

There were 7 original pioneers. The homesteader on what is now known as the Trinity Ranch.

Horatio Hall Chivington Breece 1879

Vint Fox 1882

William Tennant 1886

John Bowerman 1891

Eleanor Scott 1896

James Lemonnier 1912

Lemuel & Anna Dougherty 1921 & 1922

Horatio Hall Chivington Breece was born December 14, 1834 in Baltimore Maryland. He lived in Florida and Texas before coming to Colorado. He may have left Texas because of the great drought in 1863 with a herd of cattle.

On May 22 1865 Horatio filed a Quartz mining claim in Central City, Gilpin County. He also filed several mining claims in Summit County in 1866, October 1, 1866 a Ranch Pre-Emption was filed for 160 acres between Snake River and Elk Creek in Summit County he continued to mine it through 1867.

Sometime in 1869 Horatio came to the Hardscrabble area he was the first to homestead this part. He built a 3-room log house, 1 ½ stories high with addition good doors, windows, roof, and floor. He had about 80 acres in a good state of cultivation, corrals, stable, outhouses, corncribs, hog pen, henhouse, a good well of water and orchard, when he filed for homestead papers in December 1877. He received title to the land on Sept 4, 1879 for 160 acres.

Horatio Breece married Emma Wilson Lester, the daughter of Jeremiah William and Elizabeth J. (Wilson) Lester, on December 17, 1872. Their eight children, all born on the Wetmore homestead, were: Joseph Vernsant, Elizabeth Lester, Richard Jeremiah, Charles Horatio, Mary Wilson, William Allen, Homer Lester, and Anna Mae.

He put in the first irrigation ditches to utilize the water of Four Mile Creek. The diversion point of Breece's Northside Ditch was about 300 feet up into Four Mile Canyon, and it ran from there about 4000 feet northeasterly to the north edge of the Breece Ranch near the ranch house. Breece's water right in Four Mile Creek dates from December 25, 1870, so he probably began his ditch in the summer of 1870. In April 1873, he dug another ditch to irrigate land south of the creek. This Southside Ditch extended about 1000 feet eastward to the vicinity of the present Trinity Lodge and supplied water to the Barley Field. These ditches were the basis for the award to Breece No.1 and No.2 water rights in Four Mile Creek in the adjudication

The original homestead site is now a part of The Trinity Ranch and the original log house is still standing. Horatio was one of the first to plant a fruit orchard in the Wetmore area. He also produced strawberries, raspberries, and wagonloads of vegetables, which he sold in Pueblo, Silver Cliff, Westcliffe, Florence, Canon City, and as far northwest as Leadville. Elk horns were gathered from the nearby mountains and used for fertilizer. A portion of horn was planted with each fruit tree. By occupation Horatio had been an engineer and machinist before turning to farming. He became quite adept at grafting and it is said that, at one time, he had several (7) varieties of Apples on one tree.

H.H.C. died at his home on March 17, 1897 at the age of 63 and is buried in New Hope Cemetery. His wife, Emma, remained on the ranch and in 1902 she remarried and out lived Richard Neathery.

The next settler on the scene was Vint Fox who purchased 80 acres from the Government for cash on April 19, 1882. His land adjoined Breece's homestead on the west and included the present Upper Hayfield and most of the Middle Hayfield. Fox sold to Breece immediately after he received his final certificate. The combined properties 240 acres remained in the Breece family until 1908. Emma Breece Neathery sold to W.H. Billington a Pueblo businessman. She moved to the Greenwood area near her youngest son Homer. Emma passed away March 8, 1910 at the age of 54.

William Tennant an English stonemason, settled on 160 acres west of the Vint Fox entry in the early 1880's, getting his final certificate July 27, 1886. His homestead included most of the Middle Hogback, between Four Mile Creek and Tennant Creek, and the site of what is now Stinemeyer Lake. The ruins of his two houses still stand, and attest to his skill as a stonemason. The corners of these buildings were laid up with squared stones, laid in beds of clay rather than lime mortar. Tennant also laid up terrace walls of field stones and on these terraces he grew vegetables for sale to the miners of Silver Cliff and Westcliffe. He also dug a well beside Tennant Creek at the extreme eastern edge of his homestead. Despite his hard work, Tennant's land was sold for delinquent taxes to M.G. Palmer, October 7, 1892. Palmer sold to John H. Henderson 1899 and Henderson to Billington in November 1908. William Tennant gave Billington a quitclaim deed for the property in 1909.

