



FINDING AID

OTO RANCH COLLECTION

1924-2010(bulk dates: ca.1930)

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HISTORY

James Norris “Dick” Randall (June 10, 1866 – August 20, 1957) was a cowboy, hunter, pack guide, Yellowstone Park stage driver, and rancher who owned the OTO Ranch from 1898 to 1934. He is credited with starting Montana’s first dude ranch and for possibly coining the phrase “dude” which meant anyone who was a summer visitor who was more or less unfamiliar with the ways of ranching. Although the ranch began hosting visitors from its inception, guests did not actually start to pay for their western experiences until about 1912. The OTO Ranch began as a cattle ranch and a place for hunting parties to gather before Dick Randall would guide them up into the mountains. He led such noted individuals as Theodore Roosevelt and General Paul von Hindenburg on their hunting trips. Eventually members of the hunting parties he led decided to bring their families along to enjoy the life on a real western ranch. Dick Randall, his wife Dora, their two children Leslie Watson “Gay” Randall and Helen Elizabeth “Bess” Erskine, and Bess’s husband Clyde Erskine ran the ranch until 1934.

In 1934 Dick Randall retired from the dude ranching business and sold the OTO Ranch to his son, Gay Randall, and a former guest from Maine, Chan Libbey. The dude ranch continued until 1939 when it was closed to guests and reverted back to being strictly a cattle and horse ranch.

The ranch was sold again in 1949 to J. Paul and Jessie Shields. They raised cattle on the ranch for about thirty years before they sold the ranch in the early 1980s to a Texas land developer who then sold the ranch to the Church Universal and Triumphant in 1986. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation purchased the ranch in 1989 and then transferred the land to the U.S. Forest Service in 1990.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

OTO RANCH COLLECTION
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CATALOG NUMBER YELL 194362

VOLUME 0.25 LF

DESCRIPTION Articles and news clippings about the history of the OTO Ranch, advertising pamphlet about the ranch, original stories written by Dick Randall, transcribed copies of Dick Randall's stories, VHS copy of 35mm promotional films for the ranch featuring Dick Randall

This collection records the history of the OTO Ranch and the life of its first owner, James Norris "Dick" Randall. The articles and newspaper clippings document the transitional process the ranch has gone through from its days as a cattle ranch to becoming a dude ranch then back to a cattle ranch and finally turning into an elk winter grazing range preserved by the U.S. Forest Service. There are also articles and interviews with descendants of the original owner, Dick Randall, and the man who bought the ranch from him, Chan Libbey. The advertising pamphlet shows what types of activities were available to guests of the ranch in the 1930s and the promotional video, which features Dick Randall, demonstrates the life on the ranch and what some of the western customs mean. There are also twenty complete handwritten stories and several partial stories by Dick Randall. There are also typewritten transcribed copies of each story. In the stories, Dick Randall tells of his life and some of his more interesting adventures as a cowboy, stage driver in Yellowstone, hunter, and hunting guide. He also wrote about some of the old cowboys he met and various visiting dignitaries such as General Paul von Hindenburg.

Subjects of interest are as follows: The OTO Ranch, Dude Ranches, elk hunting, grizzly bear hunting, hunting guides, and Dick Randall guiding Theodore Roosevelt and General Paul von Hindenburg's hunting trips.

<i>ORGANIZATION</i>	Arranged by subject matter and type into folders.
<i>PROVENANCE</i>	Gift of George Perkins, October 2010.
<i>RESTRICTIONS</i>	NO
<i>ASSOCIATED MATERIALS</i>	Related materials may be found in the Leslie Watson "Gay" Randall Papers, 1817-1970, University of Montana - Missoula, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library. Related materials may be found in Dude Ranchers' Association Records, 1926-2002, University of Wyoming - American Heritage Center.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

File Unit Nbr	Title
1	Articles about OTO Ranch and Randall Family [photo copies], 1928-2010
2	OTO Ranch Pamphlet, circa 1930
3	Dick Randall Stories 1 through 20 [transcribed from originals, 2004], circa 1930
4	Partial Dick Randall Stories [transcribed from originals, 2004], circa 1930
5	Dick Randall Stories 1 through 10 [originals – fragile] {Restricted: Use transcribed copies} , circa 1930
6	Dick Randall Stories 11 through 20 [originals – fragile] {Restricted: Use transcribed copies} , circa 1930
7	Partial Dick Randall Stories [originals – fragile] {Restricted: Use transcribed copies} , circa 1930
8	VHS Tape of Advertising Film for OTO Ranch Featuring Dick Randall [separation form], 1924, 1930