

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Harry F. Sinclair-Augustus Van Horne Stuyvesant, Jr., House

AND/OR COMMON

Ukranian Institute of America

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

2 East 79th Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

18

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

CODE

36

COUNTY

New York

CODE

061

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES UNRESTRICTED NO

PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER Culture**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY** Contact: Mr. Julian I. Revay, Adm. Institute

NAME

Ukranian Institute of America, Inc.

Director

STREET & NUMBER

2 East 79th Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

VICINITY OF

New York 10021

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 5th Ave. Survey

DATE

1963; 1977

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress; N.Y. City Landmarks Prevs. Comm.

CITY, TOWN

Washington, New York

STATE

D.C.; N.Y.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From 1918 to 1930, during the height of both his economic power and his period of disgrace, Harry F. Sinclair owned and resided in this 3 1/2-story Fifth Avenue mansion, described by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission as Eclectic French Renaissance in style. There are two other known extant Sinclair residences--a yellow brick house that he occupied in Independence, Kans., from about 1908 to 1913 and an apartment building in which he had an apartment at 907 Fifth Avenue in New York about 1916-18-- but neither can compare with this structure in terms either of association with Sinclair or architectural importance. Neither a Sinclair officenor his Great Neck, Long Island, mansion of the 1930's survives.

There is popular disagreement about who designed the Sinclair-Stuyvesant House. Since at least as early as 1955 New York papers have attributed the building to Stanford White, as has the Museums Council of New York City in its recent guidebook to metropolitan museums. Research by the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission in city building records shows, however, that Charles P. H. Gilbert designed the mansion in 1899 for Isaac D. Fletcher of the New York Coal and Tar Company. Henry Murdock erected the structure at a cost of \$200,000. Later, about 1920, Gilbert drew the plans for the only two significant alterations ever made to it: addition of a rooftop tank house and installation of reinforced concrete arches for a new penthouse roof.

Sinclair purchased the house from Fletcher in 1918, less than 2 years after moving Sinclair Oil Corporation headquarters from Oklahoma to New York and making the firm the Nation's largest independent oil company, and he lived here during the infamous Teapot Dome scandal. In 1930 Sinclair sold the impressive residence to Augustus Van Horne Stuyvesant, Jr., a direct descendant of Dutch New Amsterdam General Director Peter Stuyvesant. Augustus Stuyvesant's executor sold the property to a group of investors in 1954, and the following year they sold it to the Ukranian Institute of America to house their collection of Ukranian art and artifacts and to serve as a headquarters for their myriad cultural and social activities.

The north-facing mansion, which displays no post-Sinclair exterior alteration, is situated on a 100-by-32.2-foot lot at the corner of East 79th Street and Fifth Avenue and is part of a proposed New York City Fifth Avenue Historic District. Measuring about 96 by 30 feet itself, the mansion rises approximately 71 feet high above a full basement to a steep, slate-shingle-covered mansard roof that features both copper and terra cotta decoration.

470

8 SIGNIFICANCE

INDUSTRY

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1916-30

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Henry Murdock
Charles C. P. Gilbert

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Harry F. Sinclair's significance in the history of the American oil industry is threefold. First, after the dissolution of the Standard Oil Trust in 1911, Sinclair, according to oil industry historian Ruth Sheldon Knowles, became "one of Standard's greatest competitors in all its fields of operation."¹ By 1916 Sinclair, continues Knowles, had "put together a \$50-million oil company, the fourth largest in America and the largest strictly independent oil company."² Although his reign as the largest independent proved relatively brief, the fact, says a company history, "that he meant to battle the industry giants on their own ground excited the entire mid-continent."³ Eventually, other producers followed in his footsteps, establishing oil companies that in time surpassed Sinclair's in size.

Second, Sinclair sponsored research which had a significant impact on the petroleum industry, particularly in the area of refining technology. "Tube stills," according to scholars Harold F. Williamson, Ralph L. Andreano, Arnold R. Daum, and Gilbert C. Klose, "were first used in cracking units in 1918 by Sinclair employing the Isom process."⁴ The Isom process, developed by W. H. Isom, a Sinclair employee, made it possible to double the amount of gasoline from crude oil. "In 1926 Sinclair, "according to the official company history, "leaped ahead of most of its competitors with H-C, the industry's original high octane premium gasoline for motor cars."⁵

¹Ruth Sheldon Knowles, The Greatest Gamblers: The Epic of American Oil Exploration (New York, 1959), 81.

