

654 Road 401, Cuchara, Colorado 81055
500 Year History



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

Five Flags Over Cuchara

Long before cabins and roads dotted the Cuchara Valley, this land lay within the seasonal hunting and sacred grounds of the Ute, Apache, Comanche, and Puebloan peoples. The Mouache and Capote band of the Ute considered the Spanish Peaks sacred, and even today arrowheads surface in the soil after rains, whispering of their long presence. In the late 1500s, Spain claimed the region as part of New Spain, governed from Santa Fe, leaving a cultural imprint in language, faith, and architecture that endures in southern Colorado. When Mexico gained independence in 1821, the land shifted again, though Mexican influence in the remote frontier was limited. Lawlessness and conflict marked the era. From 1836 to 1845, the Republic of Texas claimed the Cuchara Valley in its ambitious northern reach, though it never truly governed here. Still, the ties with Texas remain—many Texans still own cabins in the valley, escaping summer heat for mountain air.

Finally, after the Mexican-American War, the United States claimed Colorado in 1848. By 1876, Colorado became the 38th state. The Cuchara Valley, with its Spanish Peaks rising above, had already passed under five different flags, each leaving fingerprints on its evolving identity.

Homesteading the Future

One of the earliest written chapters of Pinehaven's story began with Union Civil War veteran John L. Powell. Born in Pennsylvania in 1834, Powell marched with the 8th Kansas Infantry through the hardships of the war. Afterward, like many veterans seeking renewal, he moved west. In 1896 he and his family arrived in the Cuchara Valley by covered wagon. In 1905, under the Homestead Act of 1862, Powell secured 160 acres just north of Cuchara. The Act required settlers to live on the land, cultivate it, and build a home; in return, they received ownership. Powell's homestead fulfilled these requirements, and his perseverance planted the seed of what would one day become Pinehaven. He lived out his years in La Veta until his death in 1920, leaving the land to his children.

The Birth of Pinehaven

In 1943, Powell's son Charles sold the family land to John C. Vories, who dreamed of transforming the rugged property into a mountain resort. With vision but limited resources, Vories named the land "Pinehaven" and began designing cabin lots along what would become Road 402. He saw the forest as "heaven among the pines," and his plans laid the foundation for the community's identity as a retreat in the high country. Health challenges eventually forced Vories to leave Colorado, but before he did, he passed his dream into capable hands.

That man was Steve Pierotti, a native of Huerfano County and close friend of Vories. Pierotti had grown up tough—an orphan by nine, managing service stations as a teenager, and later working in the coal mines. His tireless work ethic made him one of the largest coal dealers in the county. When Vories offered him Pinehaven for \$3,700, Pierotti borrowed from a friend and seized the opportunity. Through sheer determination and charisma, he sold lots, encouraged building, and helped bring Vories' dream to life. Under Pierotti's influence, Pinehaven became a thriving cabin community. Steve lived there until his death in 2017 at the age of 99, and his family remains part of Pinehaven today.

Building a Community

From Powell's homestead to Vories' vision and Pierotti's energy, Pinehaven grew from wilderness into a neighborhood. Steve Pierotti's son, Bob, carried his father's vision forward by leading Pinehaven's expansion up the mountain and ensuring its growth was both thoughtful and sustainable. With steady leadership, he guided the development of new roads, utilities, and infrastructure, while championing compliance with modern standards. His pivotal role in integrating Pinehaven into the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District secured reliable water and sanitation for generations to come. From community planning to the creation of the Pierotti

Pavilion, Bob's quiet dedication laid the foundation for a resilient mountain community whose strength endures to this day.

Cabins rose among the trees, families returned each summer, and traditions took root. Eventually, homeowners organized formally, creating the Pinehaven Homeowners' Association to care for roads, shared spaces, and community life. The Pierotti Pavilion, named in honor of Bob's contributions, became a gathering place where neighbors celebrated the very community he helped establish.

Today, Pinehaven stands as more than a scattering of mountain cabins. It is a close-knit community, bound together by its layered history, its natural beauty, and its people's love for the land. The Spanish Peaks still tower over the valley, silent witnesses to centuries of change—from the passage of flags and empires to the persistence of families who found here not just land, but home.

