, Colorado.³¹ John C. Vories was a visionary landowner and early developer in the Cuchara Valley region of Huerfano County.³² Although he faced financial challenges, Vories laid out a section known as Block 11 near the current entrance to what is now Pinehaven. This area later became known as Pinehaven Filing #1. He planned 11 cabin lots on what is now Road 402, ranging in size from 70x100 feet to 200x200 feet. Back then, the entrance ran parallel to Highway 12 and was a steep climb up the hillside, unlike today's longer but more gradual incline along Bend Creek. The second cabin plot sold was to a man who would be destined to fulfill Vories' vision – Steve Pierotti.



This initiative marked the beginning of Pinehaven's transformation from untouched homestead land into a recreational destination. As he aged, John Vories experienced health challenges associated with the altitude and would move back to Arkansas. He passed away at the age of 95 on November 11, 2009.³³ His vision played a significant role in shaping the early development of the Pinehaven area.

Steve Pierotti: Pioneer of Pinchaven

In the 1940s, nestled in the rugged beauty of the Cuchara Valley, a dream began to take shape—and Steve Pierotti was right at the heart of it. Pierotti was a native of Huerfano County and a close friend of John C. Vories.

Steve was orphaned by the age of nine, and in his teen years was no ordinary boy.³⁴ At 18 years of age he was already managing service stations—an impressive start that hinted at his work ethic and ambition. But Steve wasn't one to stand still. Soon, he moved into the coal mines, the backbone of the local economy in the years before World War II.



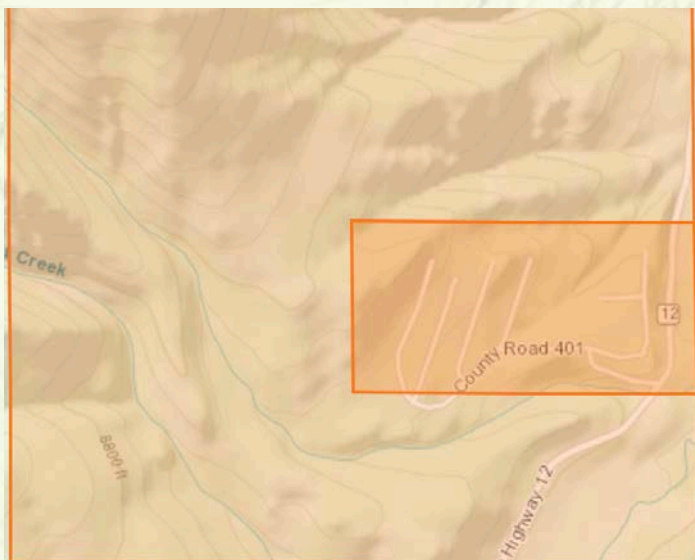
As the war effort called many young men into military service, the mines were left short-staffed—but essential. Steve quickly became a vital member of the mining team. His work was so critical that his employer requested—and received—a military deferment to keep him on the job.

But mining wasn't enough for Steve. Always looking to grow and improve, he took on extra work after hours, hauling coal to homes across the county. For the next 25 years, he delivered three to four loads a day, rain or shine. His hustle didn't stop there—he taught himself how to install furnaces and launched a heating and cooling business on the side.

Through sheer determination and an unmatched work ethic, Steve Pierotti became one of the largest coal dealers in Huerfano County, building a reputation as a self-made man with the grit and vision to turn hard work into lasting results.

Before John Vories left the area, he offered to sell Steve the entire Pinehaven subdivision for \$3,700. Steve borrowed from a friend, and his boundless energy and likeability took Pinehaven to a whole new level.

Steve Pierotti's impact is lasting. Local historians still recognize his role in bringing Pinehaven to life—a quiet legacy built not with fanfare, but with friendship, vision, and grit. Steve retired in Pinehaven, lived to be 99 years old, and passed away peacefully on June 2, 2017. His son Bob and his wife Cindy still live in Pinehaven in the family cabin at 301 on Road 401.





5

The Growth of Pinehaven

Steve Pierotti took the reins of the Pinehaven vision and continued to develop the subdivision by building out the first filing and launching a new and larger project called Filing #2.

Lower Slopes: Pinehaven Filing #1

Steve wasted no time expanding. Filing # 1 covered the area just below what is now Road 405. He laid out more cabin lots, shaping the foundation of the Pinehaven community.

Originally, the entrance road to Pinehaven was designed to slope gradually from a higher point on the hill—where cabin #42 now stands. But one owner bought a lot and decided to build a bit lower for a better view. Rather than cause conflict, Steve adjusted the road layout, sacrificing two planned lot spaces to accommodate the change. While this led to some boundary confusion in later years, the continued use of Road 401 has since settled any legal questions. This kind of neighborly civility has become part of the culture of Pinehaven.

Once the road was set and cabins began to rise, the resort started to take shape, and as word spread, new faces began arriving to build their own retreats.

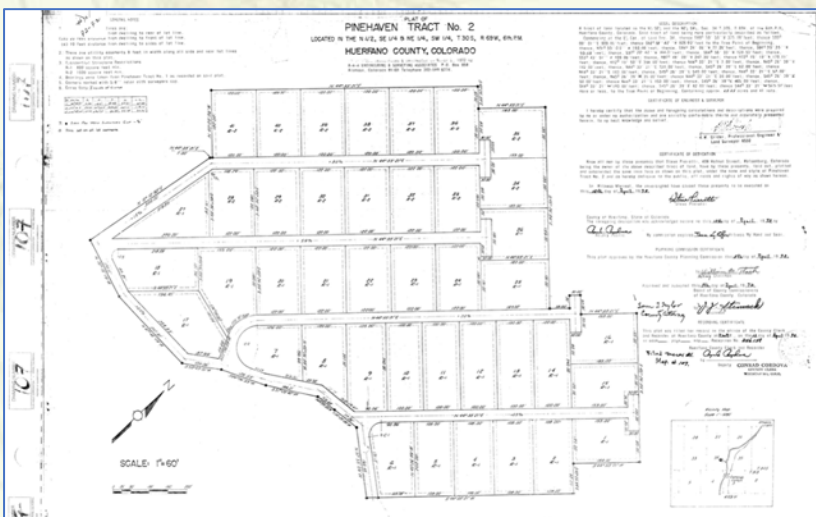
Throughout the 1970s–90s, Pinehaven Filing #1 properties were owned by individual families as summer cabins. The area remained unincorporated county land, with zoning for residential/recreational use. During these decades, the property now known as 80 CR 406 (our cabin) was still undeveloped land higher up the mountain.

Mid-Mountain: Pinehaven Filing #2

By the 1970s, Steve Pierotti was ready to take Pinehaven to the next level. With the success of Filing #1 behind him, he began planning Filing #2—a brand-new phase of development that would stretch across Roads 405, 406, 407, and an extended portion of Road 401.³⁵ Initially, these new lots had no central utilities and owners relied on wells and septic systems.

In 1974, Huerfano County formed the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District (CSWD), a special district tasked with bringing modern water and sewer services to the Cuchara Valley. However, it was not until 2007-2008 that residents of Pinehaven were brought into the water/sewer system.³⁶ This enabled Pinehaven residents to connect with reliable treated water and send wastewater to the central treatment plant instead of a septic leach field.

Meanwhile, in Filing #2, roads were carved into the rugged terrain, water lines were laid, and spacious half-acre lots were prepped for a new wave of cabins.



The lot that became 80 CR 406 was created, and in 2001 the .57-acre parcel was sold by the developer for \$52,000. The new owner, C. E. Butridge was responsible for the design and construction of the home under Pinehaven's covenant restrictions and county building codes.

Soon, cabins began to sprout across the hillside. As Pinehaven blossomed, one challenge emerged—the original water system couldn't keep up. True to form, Steve found a solution. He partnered with the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District to take over and upgrade the system, ensuring every new cabin had access to a reliable, long-term water supply.

Steve Pierotti's son Bob also leaned into the momentum and built several spec homes in Filing #1, quickly filling many of the remaining lots. He also framed and constructed homes in Filing #2 before transitioning fully into real estate.

