

## 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 lonic 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.

# Harold Coopers Plan Elaborate Party Tomorrow

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Perry Cooper are entertaining tomorrow with a cocktail party at Villa del Ruscello, taking their guests later for dinner to the Los Angeles Country Club and to the Little Harlequin Studio Guild, in North La Brea avenue. Guests will include Mr. and Mrs. John Kennedy, Miss Ellen Andrews, Mrs. John McClurg Hays, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick T. Woodman, Richard Wayne, Lee Persise, and Charles Others who are planning theater

parties for the evening include Mrs. Leafle Sloan-Orcutt, Mr. and Mrs. Robert St. Clair of Pasadena and Mrs. William Woollette, Jr.

LA Times, March 1935



nelsonwhite | architectural history + preservation nwhite3@mac.com | 312.208.0127

nelsonwhitepreservation.com | @nelsonpreserves

Edward Fitz

EFitz@TheAgencyRE.com | 424.230.3757

TheAgency.com | @EdwardFitzLA



## Villa Ruchello Santa Monica, CA

#### **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 prominant in early Los Angeles Society and resided at the Villa until 1975. There were no children.

# Harold Coopers Plan Elaborate Party Tomorrow

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Perry Cooper are entertaining tomorrow with a cocktail party at Villa del Ruscello, to the Los Angeles Country Club to the Los Angeles Country Club Guild, in North La Brea avenue.

John Kennedy, Miss Ellen Andrews, Mrs. John McClurg Hays, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick T. Woodman, Richwight.

Others who are planning theater Leafle Store in the Country Inches of the Country Cooperation of the Coope

Wright.
Others who are planning theater
parties for the evening include Mrs.
Leafie Sloan-Orcutt, Mr. and Mrs.
Robert St. Clair of Pasadena and
Mr. and Mrs. William Woollette, Jr.

LA Times, March 1935

#### Architect

- **John Thomas Payne** (1885-1934), original architect
- British-born, immigrated in 1912. Practiced for aproximately 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.

#### <u>Development</u>

 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.



John Thomas Payne



nelsonwhite | architectural history + preservation

nwhite3@mac.com | 312.208.0127

nelsonwhitepreservation.com | ◘ 動 @nelsonpreserves



Edward Fitz

EFitz@TheAgencyRE.com | 424.230.3757

TheAgency.com | @EdwardFitzLA