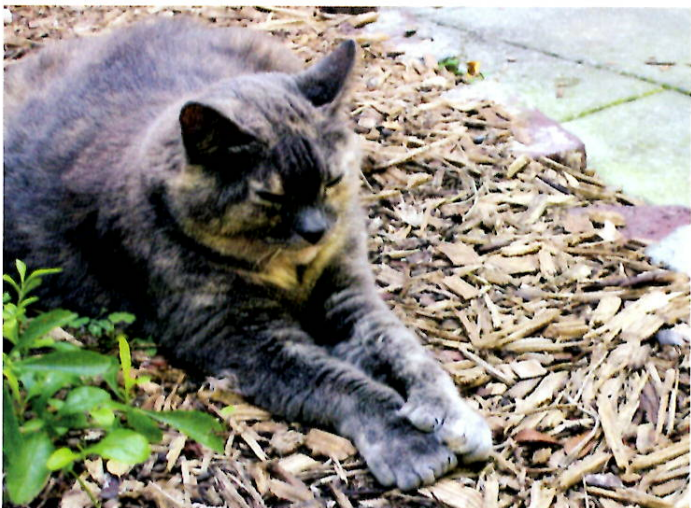


Hemingway House

Text and Photography By Kristin Perez

Ernest Hemingway lived in Key West in the 1930s with his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer. He wrote about 70 percent of his work here in the office above the pool house in what has been considered the most productive time in his life. Pauline, a society girl and sometime fashion reporter, considered ceiling fans outdated and had all of them removed from the house when they moved in. Then had every room affixed with a chandelier from her collection of antiques, which also included an international tile collection. Ernest collected rare books and wine, as this house had an unusual feature for Florida, a basement (which was then converted into a wine cellar.) The house stands on top of limestone that was then excavated to create the basement, this being done in the 1800s was surely a feat. But it is also a contributing factor to its never being flooded and having survived the many hurricanes that visit the subtropics. They say Hemingway either took the wine with him when he left in 1940 (divorcing Pauline and moving to Cuba) or had a big party when Pauline was away and drank it all with his fellow revelers.



The urinal in the back yard is another great story. It seems the owner of Captain Tony's (later named Sloppy Joe's) had an unexpected raise in his rent. So one night he decided to move down the street (to where the current Sloppy Joe's resides) and employed his loyal band of customers to help him. Do you know how to move a bar in one night? Pay them in drinks! Well, it seems

Hemingway found one of the urinals that night and decided he wanted it. He said to Tony, "I put enough of my money down this drain, I might as well keep it." Thinking it would be a great

Top: Southern view from the top floor with the Key West Lighthouse in the background **Above:** Urinal transformed into a decorative fountain. **Left:** One of the beloved six-toed cats. The scientific name is polydactyl, as the extra toe is really the result of inbreeding.



Top: A view of the house from the grounds. *Right:* An art deco glass chandelier from Pauline's antique collection. *Below:* The infamous pool.

basin for his cats to drink from, he lugged it home at the end of the night where it landed in the center of the yard near the pool. Pauline then fashioned it with an olive oil jar (which was transformed into a fountain) with the urinal—now decorated with tiles from her collection—as the waiting bath. They say that the six-toed cats (of which there are rumored to be 50 to 60 at one time, as in Hemingway's day) don't drink from it at all, but rather from the fountain, suggesting that perhaps they are aware of its original use.

But the best story of the house involves the pool. A gift from Pauline to Ernest upon his return from Spain covering the war during the 1930s. Estimated to have cost \$20,000 to install, the pool—the first in the Florida Keys, originally salt water—it was not a sight for Ernest's soar eyes. Enraged at the cost and extravagance of a 10-foot pool, he looked at Pauline, took a penny from his pocket and flung it at her.

"You've spent all my money, you might as well have my last red cent too," said Hemingway.

Pauline, responding in kind, took the penny and encased it in cement at the shallow end of the pool. Afterwards, she was known to have said, "Of all Hemingway's wives, I can say that I took him for his last cent...and I can prove it."

