

## 36 County Road 405, Cuchara, Colorado 81055



Centuries before cabins appeared in the Cuchara Valley, this mountain corridor was an untamed expanse of pine forest and open meadow. The Mouache and Capote bands of the Ute Nation hunted here seasonally and regarded the twin summits of the Spanish Peaks as sacred landmarks. Over time, explorers, settlers, and governments each claimed and redefined the land, leaving layers of cultural and political history that still shape the region today.

### **Five Flags Over Cuchara**

Long before cabins and roads dotted the Cuchara Valley, this land lay within the seasonal hunting and sacred grounds of the Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan peoples. The Mouache and Capote band of the Ute considered the Spanish Peaks sacred, and even today arrowheads surface in the soil after rains, 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 recorded chain of title for 36 County Road 405, Lot 5, Pinehaven Filing #2, begins in September 1980, when Pinehaven Inc. conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to Linda C. Hudspeth and Michael Howard. In May 1981, the Hudspeth/Howard ownership concluded when they conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to Loyd E. Russell whose ownership marked the first transition from the original subdivision developer generation to an individual private owner.

By July 1984, Russell transferred title to Alvord B. Rutherford by Warranty Deed. In December 1989, Rutherford conveyed the property back to Loyd E. Russell. This reconveyance suggests either a resale arrangement or the resolution of prior financing obligations.

On August 24, 1993, Russell conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to Kathryn A. Merchant and Marvin A. Merchant. More than two decades later, on March 1, 2016, Kathryn Merchant conveyed the property into the Kathryn A. Merchant Living Trust by General Warranty Deed. This transfer represents a common estate-planning step rather than a sale.

The next major transition occurred on December 29, 2017, when a Deed was recorded transferring the property involving trustees Richard Bruce Moon and Deborah Kay Williamson. Subsequent February 2018 filings include an Assignment of Documents and a Deed reflecting transfer into The Deborah Kay Williamson Colorado Trust.

Collectively, these records reflect a typical mountain property lifecycle: developer conveyance, early private ownership transitions, financing instruments, long-term family ownership, and eventual trust-based estate transfers.

#### **Timeline of Recorded Ownership**

- 09-15-1980 — Pinehaven Inc. → Linda C. Hudspeth & Michael Howard

- 05-08-1981 — Hudspeth & Howard → Loyd E. Russell
- 07-14-1984 — Loyd E. Russell → Alvord B. Rutherford
- 12-28-1989 — Alvord B. Rutherford → Loyd E. Russell
- 08-24-1993 — Loyd E. Russell → Kathryn A. & Marvin A. Merchant
- 03-01-2016 — Kathryn A. Merchant → Kathryn A. Merchant Living Trust
- 12-29-2017 — Transfer involving Trustees Richard Bruce Moon & Deborah Kay Williamson
- 02-23-2018 — Transfer into The Deborah Kay Williamson Colorado Trust

### **Our Cabin**

The cabin at 36 County Road 405 in Pinehaven was constructed in approximately 1993 by local expert log cabin builders for Kathryn and Marvin Merchant. Built during a period when Pinehaven was continuing its steady expansion as a seasonal mountain subdivision, the structure reflects both traditional log construction methods and the evolving infrastructure standards of the early 1990s.

According to family accounts, the Merchants selected the location because it represented what they described as a “little piece of heaven.” Their decision mirrors the broader motivations of many Pinehaven owners who sought forested mountain parcels that offered cooler summer temperatures, privacy among mature pines, and proximity to the recreational amenities of Cuchara and the surrounding Spanish Peaks region.

The cabin was constructed using hand-hewn logs with traditional daubing applied along the exterior seams. This method, rooted in long-standing Rocky Mountain building practices, provides insulation and weather protection while preserving the visual character associated with classic mountain cabins. Although constructed in the late twentieth century, the materials and exterior finish intentionally echo earlier frontier-era log traditions.

Early family memories recall that the structure was completed in stages. During initial occupancy, concrete floors remained exposed and only one working sink served the household while construction was still underway. Such phased completion was not uncommon in seasonal mountain properties, where improvements often progressed gradually over time as schedules, resources and weather allowed.

The cabin has consistently functioned as a seasonal retreat rather than a full-time residence. Over the years it has hosted extended summer stays for family and friends, offering respite from the heat of Texas summers. Its use has centered on shared outdoor experiences, wildlife observation, and time removed from urban routines.

Ownership of the cabin remained with Kathryn and Marvin Merchant until it was transferred through a Legacy Will following Kathryn’s death. Title passed to their daughters, Holly Graves and Deborah Williamson. The estate planning structure provides a way to keep the cabin in the family for generations.

One significant event in the cabin's history involved water damage during exterior renovation work when water was inadvertently left running after winterization. The lower level required reconstruction of interior walls, flooring, and portions of cabinetry. Restoration preserved the structure's original character.

Throughout its history, the cabin has embodied two consistent values identified by its owners: preservation of nature and strengthening of family ties. Its continued use as a seasonal gathering place reflects those priorities.

This history of 36 County Road 405 illustrates the intersection of traditional craftsmanship, generational planning, and seasonal mountain living within Pinehaven.

\* This summary condenses five centuries of history; full research notes, sources, and citations can be found at [www.CabinInThePines.org](http://www.CabinInThePines.org).