# Livestock Brand Registrations Searching Guide

## Introduction

This guide will help you search the Montana Historical Society's collection of Livestock Brand Registrations for Montana located on the Montana History Portal (MHP). **Part 1** of the guide gives instructions on how to navigate the MHP platform and search the digitized brand records. **Part 2** provides more detailed guidance on how to understand and use the information and references contained within brand registrations in each decade to compile a history of a brand. **Part 3** of this guide offers search tips and additional information.

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## Brand Records and Digitization

Find our digitized collection of brands on the [Livestock Brand Registrations for Montana](https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/12937) page on the Montana History Portal (https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/12937).

We produced our digitized collection of livestock brands by scanning brand registrations from 1873-1980 on microfilm and paper copies from 2001-2010. In other words, the records available online are reproductions of physical brand records stored in several volumes. The digitization process helps make the records searchable, but some records are not always legible due to fading, age, and other reasons. And some of the volumes contain handwritten indexes and notes that are not searchable. Please keep in mind that some searches may not return results, and you may need to manually navigate through some records.

## Part 1: Searching Brands on the Montana History Portal

**Collection Organization:**

The digitized collection is organized by decade, with the first section spanning 1873-1910 and each subsequent section covering a decade (1911-1920, 1921-1930, etc.).

    a. Each section from 1873-1950 contains a name index and a brand index.

    b. Registrations from 1931-1980 are split between Re-records and New/Transferred brands. You can see what is available for each decade by choosing the appropriate link from the main collection page.

1873-1910 Brand Registrations
1911-1920 Brand Registrations
1921-1930 Brand Registrations
1931-1940 Brand Registrations
1941-1950 Brand Registrations
1951-1960 Brand Registrations
1961-1970 Brand Registrations
1971-1980 Brand Registrations
2001-2010 Brand Registrations

**Search the Entire Collection for a Name:**

1. Start on the main collection page and find the "Search within the collection" search box. Enter a name and click the Search button.

**Search within the entire collection**

Tamcke      **Search**

2. A new page will come up displaying the results of your search. The results may include hits from name indexes and registrations. One result may include multiple hits within a set of pages. You can tell how many hits are in each result by looking at the line that says Page Hits: Preview (#). The number in the parentheses indicates the number of hits.

| | | Book 10 | Item Type: Livestock Brand | Volume: Registrations | Date: 2001-2010 |
| | | Page Hits: Preview (5) | | | |
| | | Book 14 | Item Type: Livestock Brand | Volume: Registrations | Date: 2001-2010 |
| | | Page Hits: Preview (1) | | | |

3. Click the Preview link on one of your search results to get more information. A pop-up window will appear called Pages Hits. This window shows the specific pages that your search found. The name you search for should be highlighted for each page. The text you see is from the OCR (Optical Character Recognition) process and may not be perfect. Some words may be misspelled or have strange characters.
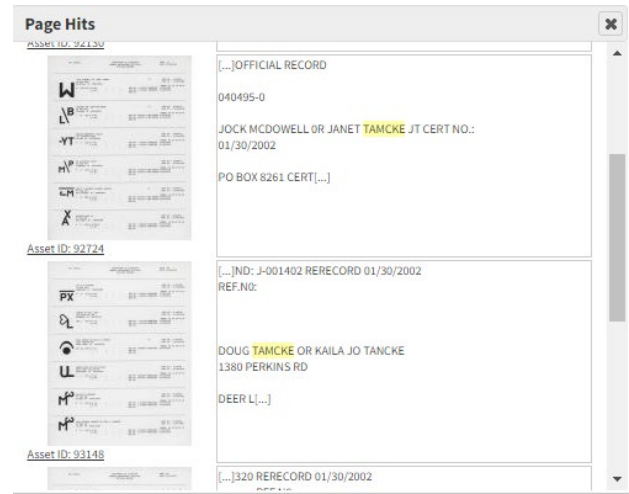
   a. If you do not see what you're trying to find in the Page Hits pop-up window, click the X to close it, and try previewing another result.

   b. If you do find a result that you want to see in the Page Hits pop-up window, click the small thumbnail image next to it.

4. A new window will open showing an entire page. Use the Zoom tool on the left-hand navigation menu to zoom in (or out) to better read the page. You can also use a scroll wheel on a mouse to zoom.

   a. Hover over the other tools on the left-hand navigation menu to see what each one does. Use any of those tools to further manipulate the page.

   b. To download the entire page, choose the download tool from the left-hand navigation menu. A pop-up window will appear asking you to Select a page. Look on the right-hand side of the screen above the Details section about the record to find the page number. A JPG file will automatically download after selecting the page number.
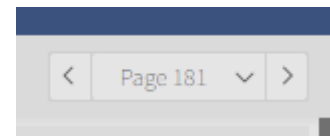
5.  Once you get to your page, look at the registrations listed on the page to locate the name you're trying to find.
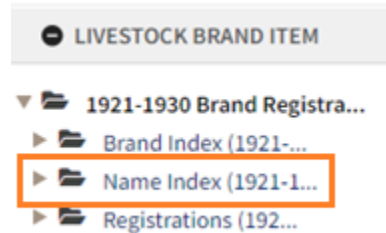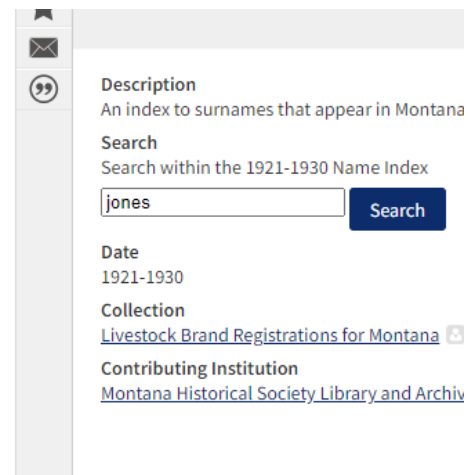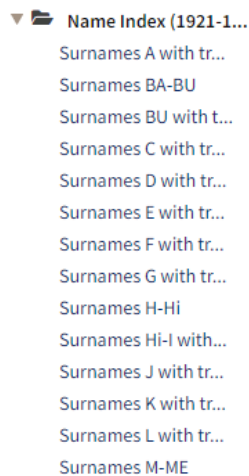


**Search for a Name in a Name Index:**



1.  Start on the main collection page and choose a decade before 1951. Name indexes are only available for the decades from 1873-1910 through 1941-1950.