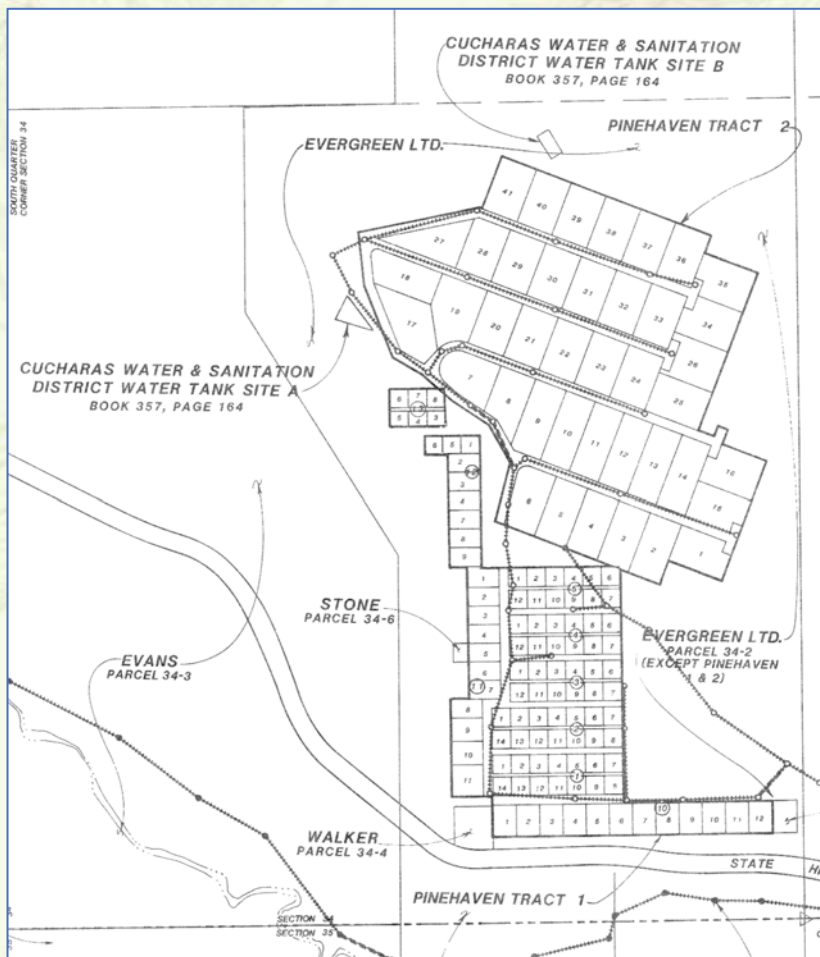
Adding Structure

As Pinehaven grew, a sense of community began to deepen. In the 1970s and early 1980s, residents felt the need to formalize their shared vision and values by creating a homeowners' association and establishing bylaws that would guide the neighborhood into the future. On August 10, 1978, a warranty deed transferred ownership of numerous lots within the Pinehaven development from private individuals (the Pierottis) to a corporation (Pinehaven, Inc.) for development or investment purposes.³⁷ The deed affirmed the Pierottis held clear title to the properties and guaranteed to defend Pinehaven, Inc.'s ownership against any future claims. It was a key transaction in the formation and expansion of the Pinehaven community.

The following image shows the roads and cabins in the Pinehaven community at the time of this writing.



The plat map below is one of the most accurate maps showing the plots of both Filings 1 and 2 in relation to utility services. It was produced by the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District (CSWD) in 1988.³⁸



These efforts became the foundation of today's Pinehaven Property Owners group. Every July, neighbors gather for an annual picnic and business meeting, a tradition that continues to keep the community spirit alive.

Pierotti Pavilion

Another meaningful contribution to Pinehaven's sense of community came from the construction of a large open-air pavilion near the intersection of Roads 401 and 406.³⁹ The land was originally owned by a neighboring cabin, and was intended to be used for a large fish pond. After the owners lost interest in creating the pond, Bob Pierotti purchased the land and constructed a large community pavilion that has been made available to Pinehaven residents. Designed with classic mountain charm—a pitched roof to shield from the winter snow and sturdy open sides to welcome the summer breeze—the project quickly became a community effort. Over the years, neighbors have pitched in with time, tools, and resources to care for the pavilion in the spirit of neighborly collaboration.

In recognition of his leadership and dedication to Pinehaven, the pavilion was named the Pierotti Pavilion in honor of Robert “Bob” Pierotti—a respected long-time resident whose influence helped shape the neighborhood in its formative years. Bob Pierotti has been a deeply involved and respected leader across the La Veta/Cuchara region. His influence has included public service on the La Veta School District Board, real estate agent, land developer, community-building in the Pinehaven subdivision, and a key figure in Pinehaven's Homeowners Association and Cucharas Sanitation and Water District.

From that moment on, the Pierotti Pavilion became more than just a shelter—it became the heart of the community. Over the years, it has echoed with the sounds of laughter and conversation during summer potlucks, Fourth of July cookouts, Labor Day picnics, and spontaneous neighborhood

gatherings. It offered Pinehaven residents a place of their own to connect, celebrate, and build lasting friendships—no longer needing to rely solely on public venues in the nearby Cuchara Village.

The pavilion also serves a practical purpose as the go-to venue for Pinehaven Homeowners Association meetings and announcements, where decisions are made and community plans are shaped. Managed by the HOA, the pavilion is maintained and remains open for member use.



Decades after its construction, the Pierotti Pavilion continues to anchor life in Pinehaven. It stands as a quiet but powerful reminder that when neighbors come together, they don't just build structures—they build community.⁴⁰



A Connected Community

Pinehaven's story is one of vision, resilience, and community. From its early development under the Pierotti family to the formation of a homeowners' association and the creation of shared spaces like the Pierotti Pavilion, the neighborhood has grown into more than a neighborhood of cabins—it's become a wonderful story about what can happen when individuals invest not just in land, but in one another. Today, Pinehaven thrives as a close-knit mountain community shaped by generosity, collaboration, and a shared love for the land.

6

The Cabin in the Forest

Clarence Butridge never imagined his dream cabin would be completed just as his life neared its close. But as he stood on the deck one summer, watching the sun rise above the Spanish Peaks, he knew he'd built something lasting.

Clarence Edward Butridge was a respected businessman, a proud Texas A&M graduate, and a dedicated member of both the A&M Corps and the U.S. Army. Beyond his professional accomplishments, he was a devoted family man with a deep love for aviation. Clarence's heart was captured by the charm of Cuchara, and in 2001, he purchased lot 9 on road 406 for \$52,000 with the intention of building on the land.

In 2006, Butridge was granted a building permit from Huerfano County to construct a cabin. The structure was completed and consisted of a wood-framed cabin with rustic charm – wood siding, a green metal roof, and a



walk-out finished basement. The floor plan included two levels totaling 1,440 square feet of living space. The main level contained a great room with scenic windows, an eat-in kitchen, a half bathroom, and a laundry room. A stone fireplace, wood interior, and hardwood floors reflected a classic mountain cabin style. The lower walk-out level



consisted of two large bedrooms, each with a full bathroom and walk-out decks. A small common area is located at the bottom of the stairs with a seating area and access to both bedrooms and a utility room. The cabin was also connected to the water, sewage system, and electrical grid. No previous structures existed on this lot, so this cabin was the first improvement on the property. The address for the cabin was assigned as 80 County Road 406.

Tragically, Clarence was diagnosed with a serious illness during the construction of the home and passed away at the age of 70, not long after the cabin's completion. However, he was able to see his dream realized and spent time at the cabin he so carefully designed. His legacy and meticulous attention to detail continue to live on in the home he built.

Infrastructure and Development

Major improvements to Pinehaven's infrastructure occurred between 2007 and 2008. The Cucharas Sanitation and Water District (CSWD) extended central water and sewer lines to serve Pinehaven Filing #2, eliminating the need for wells and

septic systems.⁴¹ Road upgrades were also undertaken and by late 2007, developers and contractors were finishing new roads and utilities for Pinehaven under county oversight.⁴² However, there was a planning oversight that would challenge the community's commitment to being good neighbors. A change by Huerfano County Planning & Zoning to the subdivision plat shifted a sewer-line easement on one lot, conflicting with an owner's planned homesite, which resulted in a small-claims lawsuit against the district.⁴³ The issue was handled legally and did not stop the project. In December 2008, the CSWD reported that the Pinehaven subdivision project was officially finished – the county signed off on the new roads, and final payments to contractors were made.⁴⁴ From this point on, all Pinehaven homes (including 80 CR 406) were connected to reliable central water and sewer service, a significant land-use upgrade from prior decades.⁴⁵

Stable Ownership

Through the late 2000s and 2010s, 80 County Road 406 continued to be owned by the Butridge family. The owners used it as a seasonal mountain retreat. No further subdivisions or structural changes are recorded in this period. The land use remained residential-recreational, consistent



with the Pinehaven covenants. In addition, the property's assessed value and taxes rose as real estate in the Cuchara area appreciated, especially after the infrastructure improvements.