William Henry Billington was vice president and purchasing agent for the

Colorado Supply Company, a subsidiary of Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. He never actually lived at Trinity Ranch. The Breece's boys farmed the ranch as tenants from 1908 to 1911, when Billington's son Robert moved in as manager. Billington was greatly concerned with the ranch water supply, especially in the summer months when Four Mile Creek often dried up or went underground. In the summer of 1913 he retained Mr. Adelbert Weiland, a Pueblo civil engineer, to make a water study and recommendations for development of a reliable water supply. Weiland concluded that the water was being soaked up by the Morrison and Dakota sandstones, to be lost forever by the ranch. He recommended that Billington build a 6-inch or 8-inch clay sewer pipe to tap the creek at the falls, an undertaking that would cost about \$2670., using ranch teams and labor. Apparently, this was more of an investment than Billington wanted to make in the ranch. The elder Billington conveyed the ranch to Robert in September 1917, and Robert sold it in May 1918 to Howard A. Sands, and his wife Sarah Belle Sands.

About 1893 Eleanor Scott homesteaded 160 acres adjoining the Breece lands in Section 4. Soon after she received her U.S. Patent in April 1896 she sold to J. M. Woodruff. Belle Sands acquired the property March 2, 1931.

Lemuel & Anna Dougherty filed on 160 acres in Four Mile Creek Canyon upstream from Tennant's land about 1917. A year and a half later, he entered another 160 acre homestead adjoining the first one on the north. Dougherty apparently died before he could prove up his homesteads, but his widow continued his claim and received U.S. patents for both homesteads in 1921 and 1922. It is possible that both of the Dougherty claims were established under the Act of December 12, 1916 which authorized stock raising homesteads of up to 640 acres. Anna K. Dougherty sold both homesteads to Belle Sands in soon after she received her patents.

With the acquisition of the Scott and Dougherty homesteads, the Sands holdings total 880 acres. Howard F. Sands was a locomotive engineer, probably working for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Since he was away from home much of the time, the day-to-day management of the ranch probably fell on Mrs. Sands. There was a girls summer camp at the ranch during Sands regime. According to Ted and Carol Sponholtz. The small cabin northeast of the ranch house was built for this camp. The Sands did lease sites on a hillside west of the present Stinemeyer Lake called Slumber Heights some crumbling chimneys still mark the site.

In December, 1942 the Sands sold the ranch, minus the Scott homestead, to Walter A. and Sarah Louise Sullivan. During the war the Sullivans ran a dairy at the ranch and to get enough clean, cold water for the milk shed Walter laid a 1-inch iron pipe on the surface of the ground to a spring near the present intake of Breece's Northside Ditch."The remains of this pipeline are still visible in places.

Ted and Carol Sponholtz came to Colorado from Texas, acquiring the ranch from the Sullivans in July, 1949. Fifteen years later, in July 1964 the Sponholtz purchased the Scott homestead from the Sullivans, who had acquired it in 1952 from Belle Sands. This acquisition rounded out the Sponholtz Ranch which was sold to the Diocese of Colorado in December, 1966. While they owned the ranch, the Sponholtz, renovated and modernized the old Breece Cabin, and also dug a new well near the present tenant house replace the unreliable well used by the Sullivans. Ted Sponholtz built the upper irrigation reservoir and terraced the Barley field.

There were 2 more homesteaders John Bowerman he received his patent in January 1891 for 40 acres and James Lemonnier he has unable to prove up his homestead and purchased it in March 1912 for 160 acres. Both properties 200 acres became the property of J.L. Draper and in 1977 they negotiated a trade with the Diocese for the Scott homestead.

Information thanks to Dorothy Breece (Mom), and The Abbey

Submitted by Peggy Breece Martin
H. H. C. Breece was my great grandfather