2.  Choose Name Index from the navigation pane, located on the left side of the screen.



3.  The Name Index menu should expand, and a search box appears. Enter a name in the search box and choose Search. A new page will come up displaying the results of your search. Follow the instructions above in Steps 2-4 in the **Search the Entire Collection for a Name** section for help navigating search results.



Description
An index to surnames that appear in Montana

Search
Search within the 1921-1930 Name Index

jones        Search

Date
1921-1930

Collection
Livestock Brand Registrations for Montana

Contributing Institution
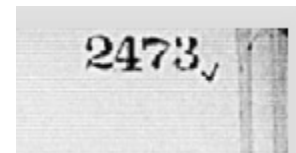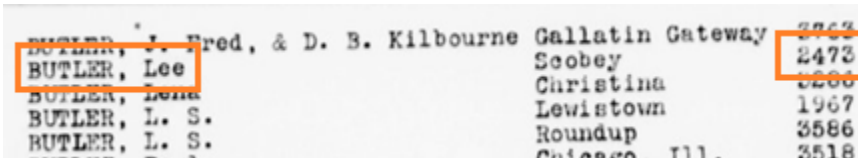Montana Historical Society Library and Archiv

a. Instead of using the search box to search for a name, you can browse for a name by choosing the appropriate alphabetical name grouping within the Name Index in the navigation pane.
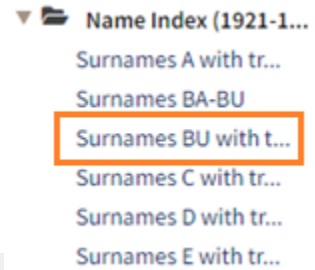
b. After choosing a name grouping, you'll see the first index page for names in that group. Use the tools in the navigation menu to zoom and find the name you want. If it's not on that page, view another page from the same name grouping by clicking the appropriate thumbnail at the bottom of the window.
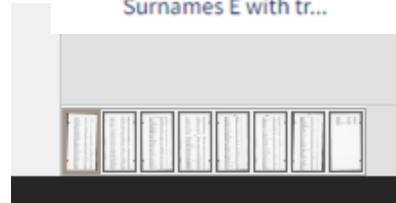


4. After finding a name, note the page number(s) associated with it. Then choose Registrations from the left-hand navigation pane. The Registrations menu should expand, and a new page will appear. Choose the page number grouping from the navigation pane that corresponds to your page number, and then click the thumbnails at the bottom of the screen to get to your page. Page numbers are typed or written at the top left or right of each page.



5. Once you get to your page, look at the registrations listed on the page to locate the name you're trying to find.
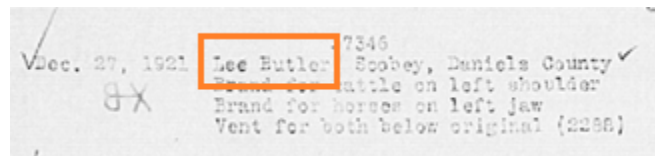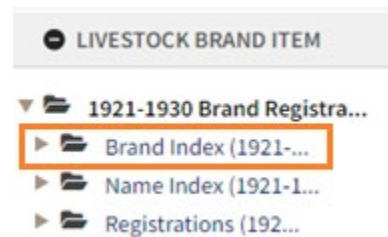
**Search for a Brand in a Brand Index**



1. Start on the main collection page and choose a decade before 1951. Brand indexes are only available for the decades from 1873-1910 through 1941-1950.

2. Choose Brand Index from the navigation pane, located on the left side of the screen.



3. The Brand Index menu should expand, and a new page appears. Brand indexes are organized by the style of the brand and grouped by the first major character in the configuration. Choose the letter, numbers, or character grouping for the brand you want to find from the navigation pane.
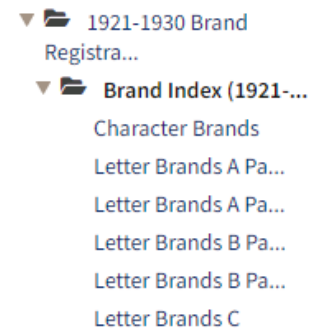


4. After choosing a brand grouping, you'll see the first index page for brands in that group. Use the tools in the navigation menu to zoom and find the brand you want. If it's not on that page, view another page from the same brand grouping by clicking the appropriate thumbnail at the bottom of the window.

5.  After finding a brand, note the page number(s) associated with it. Then choose Registrations from the left-hand navigation pane. The Registrations menu should expand, and a new page will appe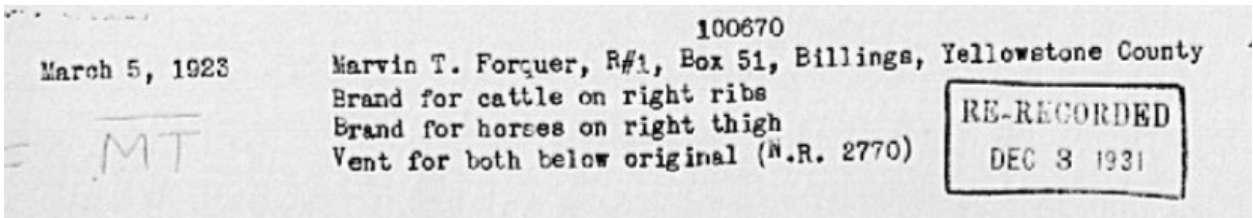ar. Choose the page number grouping from the navigation pane that corresponds to your page number, and then click the thumbnails at the bottom of the screen to get to your page. Page numbers are typed or written at the top left or right of each page.