History of Ownership

The ownership history of 654 County Road 401, Lot 34 in Pinehaven #2, reflects a stable and well-documented chain of title typical of long-held mountain properties. The lot was owned by Leslie C. Strange and Pamela M. Strange by the late 1970s, reflecting the early development era of the subdivision. In September 1990, the Stranges conveyed the property by Warranty Deed to Jay Charles Harmon and Sandra L. Harmon, marking the beginning of more than three decades of Harmon ownership. Today, the property remains associated with the Harmon family, demonstrating a continuous and intact chain of title since 1990.

Ownership Timeline

- **John L. Powell** (original homesteader), September 11, 1905 – 1920
- **Charles R. Powell** (son of John L. Powell), 1920 – 1943
- **John C. Vories** (Founder of Pinehaven), 1943 – 1947
- **Steve Pierotti** (Pinehaven Visionary), 1947 – 1972
- **Marie A. Shook**, 1972-1978
- **Leslie C. Strange and Pamela M. Strange** (1978 – 1992)
- **Jay Charles Harmon and Sandra L. Harmon** (1992- Present)

Our Cabin

The cabin at 654 Road 401 was constructed in 1971 by Lester Strange during an early phase of Pinehaven's residential development. Situated at the end of the road, the location was selected in part for its direct and unobstructed view of the Spanish Peaks, a defining landmark of the Cuchara Valley. Built using standard rough lumber common to mountain construction of the period, the exterior was originally painted a soft blue-gray color.

In 1990, Jay Charles Harmon and Sandra L. Harmon purchased the cabin from Mr. Strange. The recorded transaction marked the beginning of continuous Harmon family ownership. During the early years of their stewardship, the property functioned as a seasonal family retreat. From 1990 through December 1996, the cabin was used primarily for summer and holiday gatherings.

The winter following their purchase proved historically notable. That season produced one of the largest snow accumulations reported in years. For visiting grandchildren from South Texas, it was their first experience with snow. Such seasonal contrasts between southern Texas and the high elevation climate of Cuchara became part of the family's recurring pattern of use and memory formation.

In 1997, the Harmons transitioned the cabin into their primary residence. From 1997 until 2005, they lived full time in Pinehaven. During this period, Sandra Harmon operated a property management company, contributing to the local housing and vacation rental economy. The years of full time residency coincided with important infrastructure improvements in the subdivision, including the transition from individual septic systems to integration with the Cucharas Sanitation and Water District sewer system. This change represented a significant modernization milestone for Pinehaven homeowners.

The cabin itself underwent measured improvements over time. In the early 1990s, the original siding was removed and replaced with half log siding stained natural wood. This alteration updated the exterior appearance while maintaining a traditional mountain aesthetic. At one point, a broken water line within the house required replacement of the main floor, and the kitchen was remodeled. These renovations were functional in nature and ensured the continued habitability and structural integrity of the residence.

Architecturally, the front deck has become a defining feature of the property. Its elevated orientation frames a panoramic view of the Spanish Peaks. Within the neighborhood, the cabin is frequently recognized for this vantage point. Visitors and real estate professionals alike often remark upon the deck's view corridor, which has occasionally attracted sightseers who paused to appreciate the landscape even in the owners' absence.

Wildlife interactions have formed another consistent element of cabin life. The property's forested setting places it within active habitat for raccoons, bears, deer, and other species. One documented encounter involved grandchildren observing a raccoon at close range through the sliding glass door

while standing on the deck. Such events illustrate the continuing interface between residential development and surrounding wildlife habitat in Pinehaven.

After 2005, the cabin resumed its role as a family vacation home. In January 2026, Sandra Harmon formally included her children, Craig Harmon and Sherilyn Goad, as co owners, reinforcing the cabin's status as a multigenerational asset. The property now serves as a gathering place for four generations of family members. For the Harmon family, it represents the first home they owned independently, as prior agricultural employment had provided employer-based housing.

Over the decades, Pinehaven has experienced generational turnover, with many early owners selling or passing away. Despite these broader transitions, 654 Road 401 remains one of the earlier constructed cabins in the subdivision and retains continuity of ownership dating back to 1990. Its history reflects both the development patterns of Pinehaven and the sustained stewardship of a single family across more than three decades.

This cabin stands as a documented example of early 1970s construction in Pinehaven and long term family stewardship. Constructed in 1971 and held by the Harmon family since 1990, 654 Road 401 reflects the broader historical pattern of seasonal retreat, infrastructure modernization, and multigenerational continuity within the Cuchara Valley.

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