²Ibid., 137.

³Sinclair Oil Corporation, A Great Name in Oil: Sinclair Through Fifty Years (New York, 1966), 20.

⁴Harold F. Williamson, Ralph L. Andreano, Arnold R. Daum, and Gilbert C. Klose, The American Petroleum Industry: The Age of Energy, 1899-1959 (Evanston, 1963), 400.

⁵Sinclair Oil Corporation, A Great Name in Oil, 43.

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet.)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 587430 4514270
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
D
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known as 2 East 79th Street, New York, New York.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Visit & Description by: George R. Adams, Director, Ldmks. Proj.
History by: Ralph J. Christian, Historian, Landmarks Project

ORGANIZATION American Assoc. for State & Local History DATE June 1977

STREET & NUMBER 1400 Eighth Avenue South TELEPHONE 615/242-5583

CITY OR TOWN Nashville, STATE Tennessee

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET Sinclair House ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

Brick bearing walls support the massive structure, and limestone ashlar faces the elaborately ornamented exterior facades. Window detail is particularly varied and ornate. The north facade features, for example, windows with both plain and decorative flat, semi-elliptical, segmental, and Gothic arches. Most openings are double, triple, or quadruple, and nearly all have stone mullions. Wall dormers with high pinnacled gables distinguish the mansard roof, which is also marked along the cornice line at the corners by blind turrets with crockets and finials.

The main entrance, in the center of the north side, is a similarly ornamented, semi-elliptically arched, six-door-wide opening filled by a cast-iron and glass outer set of doors whose ornamentation matches both the spired cast-iron fence flanking the north and west sides of the lot and the carved woodwork of the reception hall. Similarly the carved stone seahorses on the balustrade flanking the outside approach to the doorway are repeated inside on the balustrade of the main stair.

Inside, there is no original Sinclair furniture, but in other respects the residence is little changed. It is arranged into six floors and a basement and has 27 rooms and 20,000 square feet of floor space. Throughout, the house interior is characterized by elaborately carved woodwork, handsome plastered or carved wood ceilings, and beautiful marble mantles. Staff quarters and offices take up the top two floors, which formerly were servants' quarters, and Ukranian cultural exhibits fill the fourth, which formerly contained bedrooms. Here two large marble bath tubs have been covered either by display cases or by temporary wall panels in order to put the space to museum use while preserving the tubs. The third floor contains the wood-paneled library, the large master bedroom, and an oval dressing room, all of which exhibit their original decor. On the second floor are a large ballroom and opposite it a similarly scaled dining room. The first floor area consists of an entry or reception hall that lies opposite the front door and holds a massive open stair against the rear wall. To the right is a formal parlor, while to the left is an original electric elevator and behind it an enclosed stair, a pantry, and a kitchen that serves in part as an office. At present the first three floors, while retaining their original handsome architectural decor, are sparsely furnished. They serve chiefly as meeting areas.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Sinclair House 7 two
ITEM NUMBER PAGE

The Ukranian Institute, which was founded in 1952 by William Dzus, inventor and manufacturer of a widely used aircraft cowling fastner, has done an excellent job of preserving and maintaining the historic mansion, and generally it is in good condition. Its roof and plumbing are in serious need of repair, however.

Continuation Sheet Item No. 9 Page one

Connelly, W. L., The Oil Business As I Saw It: Half a Century with Sinclair (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).

"Harry Ford Sinclair," National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Current Volume A (New York: James T. White & Company, 1930), 505-6.

Knowles, Ruth Sheldon, The Greatest Gamblers: The Epic of American Oil Exploration (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959).

New York Times, August 21, 1955, and November 11, 1956.

New York World-Telegram and Sun, August 26, 1955.

Noggle, Burl, Teapot Dome: Oil and Politics in the 1920's (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965). Published originally in 1962.