6.  Once you get to your page, look at the registrations listed on the page to locate the name you're trying to find.

## Part 2: Livestock Brand Registrations by Decade

**Overview**

This part of the guide provides annotated brand listings by decade to show how names, numbers, and dates can help you compile a history of a brand. Brand registrations in each decade may look different and have some variations due to changing methodologies and technologies, but each listing contains information that will help you search forward or backward in time through the records.

**Prefixes and Suffixes by Decade**

Many brand registrations contain a reference to a page number with either a prefix or suffix attached that corresponds to the previous recording of the brand. The previous recording may be within the same decade as the brand registration or an earlier decade. Page numbers with a prefix attached refer to re-records, and page numbers with a suffix attached refer to new or transferred brands. The following table lists the prefixes and suffixes found in the Livestock Brand Registrations and their corresponding decades.

| Decade | Prefix (Re-records) | Suffix (New/Transferred) |
|---|---|---|
| 1873-1910 | | |
| 1911-1920 | N.R. | |
| 1921-1930 | A | A or R |
| 1931-1940 | B | 3 |
| 1941-1950 | C | 4 |
| 1951-1960 | D | 5 |
| 1961-1970 | E | 6 |
| 1971-1980 | F | 7 |
| 1981-1990 | H | 8 |
| 1991-2000 | J | 9 |
| 2001-2010 | K | 0 |

**1873-1910**

Brand Index:
Handwritten, grouped by characters, letters, and numbers. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a brand.

Name Index:
Handwritten, grouped alphabetically by first letter and first vowel of last name but not in true alphabetical order. Look for names added out of order on the final pages of each lettered section. Look for "Mc" names at the end of the "M" section. Last names beginning with "S" are not well ordered and require more browsing. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a name.

Brand Registration Example
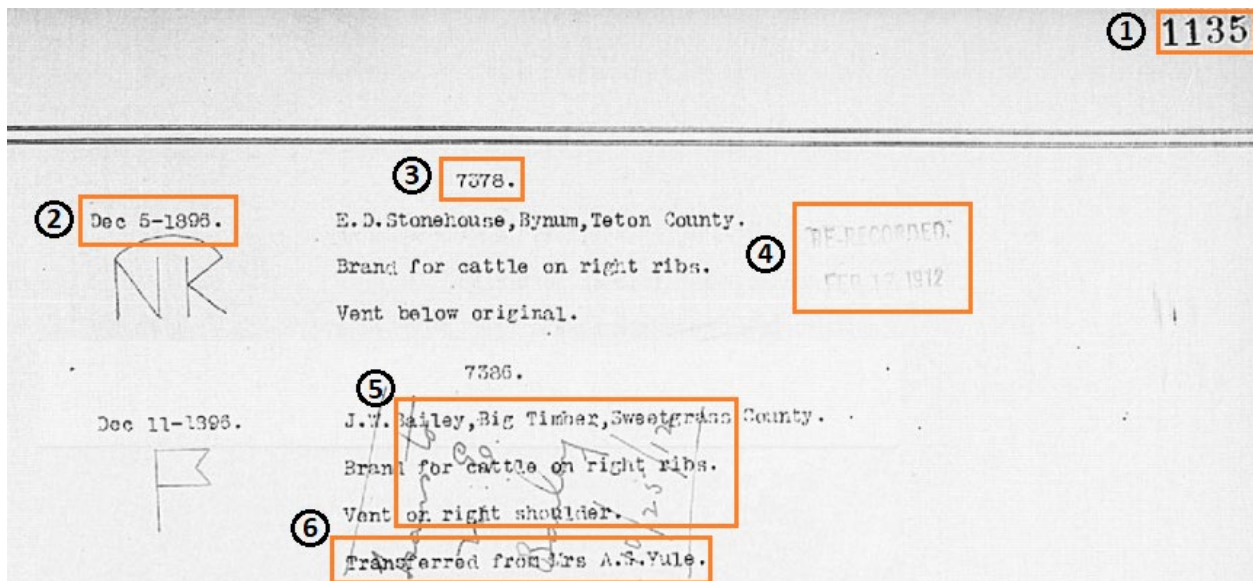


1. Page number. Use this if you have a page number from an index or brand listing.
2. Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
3. Registration number for the brand.
4. Date the brand was re-recorded in the next decade. In this example, you could browse by this date in the 1911-1920 brand registrations.

5.  Handwritten date and name to whom the brand was transferred in either the current or preceding decade registrations. In this example, you could use the 1911-1920 name index to find a page number or browse by the date in the 1911-1920 brand registrations.

6.  Name from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, you could use the 1873-1910 name index to find the page number of the earlier brand recording. Note that it could be easier to use the 1873-1910 brand index (character section) to find the same page number.

**PRO TIP:**

If you find a page number in the 1873-1910 brand index or name index higher than 4262, subtract 1970 from that page number and look for the new page number in the 1911-1920 registrations. The Department of Livestock kept recording brands in the same book from the previous decade and eventually changed page numbers.

**1911-1920**

Brand Index:

Handwritten, grouped by characters, letters, and numbers. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a brand.

Name Index:

Handwritten, organized by first letter of last name and, inconsistently, by the first two letters of last name. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a name. This index can be time-consuming to use.