Spring Creek Wildfire

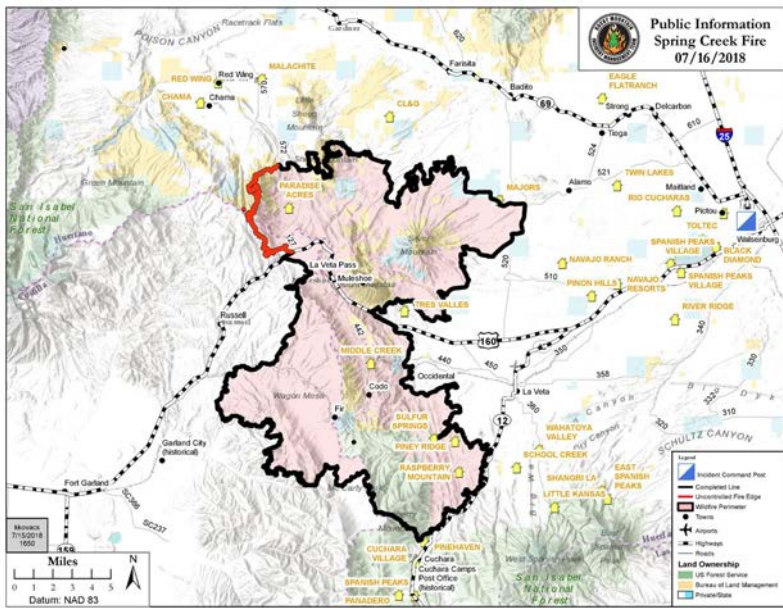
On June 27, 2018, Pinehaven residents were told to leave—fast. Fire maps showed a wall of flames creeping over Raspberry Mountain. For a moment, it looked like the entire valley might vanish in smoke and ash.

The Spring Creek Fire became one of the state's most destructive wildfires, burning over 108,000 acres across Costilla and Huerfano counties. When it was over – 216 homes were destroyed and another 119 were damaged.⁴⁶ The fire was attributed to an illegal burn by a visiting camper using a fire pit during a burn ban.

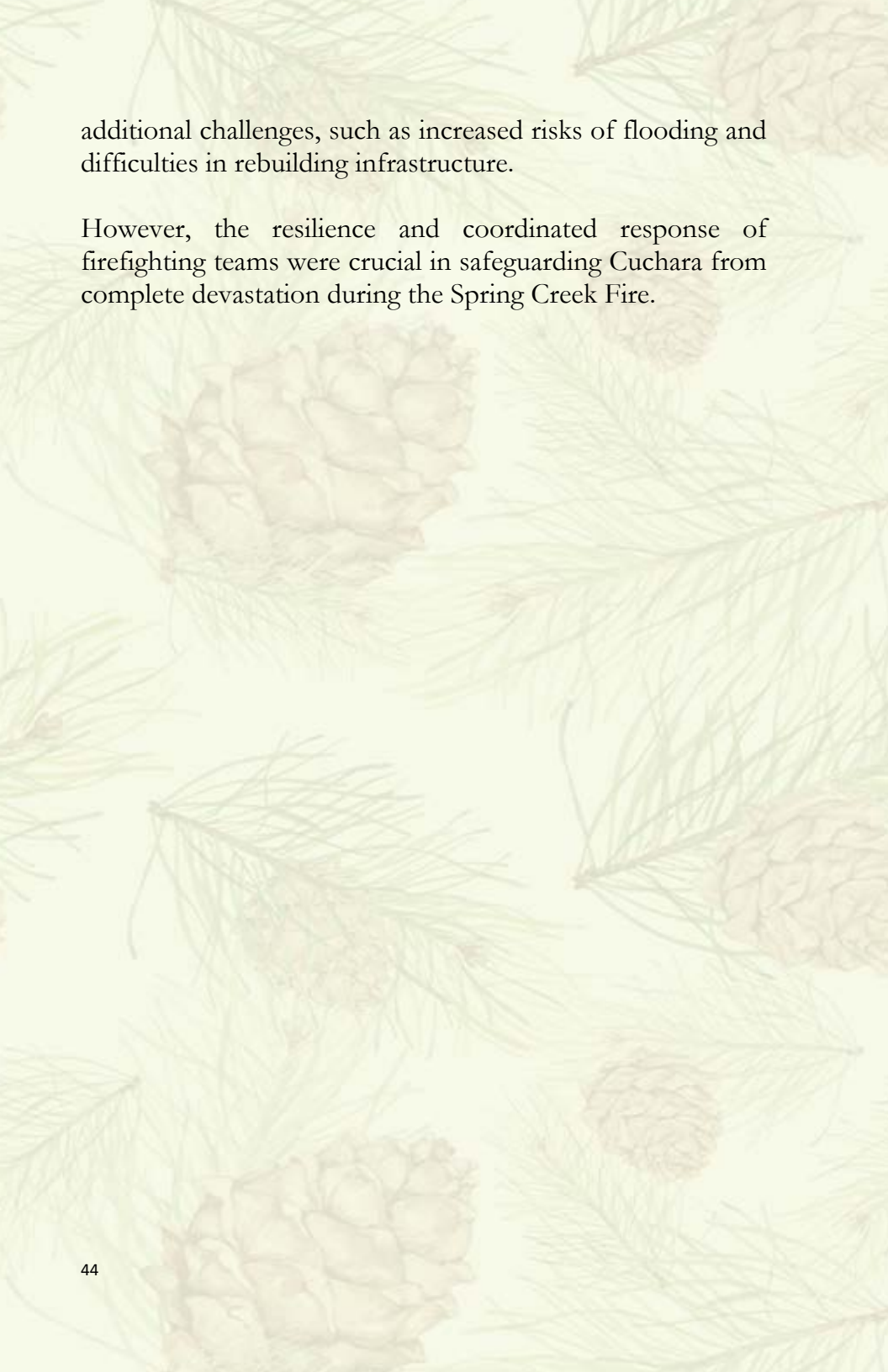


Cuchara faced significant threats from the advancing fire. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for Pinehaven and surrounding communities on July 1, 2018.⁴⁷ Live news footage showed flames approaching Raspberry Mountain and the Pinehaven area.⁴⁸ The fire moved rapidly, reaching the northern edge of the Cuchara Valley and burning into areas around homes.

Firefighters employed multiple tactics to protect the village, including constructing fire lines, conducting back burns, and utilizing aerial retardant drops.⁴⁹ These efforts, combined with favorable shifts in weather conditions, were instrumental in preventing the fire from engulfing the entire community.



Despite these measures, the fire caused substantial damage to the surrounding environment, leaving behind a landscape of charred trees and altered terrain.⁵⁰ The aftermath posed

The background of the page is a light green and yellow illustration of pine branches and cones. The branches are thin and have many small, needle-like leaves. The cones are brown and have a textured, scaly appearance. They are scattered across the page, with some in the foreground and others in the background.

additional challenges, such as increased risks of flooding and difficulties in rebuilding infrastructure.

However, the resilience and coordinated response of firefighting teams were crucial in safeguarding Cuchara from complete devastation during the Spring Creek Fire.

7

The Eagles Nest

The wind rustled through the pines like a whisper from another century. A golden eagle circled above, the Spanish Peaks stood like sentinels in the distance—and we just stood there, silent on the back deck, knowing: this was it. This was our place.

The Eagles Nest

After nearly 20 years of treasured memories, the Pinehaven cabin found new owners on May 21, 2021 when Rhonda and I purchased it for \$375,000. The sale reflected a remarkable rise in value since 2001—an affirmation of the home’s solid craftsmanship and the increasing allure of the Cuchara region.

We will never forget the day it was ours standing before the Spanish Peaks, which are two prominent mountains in southern Colorado, known for their striking appearance, geological significance, and cultural importance.



For Rhonda and me, our adult daughters, sons-in-laws, and grandchildren—the cabin has become much more than a getaway. Combined, the entire family spends nearly 90 days a year at the cabin, and it has become a sanctuary of rest, creativity, and family bonding. As a writer, I have found inspiration in the serene forest surroundings, using the cabin as a peaceful retreat to think, write, and ponder the future. I have written 13 books there! That’s how awesome the setting is. However, I am not the only one. Our entire family has found the cabin to be a well of renewal.

Wildlife at the Cabin

Cuchara, Colorado is a wildlife wonderland, thanks to its stunning variety of mountain habitats—lush forests, open meadows, running streams, and high alpine tundra. This rich landscape creates the perfect spot for nature lovers and wildlife watchers alike.

It is not uncommon to see wildlife in the Pinehaven community. While on the cabin deck or on walks, we have seen our fair share of big game, such as elk herds, deer, black bears, mountain lions, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep. There is also plenty of small game and furbearers, like coyotes, bobcats, foxes, and several different species of squirrels and rabbits. One year, we were blessed to have a mother and two bobcat kittens find shelter under our bottom deck. Needless to say, we keep a can of bear spray near every entrance to the cabin and with us on walks and hikes.