Parkes, Henry Bamford and Vincent P. Carosso, Recent America: A History, Book One: 1900-1933 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963).

Redmond, George F., Financial Giants of America, Vol. I (Boston: Stratford Company, 1922).

Rister, Carl Coke, Oil! Titan of the Southwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949).

Schruben, Francis W., Wea Creek to El Dorado: Oil in Kansas, 1860-1920 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972).

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(continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Sinclair House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

Third, Sinclair was a principle figure in Teapot Dome, one of the greatest scandals in American political history. Although he was acquitted of the charges of conspiracy and bribery brought against him in the matter, much of the public considered him guilty, particularly after Albert Fall, the man he had supposedly bribed, went to prison for accepting bribes. Sinclair's reputation was further blackened by disclosures during the Teapot Dome hearings of the operating methods of the Continental Trading Company, a firm organized by Sinclair and executives from other oil companies to sell crude oil to their respective firms at a substantial profit. "By this device," according to historians Henry Bamford Parkes and Vincent P. Carosso, Sinclair and his cronies "mulcted the stockholders, whose interests they supposedly represented, of more than \$8 million."⁶

Sinclair lived in this 3 1/2-story Fifth Avenue mansion from 1918 to 1930, during the height of both his economic power and his period of disgrace. Now the home of the Ukranian Institute of America, the stately residence has changed little since Sinclair occupied it. There are two other known extant Sinclair residences--a brick house that he lived in about 5 years in Kansas and a New York City apartment that he occupied about 2 years--but neither is as closely associated with him as this house. Neither a Sinclair office nor his Great Neck, Long Island, mansion of the 1930's survives.

History

Harry Ford Sinclair was born July 6, 1876, in Wheeling, W. Va., to John and Phoebe S. Sinclair. When Harry was only a few years old, John Sinclair moved his family to Independence, Kans., and opened a drugstore. Here, Harry grew to manhood, attending the public schools and working for his father in his spare time. In 1896, following his father's death, Harry and his brother inherited the drugstore, and in 1897 Harry entered the University of Kansas to study pharmacy. His stay at the university proved short, however, and by 1898, he was back in Independence tending the family store again. For a brief period, he operated a drugstore in nearby Coffeyville as well, but events soon proved that Sinclair's future was not in the drug business.

⁶Henry Bamford Parkes and Vincent P. Carosso, Recent America: A History, Book One: 1900-1933 (New York, 1963), 336.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Sinclair House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE TWO

By 1900 the extremely ambitious Sinclair had begun to turn his attention to the oil industry. Around this time he became a contractor to supply drilling-rig timber for several oil companies operating near Bartlesville in Indian Territory. With the profits he obtained from this venture, he bought oil and gas leases. To finance drilling operations, he formed small companies, with himself as manager and usually treasurer, and sold stock in them. "When such leases yielded oil--as they did with unerring frequency," states the official company history, "the promoters sold quickly, reinvesting in new wildcat ventures flushed by Sinclair."⁷ Although sometimes short of funds, Sinclair, according to George F. Redmond, one of his first biographers, "stuck to oil, lived oil, dreamed oil, and rose to fortune on a wave of oil."⁸

In 1904 at Kiowa, Okla., Sinclair made his first really big oil strike. The \$100,000 he netted from this venture gave him substantial capital for the first time in his career and also made it easier for him to borrow money. Next, Sinclair moved into Oklahoma's Canary Field, developing it into 100 wells by 1905. One year later, the Canary Field profits enabled him to take part in Glen Pool, the first really big oil producer in Oklahoma. By 1907 Sinclair had become a millionaire, and he further increased his wealth by erecting storage tanks in new oil areas that lacked pipelines. He would then purchase oil at the wellhead for as little as 10 cents a barrel and hold it until the price rose above the one dollar level.

By 1913 Sinclair was the major stockholder in 62 oil companies and was producing oil from every field in the Mid-Continent area. By this time he had begun to take the first steps to develop an oil empire he hoped would eventually rival or eclipse that of John D. Rockefeller. In 1913 Sinclair took his first step in that direction when he moved his headquarters from Independence to Tulsa, which was in the heart of Oklahoma's oil producing region. Because most Tulsa banks refused to lend money for oil production, Sinclair, according to Knowles, "established his own bank, the Exchange National Bank of Tulsa. Subsequently the National Bank of Tulsa, it was one of the first great oil banks in the country."⁹

⁷ Sinclair Oil Corporation, A Great Name in Oil, 14.