Brand Registration Example
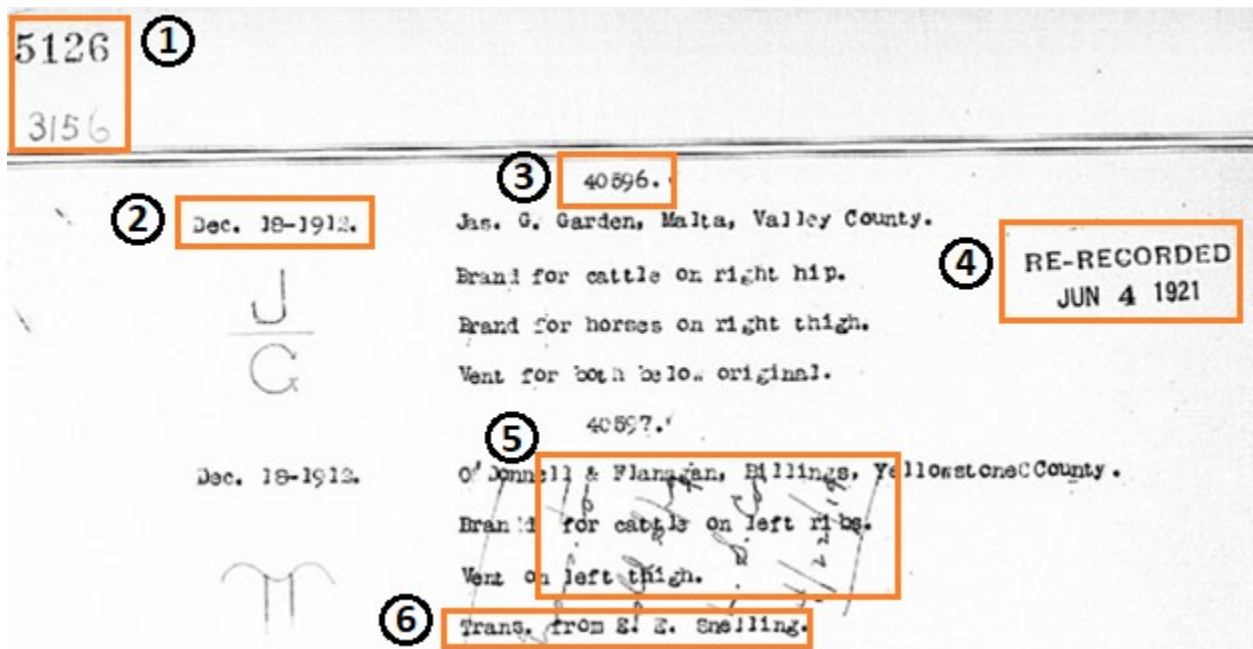


1.  Page number. Use this if you have a page number from an index or brand listing. This example illustrates the Pro Tip described above in the 1873-1910 records. The correct page number is 3156, but 5126 is the page number listed in the 1873-1910 index.
2.  Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
3.  Registration number for the brand.

4. Date the brand was re-recorded. In this example, you could browse by this date in the 1921-1930 brand registrations.
5. Handwritten date and name to whom the brand was transferred in either the current or next decade registrations. In this example, you could browse by this date in 1911-1920 registrations or use the 1911-1920 name index to find a page number.
6. Name from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the previous registration could be in either the 1873-1910 or 1911-1920 brand registrations. Use the 1911-1920 brand index or name index to find a page number. The brand index may be easier to use for this decade. You may find the earlier listing in the 1873-1910 registrations.

**1921-1930**

Brand Index:

Handwritten, grouped by characters, letters, and numbers. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a brand.

Name Index:

Typed, alphabetical.

Brand Registration Example



1. Page number. Use this if you have a page number from an index or brand listing.
2. Registration number for the brand.
3. Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.

4. Page number for the previous brand registration as a new record. In this example, the "N.R." prefix directs you to the 1911-1920 registration volumes. Use the table at the beginning of Part 2 of this guide for more information on how to translate numbers with prefixes and suffixes found in brand registrations.

5. Handwritten date and page number to whom the brand was transferred. In this example, you could browse by the page number or date in the 1931-1940 registrations.

6. Date the brand was re-recorded. In this example, you could browse by this date in the 1931-1940 registrations.

7. Page number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the absence of a prefix or suffix directs you to the 1911-1920 registration volumes. Note throughout the re-record year of 1921, a page number prefix or suffix was not used regardless of if the preceding registration was a new record or a transfer. After January 1, 1922, page numbers referring to a new record in the 1911-1920 registrations were designated with N.R., while page numbers referring to transferred brands in the 1911-1921 registrations continued with an absence of a prefix or suffix.

8. Page number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-R" suffix confirms this is a page number within the current volume of registrations (1921-1930).

**PRO TIP:**

This is the first decade with a typed, alphabetical name index. If possible, begin your name search in this decade. Be aware that search results may not be 100% accurate. You may need to browse the name index if your search does not provide a result.
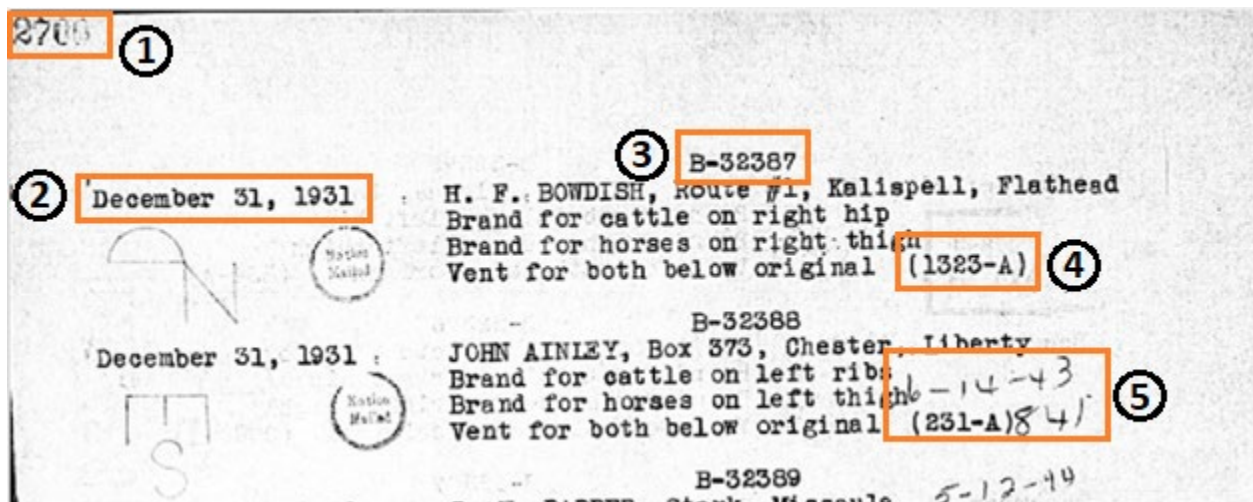
**1931-1940**

Brand Index:

Handwritten, grouped by characters, letters, and numbers. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a brand.