The Spanish Peaks region is a highlight along Colorado's official Birding Trails, making it a must-visit for birdwatchers. From elusive dusky grouse and ptarmigan to wild turkeys, hawks, falcons, and majestic golden eagles riding the mountain thermals—this area offers an impressive birding experience.

Family Memories

Unforgettable family memories have been made here, from the thrill of getting snowed in together to our grandchildren learning how to fish with a rod and reel. Bear sightings on a regular basis always add a touch of excitement, while cozy evenings spent playing games and watching movies by the fire bring everyone closer. The kids build forts, search for bones, and let their imaginations run wild in the forest, which quickly became a playground for our grandsons. With breathtaking views in every direction, wildlife encounters, peaceful fishing spots, scenic hikes, and shared moments of discovering local history, the Eagles Nest offers more than just being a getaway—it creates stories the whole family will never forget.



Renovations and Upgrades

Between 2021 and 2025, we embarked on an ambitious and thoughtful transformation of the Eagles Nest. One of our first major efforts focused on forest mitigation—removing hazardous trees and clearing dry wood from the forest floor to reduce wildfire risk and enhance the property's natural safety.

Next, we tackled the terrain, undertaking significant excavation work and constructing robust retaining walls.

With the addition of tons of gravel, we expanded the parking area in front of the cabin, making it far more accessible year-round and convenient for family members to park and play outdoor games.



The cabin itself received a fresh facelift, with its exterior siding resealed and re-stained to better withstand the elements and restore its rustic charm. Comfort was a top priority as well, leading to the installation of a mini-split air conditioning system that now provides additional heating and cooling on the main level.

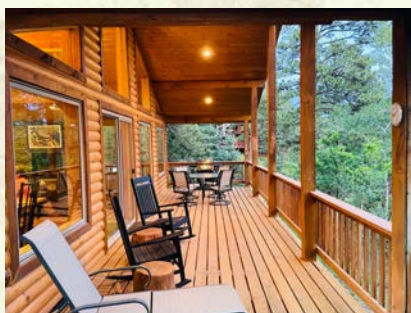
To improve efficiency and control, we expanded the electrical panel and rewired the baseboard heating system on both levels to connect with modern thermostats mounted on the walls. Room thermometers were also added to allow for remote monitoring of indoor temperatures during the winter months. Security was also enhanced with a new exterior camera system that provides real-time monitoring, motion sensors, and peace of mind.



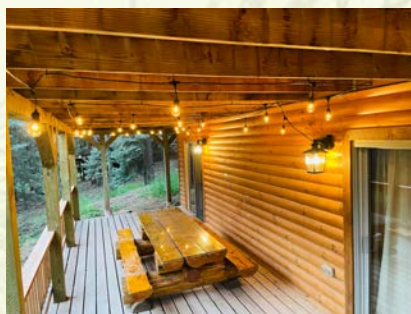
Inside, the cabin took on a whole new personality with curated themed décor and art that celebrates the surrounding

Cuchara Valley. The kitchen and laundry areas were updated with new appliances, including a refrigerator, dishwasher, washer, dryer, and updated sink. Every window on the main floor now features privacy blinds, offering both comfort and seclusion.

The furnishings, both inside and out, were upgraded to complement the new aesthetic, and a special space was created just for the grandkids—a "Kids Club" room complete with cozy seating, a large TV, gaming system, board games, and a book nook that invites imagination. Each bedroom was uniquely themed, adding character and charm to the lower level.



The outdoor spaces at the Eagles Nest were transformed into inviting hubs for relaxation and connection. The top deck now boasts stylish new furniture and a fully equipped grilling station—perfect for enjoying mountain views while cooking up a feast. Down below, the bottom deck features party lights and a handcrafted log picnic table to bring family and friends together for outdoor games, shared meals, and unforgettable moments under the open sky.



Perhaps one of the most convenient upgrades was the installation of high-speed fiber optic internet, which enabled

fast streaming, premium television service, and the ability to work remotely from this peaceful mountain hideaway. Together, these renovations reflect not only a dedication to quality and comfort but also a deep love for the Eagles Nest and the memories it holds.

In summary, the story of this property spans over 160 years. What began as an untamed wilderness area evolved into a homestead that would eventually become part of a thriving mountain resort by mid-century. In the mid 1900s, it



was subdivided into Pinehaven, setting the stage for continued growth. The 2000s brought essential infrastructure—roads, utilities, and a sense of permanence—turning raw land into a modern cabin community. With each passing era, legal and physical changes shaped the land: from Gould to Mayes, from resort to residential retreat. Today my family enjoys the fruits of that legacy.

Someday, when we're gone and the forest grows taller around this cabin, I hope our grandkids will remember the sound of wind in the trees, the warmth of firelight on winter nights, and the stories whispered on the mountain breeze. Because this isn't just a place—it's a promise.

8

The Beary Christmas Tree

The snow was falling gently outside, muffling the forest in silence. Inside, the fire crackled, and soft golden light spilled from a tree that wasn't just decorated—it was alive with memories, glowing from within seventeen tiny cabins, each telling its own story.

Christmas at the cabin is always magical—but our Christmas tree isn't just decorated; it's crafted from memories. Starting in early 2023, Rhonda and I set out on a yearlong grandparenting adventure to spend meaningful, one-on-one time with each of our grandchildren—and their parents too. The goal? To build something lasting with each one. By Christmas 2024, the journey was complete, and what came out of it is now the heart of our holiday décor at the cabin.

We purchased seventeen miniature log cabin kits—one for each parent couple, one for each grandchild (plus a few hopeful extras!), one for us as grandparents, and two for our great grandparents. Month by month, each grandchild came over to our home for their special time. They chose their cabin design, assembled it with us, picked the colors, and painted it themselves.



Each cabin now carries their engraved name—a tiny handcrafted tribute to a treasured moment shared.

To showcase these tiny homes, we built a large wooden shelf shaped like a Christmas tree. At the top sits a jolly Santa Bear, proudly declaring “Beary Christmas!”—a playful nod to the Pinehaven wildlife and the spirit of the season. Each little cabin lights up from within, glowing warmly against the rustic wood backdrop.

Every October, we bring the tree up to the cabin and set it up in anticipation of the holidays. As different family members come and go throughout the season, the Beary Christmas Tree greets them—a glowing reminder of time well spent and love well invested.

We didn’t set out to build a Christmas tree—we set out to build a connection. One cabin at a time, one visit at a time. What we ended up creating wasn’t just art, it was a monument to togetherness. This isn’t just a Christmas tree, it’s a forest of memories. A handmade reminder that time is the best gift we can give—and every glowing cabin a promise that love was shared.

Every October, the Beary Christmas Tree returns to its mountain home, lighting up the cabin with more than bulbs—it glows with belonging. Long after the cookies are gone and the wrapping paper cleared, the memories stay, softly flickering, waiting to welcome us home again.