⁸ George F. Redmond, Financial Giants of America, Vol. I (Boston, 1922), 107.

⁹ Knowles, The Greatest Gamblers, 137.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Sinclair House 8 PAGE three
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In May, 1916, Sinclair announced the formation of the Sinclair Oil Corporation. Headquartered in New York City, the firm included not only the earlier Sinclair companies but some of the larger refiners and non-integrated producers in the Mid-Continent area. This new fully integrated company owned oil wells producing 9,000 barrels daily; refineries with a daily capacity of 15,300 barrels; and 490 miles of pipelines in Kansas and Oklahoma. Thus, says Knowles, Sinclair "put together a \$50-million oil company, the fourth largest in America and the largest strictly independent oil company."¹⁰

Sinclair wasted little time in increasing the size of his company still further. With \$20 million which he borrowed from Wall Street bankers, he began to buy up oil properties in the Mid-Continent that were selling at bargain prices because of the glutted market in the region. Late in 1916, he announced a plan to construct an 8-inch pipeline from the Cushing field in Oklahoma to a Sinclair refinery in East Chicago, Ind. By February, 1918, this project had been completed, and Sinclair was able to contest Standard Oil on its own ground because his pipeline gave him access to 90 percent of the crude oil production of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The fact that Sinclair, says a company history, "meant to battle the industry giants on their own ground excited the entire mid-continent," eventually inspiring other producers to follow in his footsteps in creating integrated oil companies.¹¹

Sinclair also sponsored research which had a significant impact on the petroleum industry, particularly in the area of refining technology. "Tube stills," according to Williamson, Andreano, Daum, and Klose, "were first used in cracking units in 1918 by Sinclair employing the Isom process."¹² The Isom process, developed by W. H. Isom, a Sinclair employee, made it possible to double the amount of gasoline produced from crude oil. Several years later, in 1926, Sinclair introduced the first high octane premium gasoline.

In the early 1920's, the sky appeared to be the limit for Sinclair and his firm as its remarkable expansion continued, and he acquired what appeared to be rich drilling concessions in the Soviet Union, Angola, and several spots around the globe. Although

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Sinclair Oil Corporation, A Great Name in Oil, 20.

¹²Williamson, Andreano, Daum, and Klose, The American Petroleum Industry: The Age of Energy, 400.

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the Russian and Angolan projects proved to be costly failures, Sinclair's acquisition of drilling rights in the Teapot Dome naval oil reserve in 1922 had a more far ranging effect on the company's fortunes.

Although Sinclair was acquitted of the charges of bribery and conspiracy brought against him in the Teapot Dome scandals, much of the general public considered him guilty, particularly after Albert Fall, the man he supposedly bribed, went to prison for accepting bribes. Sinclair also increased public suspicion by hiring detectives to shadow jurors at his trials and by refusing to testify before the U.S. Senate. Eventually he was jailed briefly for these two activities. His reputation was further blackened by disclosure during the Teapot Dome hearings of the operating methods of the Continental Trading Company, a firm organized by Sinclair and executives from other oil companies to sell crude oil to their respective firms at a substantial profit to themselves. "By this device," say Parkes and Carosso, Sinclair and his cronies "mulcted the stockholders, whose interests they supposedly represented, or more than \$8 million."¹³

After Teapot Dome, the growth of Sinclair's company slowed considerably, and its position as the leading independent was soon surpassed by E. W. Marland and others. Still, it continued to grow, albeit slowly, and by the time Sinclair retired from active management in 1949, his company ranked seventh among the Nation's oil companies and had \$700 million in assets. On November 10, 1956, Harry F. Sinclair died in Pasadena, Calif., at the age of 80.

¹³

Parkes and Carosso, Recent America, Book One, 336.

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(Bay Shore, N.Y.: Pentaquit Press, 1963).

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