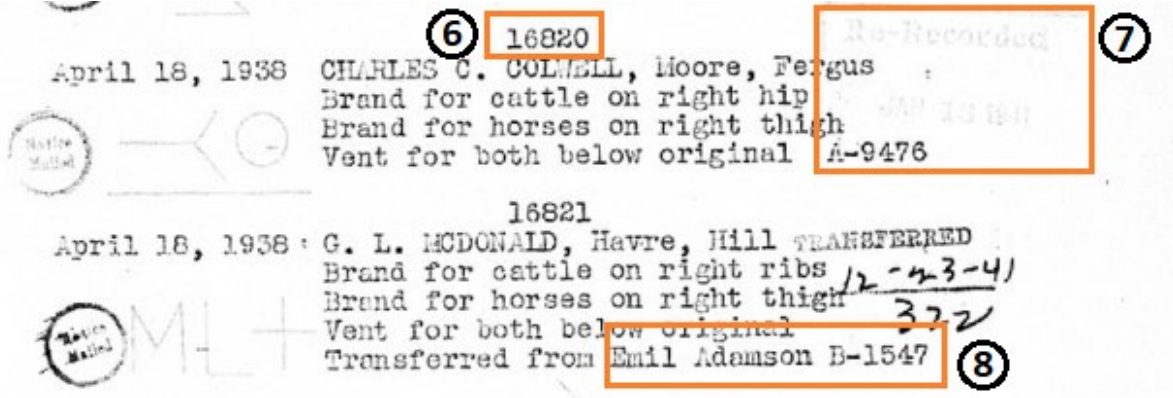Name Index:

Typed, alphabetical.

Brand Registration Example

*Re-record*

1. Page number in the Re-records section. Use this if you have a page number from an index or brand listing.
2. Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
3. Certificate number for the brand. In this example, the "B-" prefix confirms this is a 1931-1940 re-record certificate number.
4. Page number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "-A" suffix directs you to the 1921-1930 registrations.
5. Handwritten date and page number to whom the brand was transferred. In this example, you could browse by the page number or date in the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1941-1950 registrations.

*New/Transferred*



6. Certificate number for the brand.
7. Date the brand was re-recorded. In this example, you could browse by this date in the Re-records section in the 1941-1950 registrations.
8. Name and page number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "B-" prefix directs you to the Re-records section in the 1931-1940 registration volume.
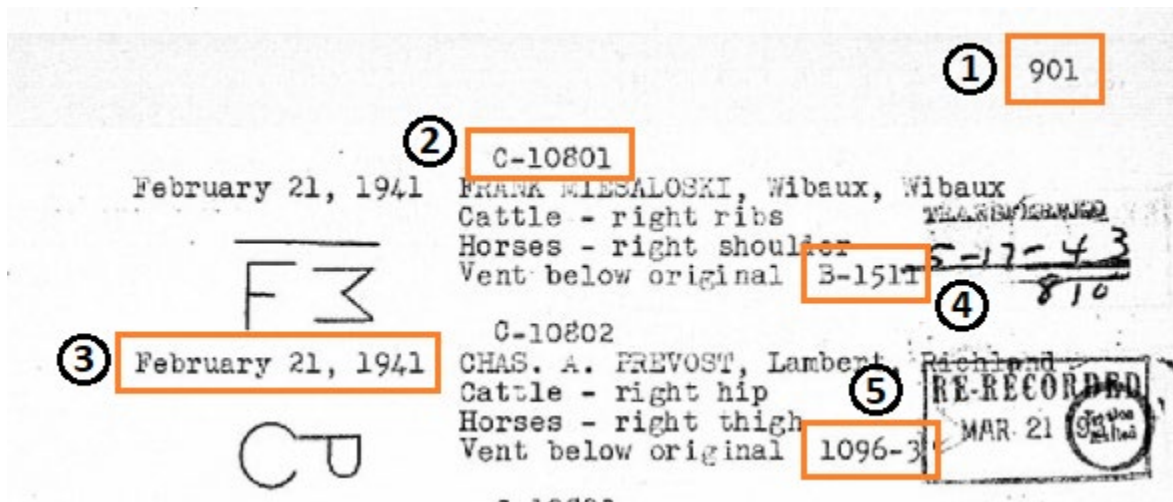
## 1941-1950

Brand Index:

Handwritten, grouped by characters, letters, and numbers. Not searchable online. You must browse the index pages to find a brand.


Name Index:

Typed, alphabetical.


Brand Registration Example


*Re-record



1. Page number in the Re-records section. Use this if you have a page number from an index or brand listing.
2. Certificate number for the brand. In this example, the "C-" prefix confirms this is a 1941-1950 re-record certificate number.
3. Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
4. Page number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "B-" prefix directs you to the Re-records section in the 1931-1940 registrations.
5. Page number for the previous recording of the brand. In this example, the "-3" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1931-1940 registrations.

6. Page number in the New/Transferred Brands section.
7. Certificate number for the brand.
8. Certificate number and name from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "C-" prefix directs you to the Re-records section in the 1941-1950 registrations.
9. Handwritten date and page or registration number to whom the brand was transferred. In this example, because the date is after 1951, the "-5" in the number below the date directs you to a registration number in the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1951-1960 registrations. If the date was before 1951, the number below it would be a page number.
10. Date the brand was re-recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.

**1951-1960**

**NOTE:**

This is the first decade without a Name Index or a Brand Index.

