Preserving Ernest Hemingway's Idaho home and stories in the heart of the American West

THE COMMUNITY LIBRARY
Ernest Hemingway first visited central Idaho and the nascent Sun Valley resort in the fall of 1939. That first visit, he stayed for months, bird-hunting, fishing, canoeing, and writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

He kept returning over the next two decades, forging lifelong friendships and an abiding connection to the Idaho landscape.

In 1959, he and Mary purchased a home along the Big Wood River. He wrote to a friend, “The new place we have in Ketchum is fireproof with dry climate and eventually hope to have all our pictures and manuscripts there.”

It was in this house that he ended his life in 1961, and he is buried nearby in the Ketchum cemetery. Hemingway continued to use the home as a residence for the rest of her life, often holding parties at the home to honor Ernest’s birthday.

Upon her death in 1986, Mary bequeathed the house to The Nature Conservancy to be preserved as a “nature reference library.”

Over the next thirty years, The Nature Conservancy maintained the property and used the house for administrative purposes. The house remained relatively unchanged from the period of the Hemingways’ ownership.

In 2014, The Nature Conservancy and The Community Library in Ketchum formed an alliance to develop a master plan for the preservation of the house and its associated artifacts and stories. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2015.

In 2017, The Nature Conservancy gifted the house to The Community Library, whose mission is deeply aligned with the stewardship of Hemingway’s Idaho legacy.
MISSION

The Community Library’s Hemingway Legacy Initiative aims to honor the life and work of Ernest Hemingway as well as Sun Valley’s regional history through preservation, educational outreach, and a new writer-in-residence program.

GOALS

PRESERVATION

We will grow, preserve, and promote the collection of books, photographs, oral histories, artifacts, and ephemera that relate to Hemingway’s life as it intersects with the American West.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

We will create multimedia educational materials to share artifacts and stories from Hemingway’s home and his time in Idaho with a broad audience, including schoolchildren and the general public.

LITERARY RESIDENCY

We will encourage creative work through a new writer-in-residence program that builds connections between the local community and the larger literary world.

BUDGET

PRESERVATION: $270,000
- house infrastructure preservation
- security upgrades
- historically sensitive improvements
- native landscaping
- archival storage materials

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH: $230,000
- digital preservation work
- multimedia exhibits
- virtual tour development
- research fellowship
- publication of print materials

LITERARY RESIDENCY: $300,000
- renovation of lower level apartment
- stipend for visiting writers and scholars

ENDOWMENT: $700,000
- sustainable fund for annual maintenance
- library staff for preservation and interpretation

Inscription in The Hemingway Reader from Hemingway to Clara Spiegel, one of The Community Library’s founders
WHY IT MATTERS

“It is possible that without Ernest Hemingway I might never have become a writer. That is partly to do with his work, which I’ve loved since I was fourteen. But it is also to do with the fact that he lived and wrote and died in the place where I grew up. The awareness that a man of Hemingway’s stature and talent had looked from his windows over the same landscape in which I played mattered to me. I’m delighted that other writers will soon have the opportunity to live and work in the Hemingway house. More than anything because their presence will, in turn, encourage local kids like me who want above all to make a life of literature.”

Alexander Maksik
author of the novels Shelter in Place, A Marker to Measure Drift, and more

“The house sits perched at the intersection of the two most important forks of the Northwest literary stream—the realm of the writer and the realm of the natural world.”

Jess Walter, writer
author of the novels Beautiful Ruins and The Financial Lives of the Poets, the story collection We Live in Water, and more

“The Community Library has the opportunity to create a vibrant, world-class literary center and writer-in-residence program, introducing others to the landscape and community (that Heminway) so loved. It’s a fortuitous moment, and I hope we will be remembered as the far-sighted generation who grasped this opportunity and in doing so secured a valuable resource, enriching even further the literary and creative life of our community for many years to come.”

Judith Freeman
author of the memoir The Latter Days, the novels Red Water and The Chinchilla Farm, the nonfiction book The Long Embrace, and more

JOIN THE LEGACY

Please help The Community Library to promote a vibrant literary culture and local history through the Hemingway Legacy Initiative.

To make a gift, please contact:

Carter Hedberg, Director of Philanthropy
208.726.7355 x105 or chedberg@comlib.org
“...And now he has come home to the hills. He has come back now to rest well in the country that he loved through all the seasons...”

Ernest Hemingway, in eulogy for Idaho native Gene Van Guilder, October 1939