The Beary Christmas Tree **A Cabin Tradition, Rooted in Love**

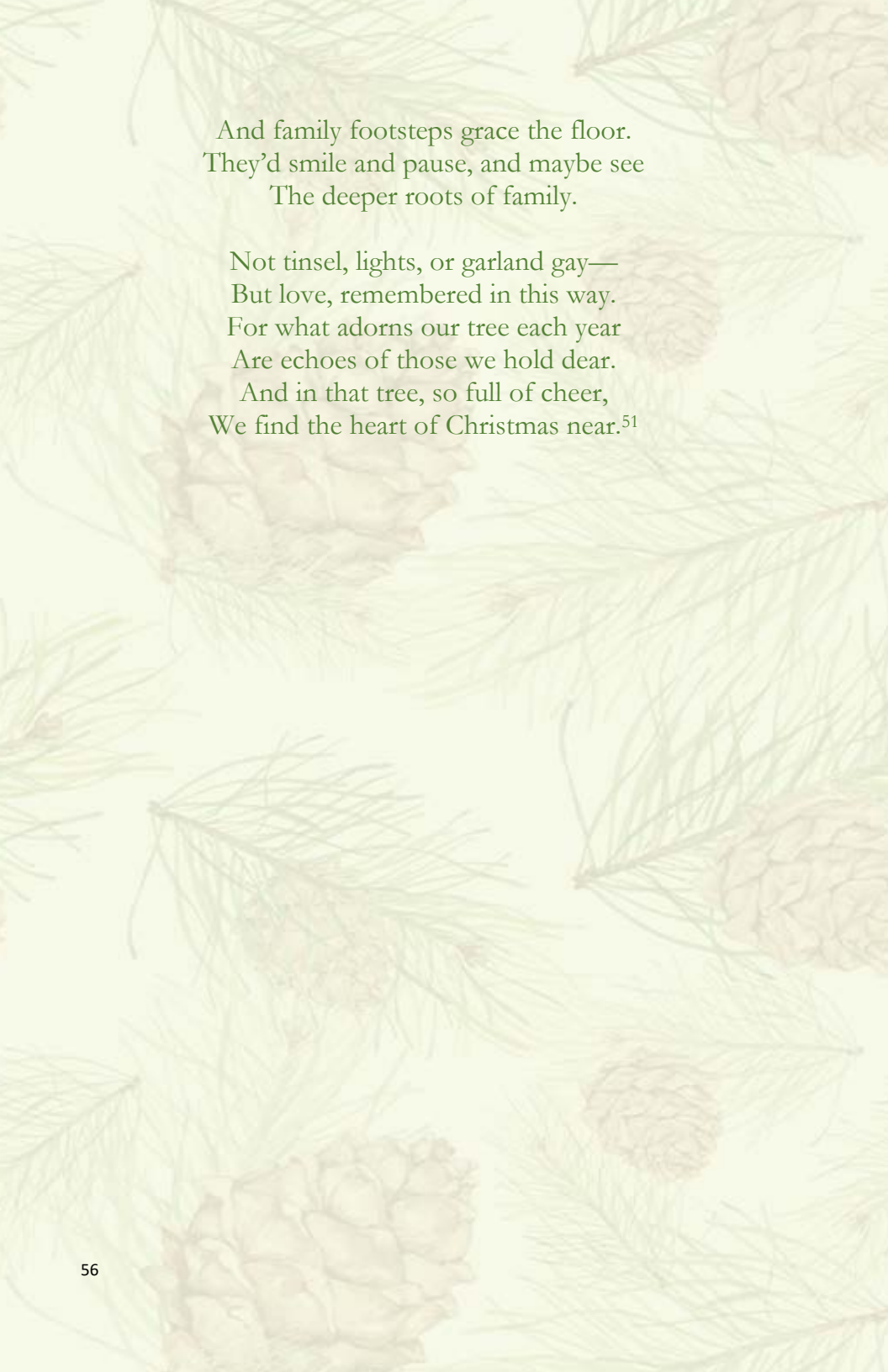
In a cabin tucked where pine trees sway,
Where snowflakes dance and children play,
A Christmas tree stands proud and high—
Not store-bought bright, but hand-built by
The loving hands of grands and kin,
A tree with stories tucked within.

In twenty-three, our quest began,
With Grandma's heart and Grandpa's plan:
Seventeen small cabins neat,
Each child would build their own retreat.
They chose the wood, they picked each hue,
They painted dreams in red and blue.

Each visit held a special glow—
A moment time could not outgrow.
Their names engraved with care and pride,
Their memories now sanctified.
And extras made with hope to see
More tiny names on cabins be.

A shelf was built with hands so sure,
In Christmas tree-like shape so pure.
We crowned it with a jolly bear
Who spreads a warm, "Beary Christmas!" air.
Each tiny home, a glowing spark,
That lights the cabin in the dark.

By October's end, we'd gently place
This treasured tree within its space.
Then snow would fall, and fires would roar,



And family footsteps grace the floor.
They'd smile and pause, and maybe see
The deeper roots of family.

Not tinsel, lights, or garland gay—
But love, remembered in this way.
For what adorns our tree each year
Are echoes of those we hold dear.
And in that tree, so full of cheer,
We find the heart of Christmas near.⁵¹

9

Writing the Next Chapter

The development of Pinehaven spans over a century, beginning with John L. Powell's 1905 homestead claim under the Homestead Act of 1862. Over the decades, the land passed through the hands of family heirs and visionaries like John C. Vories and Steve Pierotti, who transformed rugged forest terrain into a planned mountain retreat. Key milestones include the subdivision filings in the 1970s and 1990s, and the critical infrastructure upgrades in 2007–2008. In 2021, our family began a new chapter of stewardship and renovation for the cabin at 80 County Road 406, building on a legacy of dreams, development, and community resilience.

Pinehaven's Historic Timeline

The timeline below visually captures these pivotal moments in Pinehaven's evolution.

- **1862** – Homestead Act signed into law, encouraging western settlement by offering land to citizens willing to improve and live on it.

- **1905** – John L. Powell (homesteader/rancher) homesteads land in the Cuchara Valley that would eventually become Pinehaven.
- **1920** – Powell passes away; the land is inherited by his children.
- **1922** – The Powell siblings deed their interest solely to Charles R. Powell, consolidating ownership.
- **1943** – John C. Vories (visionary investor) purchases 137 acres from Charles R. Powell, intending to create a mountain resort community.
- **1948** – Full ownership of the land is transferred to Vories; he begins laying out Block 11, the first cabin sites.
- **1950s** – Vories sells his interest to Steve Pierotti, who takes over the Pinehaven vision and begins expanding development.
- **1970s–1990s** – Filing #1 of Pinehaven is completed; individual families begin purchasing and building summer cabins.
- **1990s** – Filing #2 is planned and developed by Pierotti, including Roads 405–407 and upper Road 401.
- **2001** – Lot 9 (now 80 County Road 406) is sold to C.E. Buttridge for \$52,000.
- **2006** – Buttridge constructs the first cabin on the lot, featuring a rustic design and modern conveniences.
- **2007–2008** – Major infrastructure and improvements through Cucharas Sanitation and Water District (CSWD) extends water and sewer lines; roads are completed under county oversight.
- **2018** – Spring Creek Fire forces evacuation of Pinehaven and causes environmental damage in nearby areas.
- **2021** – Gene and Rhonda Roncone purchase the cabin at 80 CR 406 for \$375,000 and begin family use and improvements.

- **2021–2025** – The Eagles Nest undergoes renovation, safety upgrades, and modernization, becoming a central retreat for the Roncone family.

Still Writing Our Pinehaven Story

The Eagles Nest cabin is truly a gem in Cuchara, Colorado! It represents an incredible journey of family and nature, deeply rooted in the area's vibrant history. From its beginnings as a wilderness homestead to becoming a cherished retreat, this cabin beautifully illustrates the joy of preserving local heritage while creating unforgettable family memories!

Cherished moments that our family will never forget have been made here. Cuchara isn't just a place you visit—it's a story you step into; one filled with quiet wonders, wild beauty, and moments that linger long after you leave. But the best part is, the story isn't finished. The trails, the stars, the laughter echoing from the village... they're all waiting for us to write the next chapter—one that lives on in our family's heart, long after the mountains fade from view.



Tell Your Story

We know our story is just one thread in the rich tapestry of Pinehaven's history. That's why we've created a companion blog where you can add your own memories, stories, and reflections. Whether it's a link to a treasured photo from a summer hike, a funny cabin mishap, or a family tradition passed down through generations, we invite you to share your piece of the Pinehaven legacy. You can even include links to

your own photos or online albums. Together, we can preserve the spirit of this special place—one story at a time.

Submit your story at



www.cabininthepinescuchara.blogspot.com

10

Things to Do in Cuchara

Cuchara, Colorado, nestled in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, offers a variety of attractions and activities for those seeking outdoor adventure, scenic beauty, and small-town charm.

Outdoor Adventures

Cuchara Mountain Park. This mountain park provides year-round recreational opportunities.

- Hiking & Snowshoeing. Explore trails like the Lower Baker Creek Trail and Baker Creek Connector Trail.
- Backcountry & Cross-Country Skiing. Access groomed loops and backcountry areas for skiing.
- Disc Golf. Enjoy an 18-hole course split into two challenging 9-hole sections.



- **Miniature Golf.** Play-at-your-own-pace mini golf is available, with equipment at the Bear's Den.

- **Stargazing.** Experience incredible night skies, with the park working towards 'Dark Sky' certification.

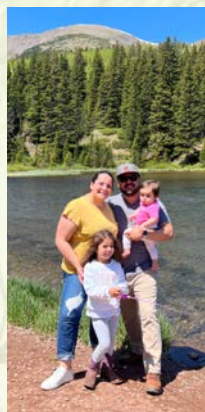
- **Sledding & Snow Play.** Designated areas are available for sledding. Registration is required.



Lift-served skiing is currently not operational, but snowcat rides are offered during the winter season.

Nearby Natural Attractions. Explore the surrounding San Isabel National Forest and nearby lakes.

- **Bear Lake & Blue Lake.** Ideal for fishing and picnicking.
- **Spring Creek Trail.** A local favorite for hiking.
- **Cuchara Pass.** Offers scenic views along the Highway of Legends.



Geological Wonders. Cuchara isn't just scenic—it sits at the heart of some of Colorado's most fascinating geology. Nestled on the eastern flank of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the area is shaped by ancient volcanic and tectonic forces. Just east of town rise the majestic East and West Spanish Peaks, which was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1976. The two peaks are towering remnants of massive volcanic intrusions known as stocks. Millions of years ago, volcanic activity here forced molten rock into vertical

cracks in the Earth's crust, which then cooled into more than 400 striking, wall-like formations called dikes. These dramatic natural structures fan out from the peaks like spokes on a wheel and are among the most remarkable examples of their kind in North America—so impressive, in fact, they're frequently featured in geology textbooks.