Brand Registration Example

*Re-record*



1. Page number in the Re-records section.
2. Certificate number for the brand. In this example, the "D-" prefix confirms this is a 1951-1960 re-record number.
3. Certificate number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "-4" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1941-1950 registrations.
4. County code for the residence of the person recording the brand.
5. Date the brand was recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.

*New/Transferred*
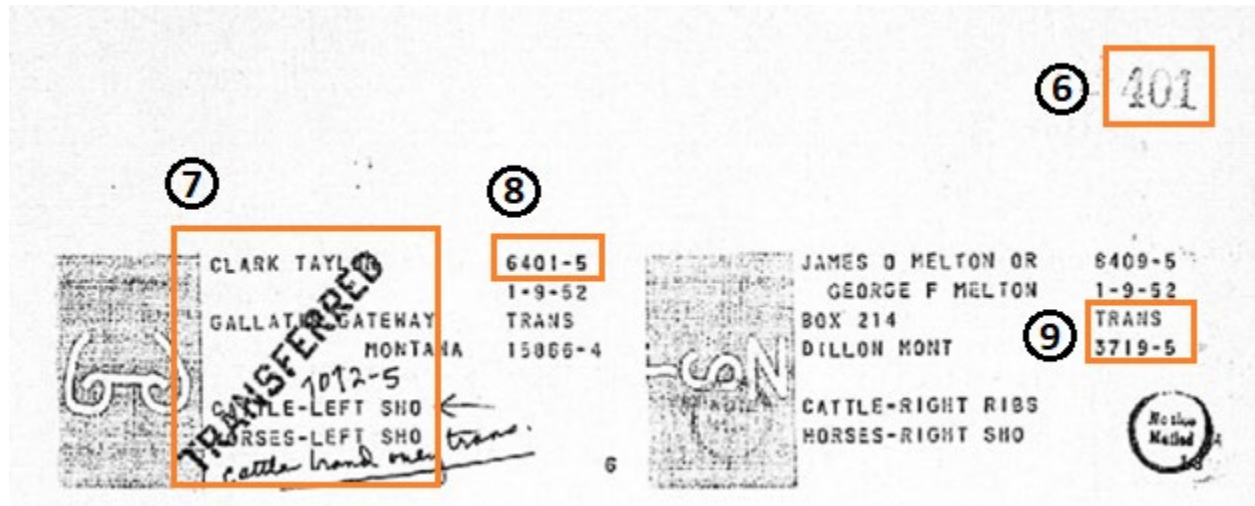


6. Page number in the New/Transferred Brands section.
7. Handwritten certificate number to whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-5" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1951-1960 registrations.
8. Certificate number for the brand. In this example, the "-5" suffix confirms this is a 1951-1960 New/Transferred Brands certificate number.
9. Certificate number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-5" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in 1951-1960 registrations.

**1961-1970**

**NOTE:**

This decade does not have a Name Index or a Brand Index.

Brand Registration Example

*Re-record*



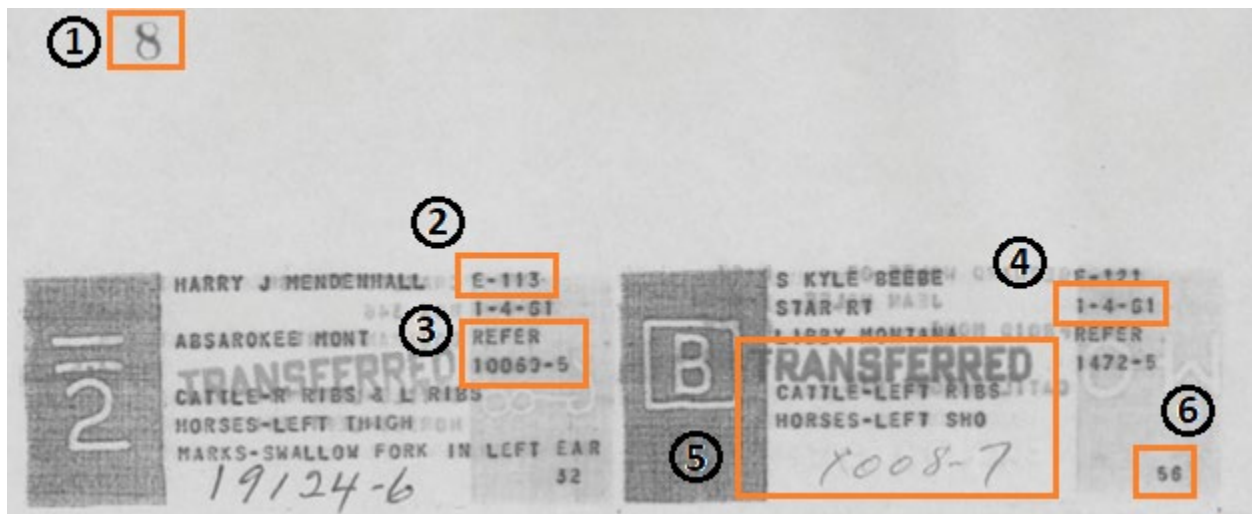1.  Page number in the Re-records section.
2.  Certificate number. The "E-" prefix in this example confirms this is a 1961 re-record number.
3.  Certificate number for the previous brand recording. The "-5" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1951-1960 registrations.
4.  Date the brand was re-recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
5.  Handwritten certificate number to whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-7" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section of the 1971-1980 registrations.
6.  County code for the residence of the person recording the brand.

*New/Transferred*



7. Page number in the New/Transferred Brands section.
8. Certificate number in the New/Transferred Brands section. The "-6" suffix in this example confirms this is a 1961-1970 New/Transferred brand certificate number.
9. Page number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "C-" prefix directs you to the Re-records section in the 1941-1950 registrations.
10. Certificate number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-5" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1951-1960 registrations.

