

JOHN SINOPOULO HOUSE
(Sundial)
400 North Kelley Avenue
Oklahoma City
Oklahoma
Oklahoma

HALS OK-33
OK-33

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

JOHN SINOPOULO HOUSE (SUNDIAL)

HALS NO. OK-33

Location: 400 North Kelley, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma.
Lat: 35.51296 Long -97.4928

Significance: The Sundial was home to Greek immigrant and Oklahoma City entertainment pioneer John Sinopoulo and his wife Katharine. The Mediterranean-styled villa, was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson and is surrounded by 20 acres of gardens designed by a landscape architect also from Chicago in 1919 to resemble the famous Versailles Gardens of France. The property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

History: Situated on 20 acres of gardens designed after the gardens of Versailles, the Sundial itself was fashioned after Greek villas along the Mediterranean. Born in Magoula, Greece, John Sinopoulo and his brothers Peter and James immigrated to the United States in 1893. After spending time in New York, Chicago, and St. Louis, the brothers moved to Oklahoma City in 1903. During the same year the brothers opened the Delmar Gardens, one of Oklahoma's first amusement parks. The 140-acre gardens included a hotel, restaurant, race track, theater, and beer garden. Delmar Gardens closed in 1909, and the brothers began acquiring theaters throughout Oklahoma City. Originally, the theaters served as venues for the vaudeville circuit, traveling acting troupes, and operas. Later, they expanded to include motion pictures. By the beginning of World War I, the brothers had acquired six theaters. In 1920, the brothers merged their theaters with other prominent theaters in Oklahoma City and formed Midwest Enterprises, Inc, where John would serve as president until his retirement in 1962.

In 1915, the Sinopoulos began building their fourteen-room Mediterranean styled home that was inspired by estates in his homeland of Greece. Interestingly, his wife Katharine, an artist, created a cardboard model mock-up of the house and presented it to architect John Eberson to design fully. The Sinopoulo's inspiration for the gardens surrounding their home came during their honeymoon in Europe. They especially were enamoured with the layout of the gardens at Versailles, France and hired a landscape architect from Chicago to design the landscape in 1919. The home was situated among fruit and nut trees, an extensive vineyard, goldfish and lily pond, formal gardens and passageways that included a quartz bridge.

Upon John Sinopoulo's death in 1976 little of the original landscape remained due to maintenance difficulties. The property was left to Mr. and Mrs. Byron

Gambulos, the couple's son-in-law and daughter. Efforts have been made to restore the property.

Sources: National Register Nomination Form, "John Sinopoulo House,"
<http://www.oci.okstate.edu/shpo/nhrpdfs/78002251.pdf> (accessed November 15, 2009).

Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, "Sinopoulo Brothers,"
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/S/SI009.html> (accessed November 15, 2009).

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Vintage photo of home (<http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/NHRPICS/78002251.jpg>, accessed November 15, 2009).



Modern photo of home (Steve Eilers, 2009).