Family-Friendly Activities

- **Yellow Pine Guest Ranch.** Offers horseback riding, fishing, hiking, and seasonal activities like sand volleyball.
- **JW Ranch.** Provides guided UTV nature excursions to observe wildlife such as elk, deer, and black bears.

Cuchara Village Charm

Stroll through the quaint village featuring shops, local boutiques, and gift stores. Dining options like the Dog Bar & Grill and the Yacht Club offer indoor and outdoor seating.



The Yacht Club has fabulous outdoor seating by the creek with yard games for kids. Here are some of our favorite things to do in the village.

- **Bear's Den** in Cuchara is a fun gift shop and mini golf place. They have a small, themed putt-putt course, shaved ice, and ice cream and one of Cuchara's best gift shops. Kids love this place. Their number is 719-742-6022 and they are located on the left side at the end of the main street in Cuchara Village.
- **Cuchara Country Store** in Cuchara Village is a large gift shop with local stuff for all ages.
- **Dakota Dukes.** The gift shop inside Dakota Dukes is a fun experience for kids. It is at the main entrance to the Cuchara Village and is open year-round. Their number is 719-742-5529 if you want to call before you go.
- **Yellow Pine Livery** is a tourist ranch just outside the northern border of Cuchara. In addition to cabin rentals, they also offer horseback riding. Horseback trail rides provide a relaxing tour of the ranch pastures, streams, and forest during the summer months for adults and children ages 8 years and up. Reservations are required and the cost is \$75 per person with a weight limit of 225 pounds per person. They are located at 15880 CO-12, Cuchara, CO 81055. Their phone



number is 719-742-3548 and their website is <https://yellowpine.us>.

In the area. Here are some fun things to do in the general area.

- **Shepherds Walk.** The Shepherds Prayer River Walk is a trail along the Cuchara River with the trailhead being only a three-minute drive from the cabin. The trail is on private property and divided into various rest stops and benches with different parts of Psalm 23 engraved in rock and stone. The Yellow Pine Ranch is very hospitable and allows respectful visitors to use it if they stop at the office and let them know where you parked your car. Halfway through is a scenic overlook with a large cross. Use the QR code to get the trailhead location. 
- **Cuchara Mountain Park** is a ski resort that went out of business a few decades ago and was reopened as a mountain park for hiking, snow shoeing, sled riding, hiking, and has two-disc golf courses. They have an 18-hole disc golf course, a nine-hole “Creek Course” and a challenging nine-hole “Mountain Course.” The “Creek Course” has become very popular with families. For more information check-out their website.
- **Highway of Legends scenic route.** Take the Highway of Legends scenic route (Highway 12) to see the Spanish Peaks, lookout views, Great Dikes of Cuchara, Monument Lake, Stonewall and much more. You will see wildlife and breathtaking mountain scenery to take pictures. You can 

download an audio tour to listen to as you drive with the QR code on the previous page.

- **Wildlife drive.** Take a ride at dusk over the Cuchara Pass to see elk, deer, wild turkeys, fox, eagles, bobcats, bear and more.
- **La Veta & Cuchara Tour Map & Guide.** There is map and guide of scenic spots, lakes, hiking trails, fishing spots and other fun things to do. The map is available in most stores in the village.
- **Stonewall Gift Shop & Diner.** There is a super fun gift shop and diner in Stonewall called, The Stonewall Shopping Bag. It is located at 6689 CO-12, Weston, CO 81091.



Seasonal Events

Cuchara Valley Recreation Program. Engage in community events such as:

- Guided Hikes
- Annual Fun Run
- Sunset and Stars. A unique stargazing experience.
- Bingo Nights. Family-friendly entertainment.

Local Festivals. Attend seasonal festivals in nearby La Veta and Gardner, including farmers markets and art shows.

Whether you're seeking outdoor adventures, family activities, or a peaceful retreat, Cuchara offers a diverse range of attractions to suit all interests.

11

Story in Pictures and Poems



Whispering Cabin

Tucked beneath the pine trees tall,
Where quiet winds and shadows fall,
A cabin waits with open door,
Its wooden heart forever warm.

Smoke curls up into the sky,
Stars blink low and owls fly high.
Peace resides in walls of pine—
A simple life, a sacred shrine.⁵²

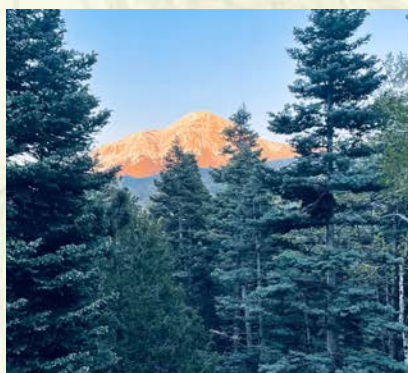














John L. Powell: Union Veteran of the West

In Pennsylvania's hills he drew first breath,
A child of spring, not far from death.
April's dawn in thirty-four,
Would one day march to fields of war.

In Missouri's Clay, his vows were sworn,
To Elmina, on a winter morn.
Seven children graced their years—
Through joy, through toil, through hope and tears.

To Kansas plains the Powells came,
Before the country split in flame.
He heard the Union's urgent call,
And joined the ranks to risk it all.

Company A, brave Eighth of name,
Through Southern fields they fought and came.
Through storms, disease, and hostile land,
With rifle, grit, and weary hand.

He did not seek the hero's prize,
But followed duty's quiet cries.
The war was long, the peace was loud—
Yet soldiers sought no cheering crowd.

To Colorado's rugged grace
He journeyed west to find a place—
Where homestead soil and open sky
Could soothe a veteran's battle-cry.

La Veta's hills became his rest,
Among the peaks he loved the best.

A grant of land, his hands made whole,
The West now cradled heart and soul.

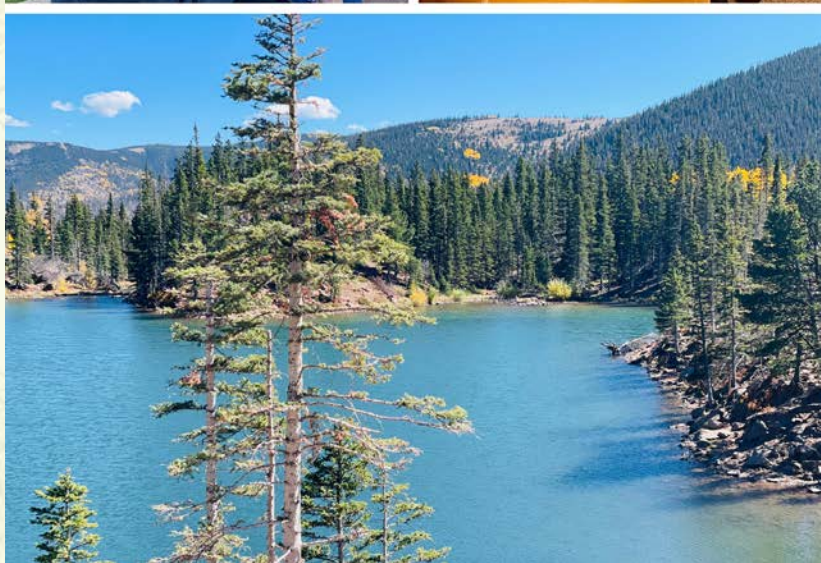
He died when spring returned once more,
In 1920, aged eighty-four.
The flag he fought for gently waved
Above the La Veta ground he braved.

His children walked where pine trees lean,
And left the land near still and green.
Till Charles, son of grit and flame,
Preserved the Powell family name.

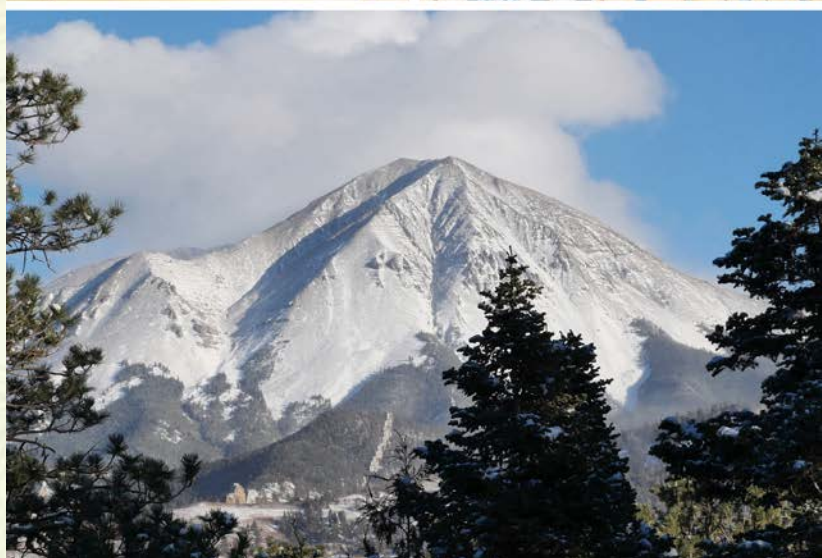
Through blood and soil, through war and peace,
His legacy would never cease.
A soldier, settler, husband, sire—
Whose life still echoes through the mire.

