

Villa Ruchello Santa Monica, CA

A History

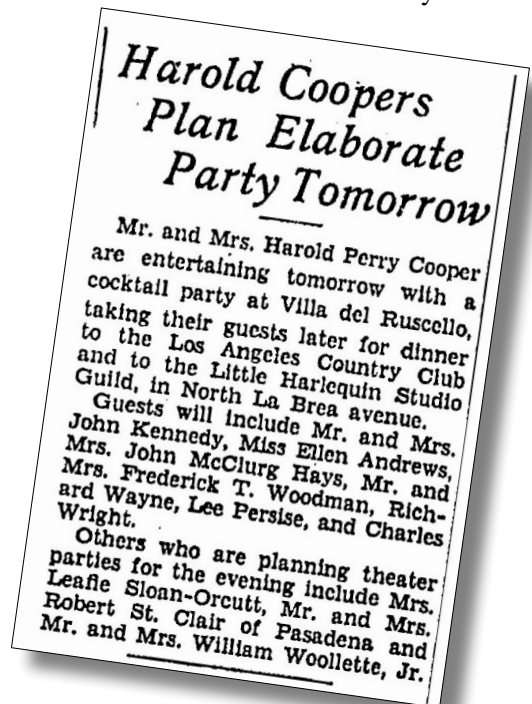
Villa Ruchello was designed and built in 1933 by **J. Thomas Payne** for business exec Harold Cooper and his heiress wife Lillian Sinclair. The *Villa* is a masterful architectural residence made all the more remarkable as the work of an English emigrant. After moving to Los Angeles Payne quickly developed a love for California's Mediterranean architecture. He was largely self-taught in its aesthetic of Renaissance, Moorish, Byzantine, and Gothic influences. Payne's talent can be seen in the mahogany-paneled library with Ionic pilasters and in the circular foyer that seamlessly blends classic Mediterranean detailing with an Art Moderne tiled floor in period colors.



John Thomas Payne

The Speakeasy

Arriving in L.A. as newlyweds, **Harold P. and Lillian S. Cooper** set out to build their Southern California dream house. Mr. Cooper was a largely retired insurance executive while Lillian was the heir to a vast Indiana resort. Known to the Coopers for some forty years as *Villa del Ruscello*, the estate featured prominently in the couple's lives. Prolific coverage in the society columns and a surviving **speakeasy** in the library (The *Villa* was designed in the final year of prohibition) tell of the Cooper's taste for entertaining and stature within early Los Angeles high society. When not in residence the Cooper's were oft reported traveling abroad for months at a time or residing at one of their properties in Palm Springs and Louisville.



LA Times, March 1935

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Style

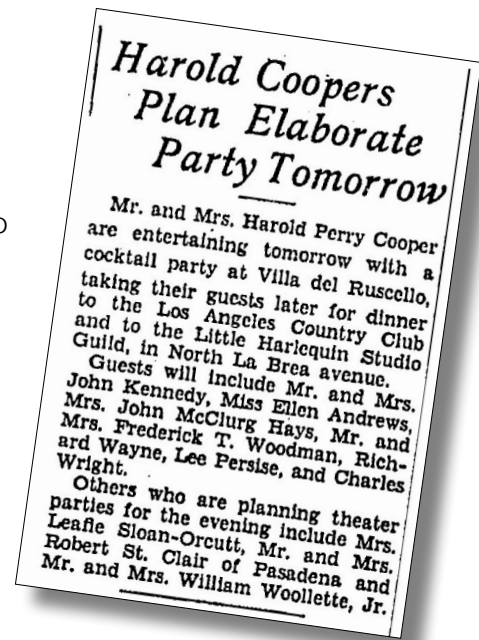
- Mediterranean

Original Building Permit

- **Completed in 1933**
- In September 1932 the City of Los Angeles approved two permits, one for a two-story stucco dwelling & garage. The other permit was for a detached two-story stucco gatehouse garage & servants quarters. Both buildings of stucco with tile roofs.
- Total cost to build: \$25,000.

Original Owner

- **Harold & Lillian Cooper**
- Moved to Los Angeles in about 1930. Harold was a veteran of WWI & later worked as an insurance agency executive. Lillian was the heiress to a sizable resort hotel in southern Indiana. The Coopers were prominent in early Los Angeles Society and resided at the *Villa* until 1975. There were no children.



LA Times, March 1935

Architect

- **John Thomas Payne** (1885-1934), original architect
- British-born, immigrated in 1912. Practiced for approximately sixteen years between 1918 and 1934. He was a native of Leicester, England but spent most of his career in independent practice here in Los Angeles.
- **Frederic C. Barienbrock** (1904-1978), 1st renovation architect
- Santa Monica-based. Known for institutional and government buildings.



John Thomas Payne

Development

- The Santa Monica Land Co. first subdivided parts of Santa Monica Canyon in 1912 and by 1913 much of the rest was platted. Early houses were primarily of the then popular Mediterranean style.