

FINCA VIGÍA FOUNDATION, INC.

Preserving Ernest Hemingway's Legacy in Cuba

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The epilogue not chosen from *For Whom the Bell Tolls* ... a series of love letters written from the front during the last months of WWII courting his fourth wife while married to his third ... letters sent and received from more than 300 people including Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joan Miro, and Maxwell Perkins ... Nobel Prize congratulatory telegrams from around the world... letters to his beloved sons ... instructions in Spanish to the cook regarding preparation of favorite dishes and the day of the week he preferred to eat them ... photographs of dinner parties, fishing trips, African safaris, and family celebrations ... 9,000 book personal library.

These documents reflect just a fraction of the treasures that exist at Hemingway's home, Finca Vigía, in Cuba. Some papers are almost 100 years old. The most recent are from 1960.

Background.

Finca Vigía (Lookout Farm), located on the outskirts of Havana, was American Nobel Laureate Ernest Hemingway's home from 1939-1960. It was there that he wrote standing at his typewriter, entertained, married twice, accepted his Nobel Prize for Literature, and pitched endless innings of baseball with the neighborhood children. *Finca Vigía is American cultural patrimony.* It was the only one of his homes where the author put down roots, gathering the objects that he valued. He left in 1960 for medical treatment in the United States; in 1961, he committed suicide in Idaho. Hemingway's home was turned into a museum.

Over the next 50 years, the Finca and its unique collection fell into disrepair. More than 4,500 photographs, original manuscripts and galleys of his stories and novels, his correspondence and his journals, and a personal library of almost nine thousand volumes – many with his writing in the margins -- were in danger of destruction from heat, humidity, pests, mold, and the sheer passage of time. The Cubans cared for the museum admirably, but they did not have the resources to conserve this American treasure.

The Beginning of the Finca Vigía Foundation.

In 2002, Jenny Phillips, the granddaughter of Ernest Hemingway's editor, Maxwell Perkins, became aware of the thousands of irreplaceable documents languishing in the tropical climate. Dr. Phillips and her husband established a US-based non-profit organization in 2004, the Finca Vigía Foundation, whose mission is to preserve Ernest Hemingway's legacy.

Past Success.

The Foundation has successfully created a bi-national project that has:

- Built trust and won support;
- Consulted on the restoration of Hemingway's home and yacht partnering with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Mystic Seaport: the Museum of America and the Sea;
- Conserved more than 10,000 letters, telegrams, and manuscripts, by sending renowned paper conservators from Northeast Document Conservation Center to Havana to train Cuban specialists in conservation techniques;
- Preserved 5 rare scrapbooks created by the author;
- Taught best practices in metadata, photoshop, and other digital imaging techniques;
- Brought digitized copies of the conserved documents to be archived at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston allowing access to US and international scholars;
- Oversaw the architectural design and construction of an on-site Renovation Center with museum-quality archival storage and conservation laboratories to ensure the longevity of the documents and collection.

Future Goals.

With limited funding, and amid increased threats due to severe tropical weather, this American project has flourished and continues to grow. Our plans for the future are bold.

Saving the Cuban home of one of America's most beloved and internationally recognized authors is an exciting and important endeavor.

As with all historic properties, constant maintenance is required. After almost 20 years, Hemingway's home is in distress. A recent feasibility study conducted by US architects and engineers illustrates the poor condition of Finca Vigía due to water seepage and termite damage. Most importantly, the collection within the home is at risk. As a result, the Foundation has developed a preservation plan.

This architectural preservation project will be based on the knowledge and expertise resulting from the Foundation's longstanding work at the Finca, particularly from the more recent successful construction of the Restoration Center. This year we hope to replace four windows that were damaged by devastating hurricanes. We also plan to conduct a Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) study to ensure the longevity of the Hemingway home and the collections within.

We are confident that together with our funders and colleagues, it can be achieved.

About The Finca Vigía Foundation.

The Foundation is a U S 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. The Foundation operates under a general license from the Department of Treasury, with oversight from the State Department. We meet regularly with the Chief of Mission of the United States Embassy in Havana.

Leadership.

The Foundation is governed by a board of trustees. The President is Andrés Gil, and the Vice President is Sandra Spanier. All officers and members are listed on the following page. The board is comprised of professionals from the preservation, diplomatic, corporate, and academic worlds. Board members are not compensated. Our legal team from Jones Day, Washington, DC office, is pro bono. The Foundation employs two staff members. Mary-Jo Adams, Senior Advisor, and Stephanie Bond, Acting Executive Director.

Budget.

The annual budget is \$240,000. We receive thousands of in-kind contributions from many of our consultants. Program expenses are not included.

Awards / Distinctions.

- 2005 The National Trust for Historic Preservation's "11 Most Endangered List"
- 2006 World Monument Fund "List of 100 Most Endangered Sites"
- 2008 Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural de Cuba "Premio de Preservacion" First prize for Architectural Preservation of Ernest Hemingway's home.
- 2010 US ICOMOS International Heritage Award for Excellence, Washington, DC
- 2011 Coloquio Hemingway, Premio de Distinción awarded to Jenny Phillips
- 2012 Congressman James McGovern, Premio de Distinción, Havana, Cuba
- 2014 Finca Vigía Premio de Distinción from the Ministry of Culture, awarded to Executive Director Mary-Jo Adams, Havana, Cuba
- 2016 Finca Vigía Premio de Distinción awarded to William Dupont, Leader of the United States Technical Team, Havana, Cuba
- 2019 Completion of the Restoration Center and Commemoration Ceremony
- 2024 Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation Grant