So raise a glass to Powell's line,
To homestead dreams and marching time.
For freedom's price he gave his due—
A man both brave, and stalwart true.⁵³









At the Roncone Cabin

Nestled high where pine trees stand,
The Roncone cabin warms the land.
A mountain home, both wild and true,
With skies so vast and crystal blue.

We've watched the snow pile at the door,
And laughed as flakes kept falling more.
Trapped inside? Not quite—we'd cheer,
For family love drew everyone near.

The grandkids learned to cast and reel,
Beside the lake so calm and still.
While bears passed by with quiet grace,
We watched in awe from our safe place.

By firelight, we'd play and chat,
With cards and cocoa, blankets, laughs.
The forest called—the boys would run,
With forts to build and bones to hunt.

Imagination shaped the trees,
A kingdom ruled by joy and glee.
Each trail, each stream, a path to find
New stories etched in heart and mind.

The views astound at every turn,
With nature's wonders to discern.
We've hiked, we've fished, explored with care—
And felt the mountain's quiet prayer.

In this small cabin, memories grow,
Like summer streams from melting snow.
More than a getaway, this space
Is stitched into our family's grace.⁵⁴











A Touch of Heaven in the Pines

We wandered west with skies so wide,
Where desert met horizon's tide,
When chance and road signs changed our way—
"Highway of Legends," they did say.

We turned around, just chasing lore,
Not knowing what might lie in store.
But up we climbed through desert's edge,
Beyond the plains, past cedar's ledge.

Then suddenly, the world grew green—
With rivers bright and forests seen.
A valley whispered soft and low:
"Cuchara waits, with heart aglow."

Like John once sang, it felt like home,
Though it was one we'd never known.
A village hidden, small and true,
Beneath the skies of mountain blue.

We came again, then came once more,
Our hearts returning to this shore.
And in the pines near Raspberry Hill,
We found a cabin, calm and still.

Pinehaven, where the tall pines stand—
A heaven carved by nature's hand.
With Ponderosa, Bristlecone,
We claimed a space to call our own.

A quiet place to laugh and play,
To build sweet memories day by day.
For children's joy and grandkids' cheer,
A legacy of love lives here.⁵⁵











Steve Pierotti A Pioneer of Pinehaven

In Cuchara's hills where pine trees grow,
Where rivers rush and wild winds blow,
A vision formed in days gone by—
And Steve Pierotti reached for sky.

A Huerfano son, born of grit and ground,
With calloused hands and dreams unbound.
At eighteen, work was not a chore—
He ran the pumps, then labored more.

When war drew men to distant lands,
Steve stayed behind, with coal-stained hands.
In silent mines he bore the weight,
Of duty served by toil, not fate.

Three loads, four—through rain and sleet,
He hauled the fire for homes and heat.
And still, at night, he studied flames,
Learned pipes and ducts, and built his name.

A self-made man with steady pace,
No shortcuts carved his path to grace.
He built a life with honest sweat,
A legacy we won't forget.

But more than work, he dreamed of land—
With Vories close, they took a stand.
Through brambles wild and trails unmade,
They mapped out dreams with axe and spade.

Block Eleven, cabins planned,
On highland soil, by their own hand.
Where dirt roads curled like mountain streams,
They laid the bones of future dreams.

Not for glory, not for gold—
But for a mountain life to hold.
With love for pine and open sky,
They built where eagles dared to fly.

Now Pinehaven stands, serene and true,
A quiet place where wild hearts grew.
And though Steve's voice is now at rest,
His spirit lingers in the West.

At 301, the fire still glows,
Where stories bloom like mountain rose.
And through his son and those he knew,
Steve's dream lives on in morning dew.

So raise a toast in evening's hush,
To rugged men and hearts that rush.
To Steve Pierotti—humble, wise—
A pioneer beneath these skies.⁵⁶













C. E. Butridge

A Legacy in the Pines

He walked with honor, steady, proud,
A Texan bold beneath the cloud.
An Aggie first, with maroon pride,
In Corps and country, he did not hide.

A soldier's stance, a leader's grace—
With purpose carved in time and place.
Yet in his heart, beyond the skies,
Where aircraft soared and eagles rise,

He found another dream to chase—
A quiet, pine-bound mountain place.
Cuchara called with whispered breeze,
Through trembling aspen, bending trees.

And there he found, on lot marked Nine,
A patch of earth that felt divine.
With vision clear and hands so sure,
He drew up plans meant to endure.

A cabin strong with rustic soul—
Of wood and stone, of heart and goal.
Green roof shining in the light,
Framed by stars and cool, crisp night.

A fire danced on hardwood floors,
While mountain views adorned the doors.
Two stories built with care and pride,
Each corner touched and verified.

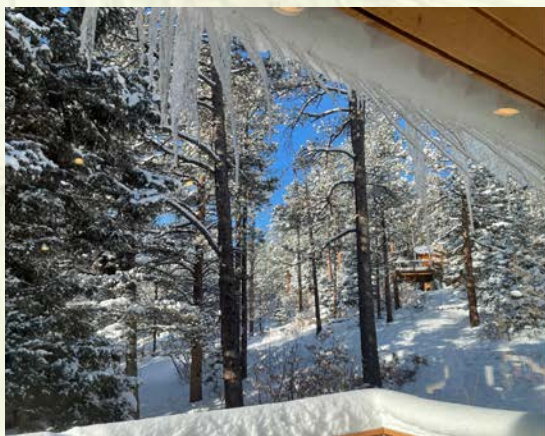
A great room kissed by morning beams,
An echo of his mountain dreams.
He saw it through, though time ran thin,
The illness fought, yet did not win—

Not truly, for he stood once more
Within the walls he'd long worked for.
He walked those decks, he felt the breeze,
Among the pines, beneath the trees.

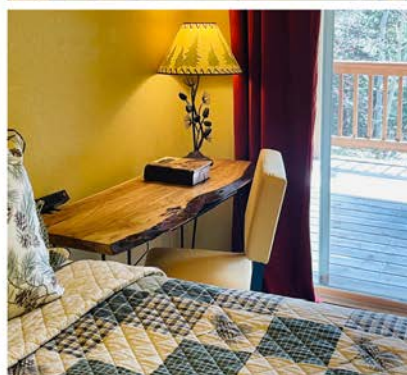
And in that cabin, love remains—
In laughter, echoes, sunlit panes.
At 80 Road 406,
His story lives in stone and sticks.

No prior house had claimed that land,
Just Clarence's touch, his guiding hand.
Though he's gone, the walls still stand,
A monument to dreams well-planned.

To discipline, to strength, to care—
To one man's life laid gently there.
So here's to Butridge, calm and wise,
Whose vision rests beneath these skies.
His legacy, in wood and flame,
Still breathes in Pinehaven—
And bears his name.⁵⁷













Flags Over the Forest

Beneath the pines and peaks that gleam,
Where rivers twist and aspens dream,
There lies a land both wild and wise,
With stories whispered to the skies.

Before the borders, names, and lines,
The forest hummed with ancient signs.
The Ute, Apache, Pueblo, too—
They knew these lands, they passed them through.

The Capote watched the seasons turn,
In sacred hills where spirits burn.
Then came the Spaniards, bold and proud,
With cross and crown and vows avowed.

They claimed the soil, they drew their maps,
And trailed through canyons' silent gaps.
Their missions stood in dust and gold,
Their language deep, their stories old.

When Spain grew faint, the Eagle cried—
Mexico rose, its hopes held high.
A young republic, fierce and wide,
Inherited this mountain side.

Though distant from the halls of power,
These woods still felt the empire's hour.
Then Texas, wild with restless flame,
Declared a land without a name.

It claimed the peaks, though loosely held,
A dream the Rockies never quelled.

Its ghost remains in laughter's toast,
Where Texans still retreat the most.

At last the Stars and Stripes were raised,
Through treaties signed and lines rephrased.
The Union came with rail and road,
And settlers seeking their abode.

They mined, they farmed, they built with pride,
And carved their stories mountain-wide.
Five flags have flown above these trees,
Through time, through war, through winter's freeze.

