

HEMINGWAY HOME IN CUBA ON RESCUE LIST

by Maria Puente

Ernest Hemingway's house in Cuba is falling apart, prompting the National Trust for Historic Preservation to mount a rescue campaign that has the U.S. government's OK, despite the 44-year economic embargo against the island nation.

Finca Vigia outside Havana is the house where Hemingway lived from 1939 to 1960 and wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

The trust placed the 119-year-old home on its list of America's Most Endangered Historic Places on Thursday. It's the first time in the list's history that a site outside U.S. borders is included.

Trust officials say their campaign transcends the enmity between the U.S. government and Cuban President Fidel Castro. "This has nothing to do with politics," says Richard Moe, president of the trust, chartered by Congress in 1949 but privately funded. "It's a very important part of our shared heritage with the Cubans."

In a letter signed by 60 writers and historians, including John Irving, Salman Rushdie and Ken Burns, the Finca was compared to the preserved homes of Mark Twain in Hartford, Conn., and William Faulkner in Oxford, Miss. The trust says Finca is a "preservation emergency" with a leaky roof, shifting foundation and a bedroom ceiling near collapse.

Hemingway committed suicide in Ketcham, Idaho, in 1961, months after the failed U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion to topple Castro and the same year the United States instituted the embargo. His widow gave the house to the Cuban people.

The trust and the Hemingway Preservation Foundation have persuaded the State Department and the Treasury Department to allow a team of architects to travel to Cuba this month to work with the Cubans in assessing the house.

Restoration work could cost up to \$3million. There is no guarantee the United States will approve the project or allow Americans to donate to it.

Camila Ruiz of the anti-Castro Cuban American National Foundation understands the desire to save the home. "But I don't believe Cubans will be allowed to enjoy it. Rebuilding it would just allow Castro to make more money off tourists."

Other historic sites on list:

- *Bellevue Biltmore Hotel, Belleair, Fla.
- *Catholic churches of greater Boston, many closing because of financial problems
- *Camp Security, a Revolutionary War prison camp, York County, Pa.
- *Buildings in downtown Detroit
- *Eleutherian College, Madison, Ind.
- *Ennis-Brown House, Los Angeles
- *"Journey Through Hallowed Ground" Corridor, a 175-mile stretch of Civil War sites in Pa., Md. and Va.
- *King Island, Alaska
- *National Landscape Conservation System, 26 million acres in 12 Western states
- *Daniel Webster Farm, Franklin, N.H.