

ROBERT E. KENNEDY LIBRARY

**LINKS TO THE LAND:
PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF LAND USE ON THE CENTRAL COAST
AT THE KENNEDY LIBRARY**



Local San Luis Obispo history is rich with stories of pioneer ranching families who came to the county after the California Gold Rush in 1849. Their experiences are documented in several collections preserved in the Kennedy Library's Special Collections department.

These individual manuscript collections have become the core of a growing body of materials on the history of land use on the Central Coast. Thanks to the ongoing generosity of the James Sinton family, dedicated to preserving the land and its historic local legacy (*see below*), the Kennedy Library is expanding these

collections into a comprehensive "Links to the Land Archives."

Mirroring the changing agricultural history of San Luis Obispo County and its people, the archives reflect not only the history of cattle and grain production, but also environmental and land stewardship efforts. Papers of the Sinsheimer, Jack and Wreden families record their ranching, mercantile and financial interests in the area from the mid-19th century on.

In addition, the McMillan and Miossi environmental collections include their joint master plan to keep Montaña de Oro a natural landscape, free of intense recreational pursuits, a plan still in force today.

A Web site, "Links to the Land," developed by the library's Special Collections and multimedia staff, and funded by the Sintons, provides students, scholars and the community access to guides to the collections.

The role of the Kennedy Library in collecting the records of ranching, farming, wine-growing and land stewardship efforts on the Central Coast ensures that the historical links of our community to the land will be preserved and available for future generations of students and scholars. Visit the Kennedy Library's Web site at www.lib.calpoly.edu/ranching to learn more.

– Carol Pendergast

A LOVE FOR THE LAND



Tall and lean, and blessed with an acute memory for details, James Sinton is a fascinating mix of cattleman, environmentalist and historian. The Sinton family descended from a pioneering mercantile family that settled in California in the 19th century. They have been ranching their Avenales Ranch in the Shandon area for more than a century.

Leaders in the community and dedicated preservationists, Sinton and his son, Steve, are active in the California Rangeland Trust, a land conservancy founded by the California Cattlemen's Association to foster proper land management and stewardship.

Sinton is an avid historian of early California and San Luis Obispo. He and his wife, Norma, place a high value on education and are voracious readers. They have passed on their love of the



Photo by Catherine Trujillo

From left: Hiram Davis, dean of library services; Gail Sinton Schoettler; her father, James Sinton; Nancy Loe, assistant dean of collection management; and Carol Pendergast, advancement director.

land, history and reading to their three children.

Over the years, James Sinton has developed a close affiliation with the Kennedy Library, whose educational mission he values. He has special regard for the Special Collections Department and its role in preserving the history of ranching and land management on the Central Coast. As a result of his generous gifts, the library

has been able to move forward in further developing the collections and created a Web site, "Links to the Land: Ranching the Central Coast," that provides access to the ranching and land stewardship materials. The library has just completed an oral history of James Sinton, which will be added to the online site as a valuable record of local ranching history and lore.

– Carol Pendergast