Each left a trace, a thread, a flame—
Yet still the forest keeps its name.
For Cuchara stands not bowed, but free,
A quilt of deep identity.

A village small, with echoes vast,
That bridges future with the past.
So let the wind through branches weave
The songs of those who dared believe.

From hunters' path to summer trail,
This land remembers every tale.
And in the hush of pine and sky,
Five flags still ripple—soft and high.⁵⁸

End Notes

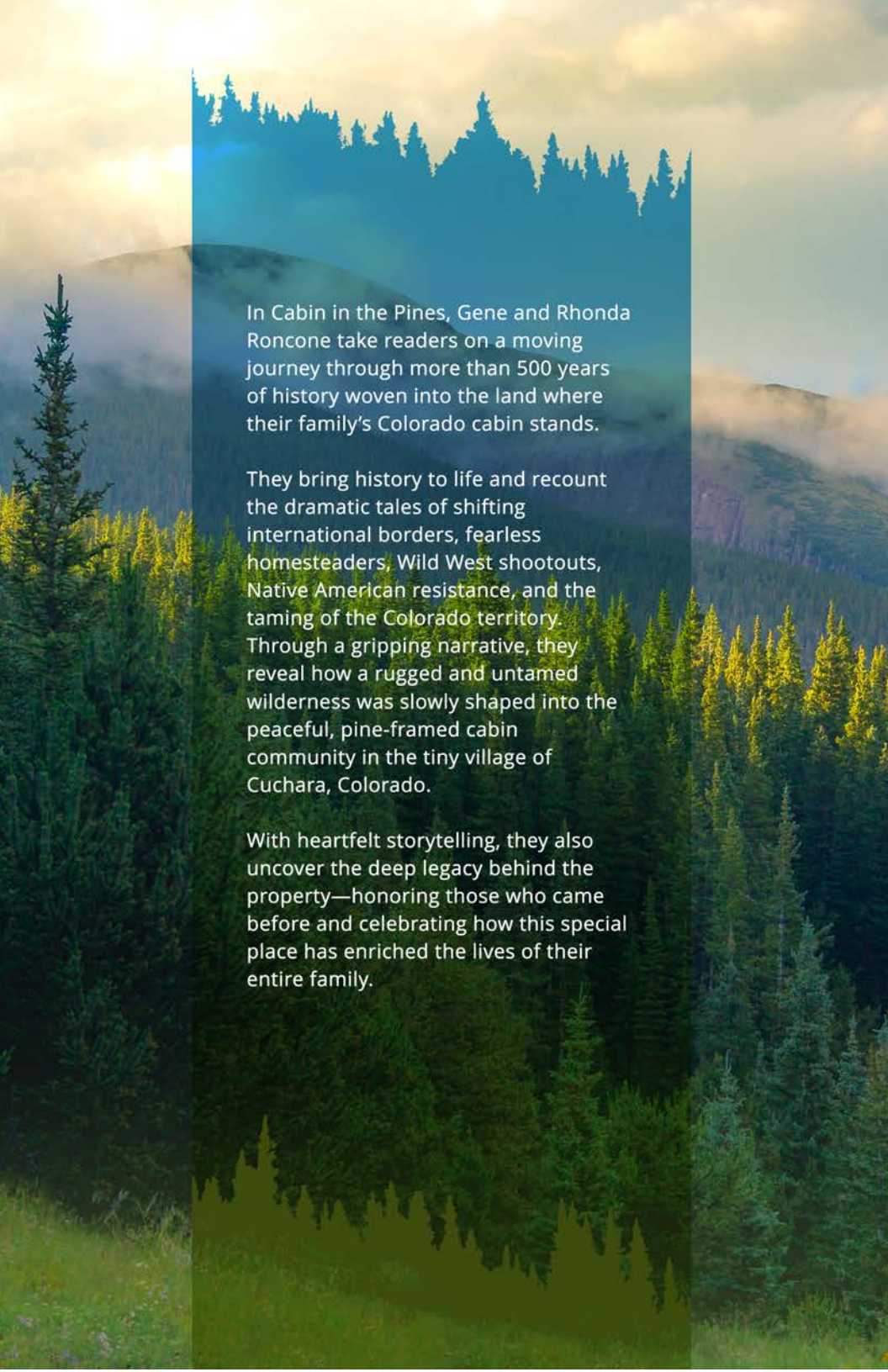
- ¹ Robert (Bob) Pierotti (son of Steve Pierotti, community leader, namesake of the Pierotti Pavilion, and current Pinehaven resident), phone conversation on June 7, 2025, June 12, 2025, and interview by the author, Cuchara, Colorado, June 24, 2025.
- ² Ron Jameson, interview by the author, Cuchara, Colorado, June 22, 2025
- ³ John Denver, *Rocky Mountain High*, RCA Records, 1972.
- ⁴ William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), Act I, Scene III.
- ⁵ By 'five flags,' we mean the successive sovereign nations that have claimed this land: Indigenous Tribal Nations (Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan) peoples, Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States.
- ⁶ Horace Swartley Poley, *Horsemen crossing the Los Pinos River*, 1899, digital format, Denver Public Library, Digital Collections, <https://digital.denverlibrary.org/nodes/view/1033957>.
- ⁷ "Spanish Peaks Wilderness," Wikipedia, last modified on June 19, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Peaks_Wilderness.
- ⁸ Ron Jameson, interview by the author, Cuchara, Colorado, June 22, 2025.
- ⁹ Bob Pierotti, interview by the author, Cuchara, Colorado, June 24, 2025.
- ¹⁰ Documented violence associated with the western expansion and outlaws in southern Colorado can be found at
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- ¹¹ Cuchara Foundation, “Cuchara Village,” <https://www.cucharafoundation.org/cuchara-village>.
- ¹² “Cuchara Digital History Project,” Cuchara Foundation, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://www.cucharafoundation.org/cuchara-digital-history-project>; also referenced on Cuchara Foundation Facebook page, accessed June 12, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/CucharaFoundation/>. Photo, <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=536982096443121&set=a.235326319942035>.
- ¹³ “Way Back When in Cuchara Camps,” *Huerfano World Journal*, <https://worldjournalnewspaper.com/way-back-when-in-cuchara-camps/>.
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- ³¹ "Obituary for John C. Vories," Roberts Funeral Home, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.robertsfh.com/obituary/456233>.
- ³² "Photograph of John Calvin Vories." Find a Grave, www.findagrave.com/memorial/18481952/john_calvin-vories. Accessed 7 June 2025.
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- ³⁵ Huerfano County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed, Book 352, Page 222, Document ID General-352-222, filed on August 10, 1978 in Huerfano County, Colorado, accessed at www.thecountyrecorder.com. The deed documents and records the April 12, 1972, filing of Pinhaven #2 (reception 246148) and the June 28, 1949 filing for Pinehaven #1 (reception 180326).
- ³⁶ <https://www.cuchara.org/about-us>
- ³⁷ Warranty Deed from Steve Pierotti and Anna Pierotti to Pinehaven, Inc., August 10, 1978, recorded in Book 352, Page 222, Document ID General-352-222, Huerfano County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Walsenburg, Colorado, accessed at www.thecountyrecorder.com.

- ³⁸ Special thanks to Angie Glover, a clerk from Huerfano County, who found this image and emailed it to me on June 7, 2025. The image is from their online database at www.thecountyrecorder.com under select state: Colorado, select county: Huerfano, select book type: map, select book number: map, select book page number: 315. The Pinehaven map is on page 4 of the 8-page PDF document.
- ³⁹ Robert (Bob) Pierotti (son of Steve Pierotti, community leader, namesake of the Pierotti Pavilion, and current Pinehaven resident), phone conversation with the author, June 7, 2025, and June 12, 2025.
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- ⁵⁵ OpenAI. (2025, May 30). Poem, *A Touch of Heaven in the Pines*, generated by ChatGPT in response to user prompt. ChatGPT (GPT-4.5) <https://chat.openai.com/>.
- ⁵⁶ OpenAI. (2025, May 30). Poem, *Steve Pierotti: A Pioneer of Pinehaven*, generated by ChatGPT in response to user prompt. ChatGPT (GPT-4.5) <https://chat.openai.com/>.
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In *Cabin in the Pines*, Gene and Rhonda Roncone take readers on a moving journey through more than 500 years of history woven into the land where their family's Colorado cabin stands.

They bring history to life and recount the dramatic tales of shifting international borders, fearless homesteaders, Wild West shootouts, Native American resistance, and the taming of the Colorado territory. Through a gripping narrative, they reveal how a rugged and untamed wilderness was slowly shaped into the peaceful, pine-framed cabin community in the tiny village of Cuchara, Colorado.

With heartfelt storytelling, they also uncover the deep legacy behind the property—honoring those who came before and celebrating how this special place has enriched the lives of their entire family.