**1971-1980**

**NOTE:**

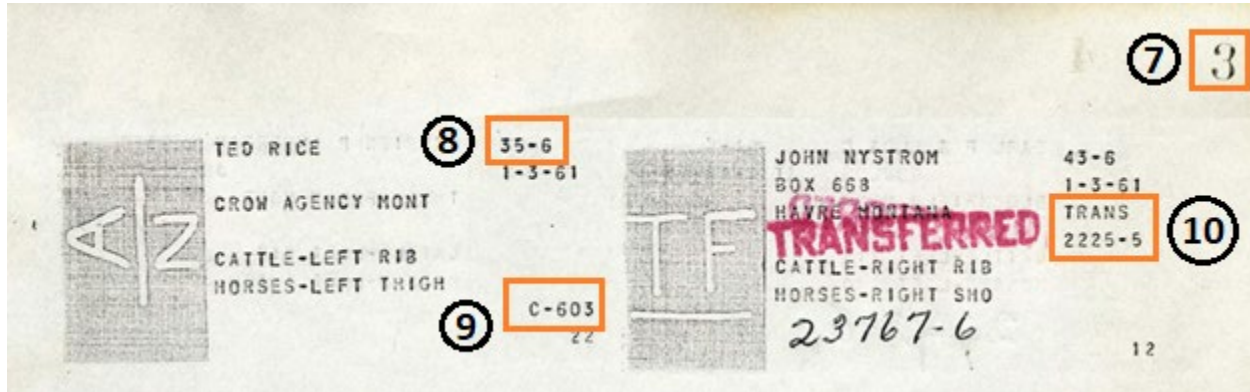This decade does not have a Name Index or a Brand Index.

Brand Registration Example

*Re-record*



1. Page number in the Re-records section.
2. Certificate number. The "F-" prefix in this example confirms this is a 1971 re-record.
3. Certificate number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "-6" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1961-1970 registrations.
4. Date the brand was re-recorded. Use this if you are browsing by date.
5. County code for the residence of the person recording the brand.

6. Page number in the New/Transferred Brands section.
7. Page number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-4" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred section in the 1941-1950 registrations.
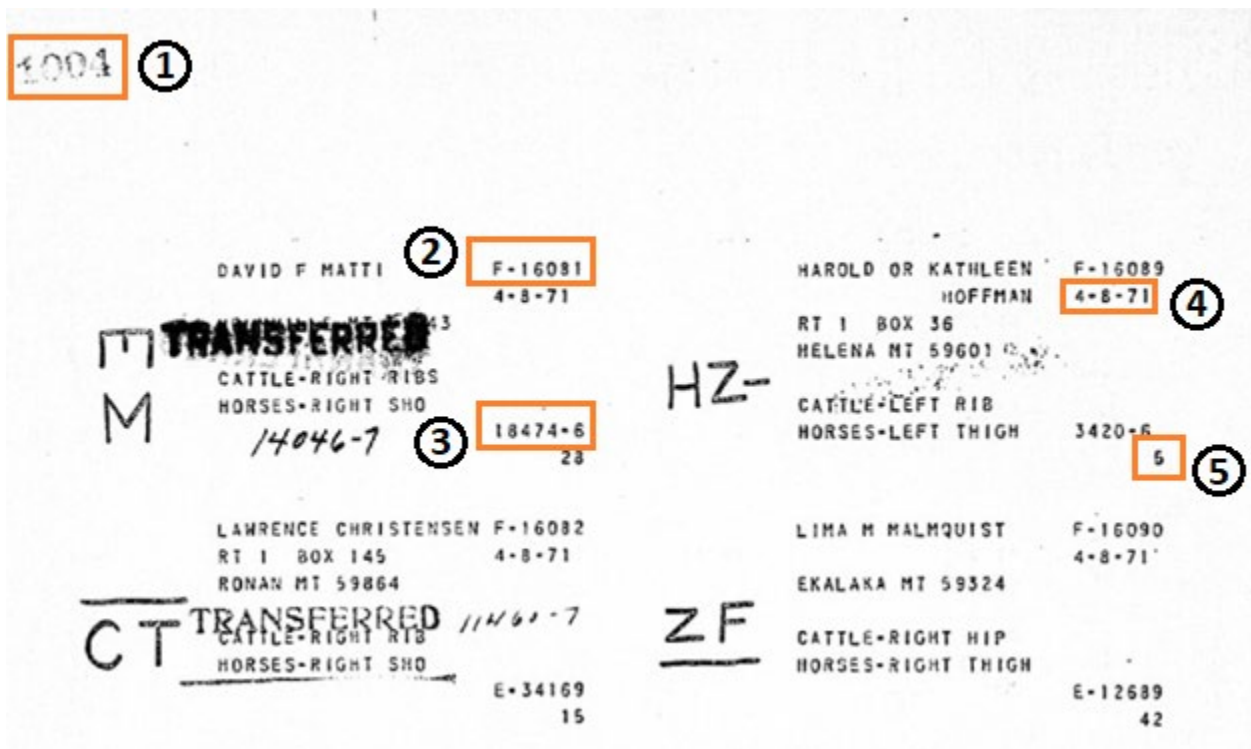8. Handwritten certificate number to whom the brand was transferred. The "-7" suffix in this example directs you to the New/Transferred Brands section in the 1971-1980 registrations.
9. Certificate number from whom the brand was transferred. In this example, the "-6" suffix directs you to the New/Transferred Brands of the 1961-1970 registrations.

**2001-2010**

**NOTE:**

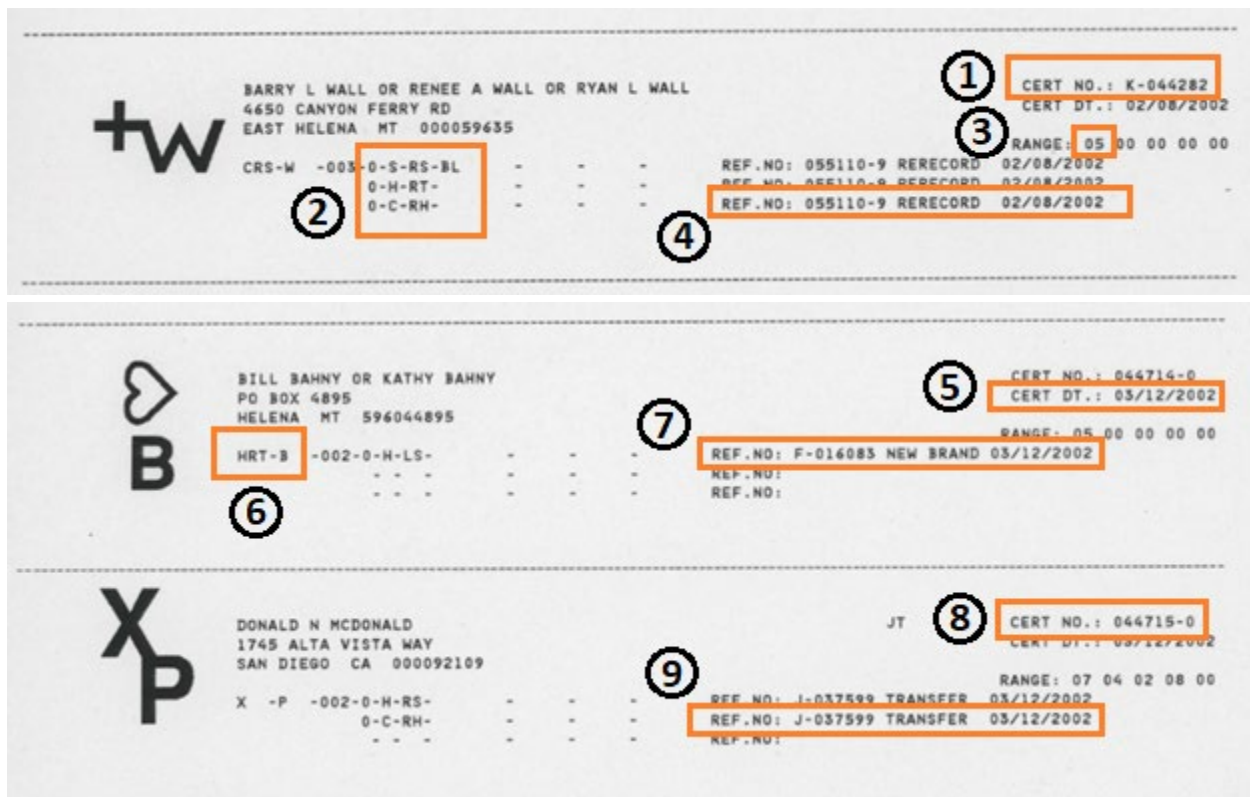This decade does not have a Name Index or a Brand Index. Also, reports were generated throughout the decade on demand. Re-records and New/Transferred brand registrations are interspersed with non-consecutive page numbering.

Brand Registration Example



1. Certificate number. In this example, the "K-" prefix confirms this is a 2001-2010 re-record.
2. Abbreviation for animal and location on the animal for the brand
3. Code for county of range. A registration may have up to five counties of range.
4. Certificate number from previous brand recording. In this example, the "-9" suffix directs you to the 1991-2000 registrations.
5. Date the brand was registered. Use this if you are browsing by date.
6. Livestock Commission alpha-numerical code for the brand configuration.

7. Certificate number for the previous brand recording. In this example, the "F-" prefix directs you to the Re-records section in the 1971-1980 registration volume.
8. Certificate number. In this example, the "-0" suffix confirms this is a 2001-2010 New/Transferred Brands certificate number.
9. Certificate number from whom the brand was transferred. The "J-" prefix in this example directs you to the 1991-2000 registrations.

## Part 3: Searching Tips and Additional Information

**Overview**

This section offers some more tips to help you search brand registrations and compile the history of a brand. It also provides some additional information about historical Montana brand registrations, including a list of some other helpful resources.

**Search Tips**

- It is easiest to trace the history of a brand backwards in time. Brand records show the page number or registration number of the previous brand recording and not the next brand recording. If you can locate a more recent brand record (even if it's registered to a different person), you can more easily trace it backwards, whereas if you find an older brand record, you will have to search for it again in a more recent decade.

- Remember to consult the table of Prefixes and Suffixes by decade and the brand registration examples by decade. Some notations for previous brand recordings refer to page numbers and some refer to registration or certificate numbers. The prefixes and suffixes refer to different decades. Use the table on Page 9 and the decade examples on Pages 10-27 for help with translating brand records.

- Using the name indexes and brand indexes is often easier than searching. We scanned the brand records and used Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to make the text searchable. The process is not perfect, and the text can have misspellings and strange characters that may affect search results. Use the name indexes available from 1873-1950 to find your brand without keyword searching.

- There is a lot of overlap in early brand records. If you can't find something in the 1873-1910 records or the 1921-1930 records, it might be in the 1911-1920 records. See the Pro Tip on Page 11 for additional information.

- Try searching using one keyword and not multiple keywords. Searching on two words, such as Thomas Meagher, will return all results for Thomas and all results for Meagher, which

may make finding your brand time-consuming. Try searching for just a last name or just a first name. Do not put keywords in quotes, as that performs a different search process and does not give you the option to preview your results.

- Also try keywords other than names. If you search for a name but do not find good results, try searching for a different keyword, such as a street name or a city. It may be easier to sift through search results for a city name, such as Scobey, as compared to a more common name, such as Johnson.

- If you get stuck, consult another resource or contact us.

## Additional Resources

- *Brands Across Montana*, by Fred B. Hunnes. This book, published in 1984, has a brand index and a name index.
- Montana Cattlemen's Reference Manual, 2012-2020, by the Montana Cattlemen's Association. This three-volume set contains more recent brands and includes a brand index and name index. Find a copy in our Reference Room or order a copy from the Montana Cattlemen's Association.
- Montana Department of Livestock, Brands Enforcement Division. Contact the Department of Livestock for more information on current brands and brand registration in Montana.
- See our full list of resources in our online guide.

## Contact us

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