

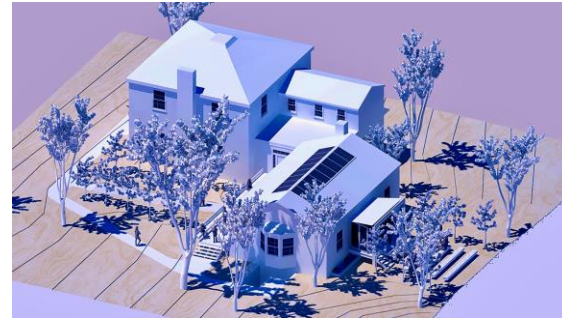


### Timeline

The Moorings was built in 1850 for Francis Preston Blair's son, James Blair (1819-53), and his wife



Abolitionist and two men escaping slavery attacked and arrested in 1850 in front of The Moorings



Violet Blair Janin inherits The Moorings in 1914, bequeaths it in 1933



## JESUP BLAIR HOUSE

Historical Jewel in the Heart of Silver Spring



"The Moorings" c.1870; now called Jesup Blair House



House serves as Silver Spring public library from 1934 to 1957; large wing is added in 1942



State of Maryland turns the property over to Montgomery County in 1939



House becomes Silver Spring Draft Board No. 53; 1969 raid



House is used as Chelsea School from 1978 to summer 1989



House is renovated in 1990 as transitional housing for single-parent families; closed for repairs in 2008



Violet Blair Janin designated the Jesup Blair property as a community park in perpetuity in her 1933 will.

Photos by Carpe Diem Arts

The Vision, rendered by architects Stanley Hallet and Richard Loosle-Ortega of Kube Architecture. 3-D renderings by Matthias Arauco-Shapiro.

JesupBlairHouse.org



## Jesup Blair House

What we know today as Jesup Blair House was built by Francis Preston Blair 170 years ago. From a Virginia family transplanted to Kentucky, Blair moved to the DC area as a newspaper publisher and influential advisor to President Andrew Jackson.

Blair purchased Blair House across from the White House in 1836, but also wanted a country home where his family could have fresh air and escape from the swampy city.

Francis Blair had a country mansion built in 1842 in the place he called “Silver Spring,” inspired by a small, mica-speckled spring. His son James’ house was built in 1850 and was named “The Moorings” (later known as the Jesup Blair House). His elder son Montgomery’s summer mansion, called “Falkland,” was built in 1854.

James, a naval officer, died in his prime and never lived in the house, though his wife Mary Serena Jesup Blair and children did. James and Mary’s eldest daughter Violet, the last Blair to own the property, upon her death at age 84 donated it and the land as a public park in perpetuity in honor of her younger brother Jesup who died in 1902.

The house today sits on 14.5 acres of park along Georgia Avenue next to Montgomery College. The park features picnic areas, walking paths, a playground, soccer field, two lighted basketball courts, two lighted tennis courts, and an open amphitheater. Among the park’s 42 tree species are 100 historic forest trees, some more than 200 years old.

That is the story of the Jesup Blair House in a nutshell, but only the tip of the iceberg in terms of its astonishing and inspiring historical significance. Read on to find out more.

## Historical Significance

When you walk into the historic Jesup Blair House and Park, *you are connecting to:*

**The founding of Silver Spring** by Francis P. Blair, who advised twelve U.S. presidents from Andrew Jackson to Ulysses Grant.

The first stop on “**Underground Railroad: Maryland’s Network to Freedom,**” where abolitionist William Chaplin was arrested on August 8, 1850 for carrying in his carriage two men attempting to escape from slavery in Georgia: Garland White and Allen. White later escaped and served as chaplain for the 28th regiment, U.S. Colored Troops in the Civil War.

**Montgomery Blair**, who visited family at the Moorings and served in **President Abraham Lincoln’s cabinet** as postmaster general during the Civil War. He established free delivery of mail in cities, founded the Universal Postal Union, and other postal innovations such as standardizing international postal rates and services, money orders, and railway postal cars. He was instrumental in keeping Maryland in the Union, and he represented Dred Scott in the infamous U.S. Supreme Court case.

The first long-term home of the **Silver Spring Library** (after starting in 1931 in East Silver Spring Elementary School), which occupied this building from 1934 to 1957.

**Architect Howard W. Cutler** who remodeled Jesup Blair House to be Silver Spring’s public library in 1934 and also designed a dozen Montgomery County schools, including BCC and SSIMS. His daughter Katherine Cutler Ficken became in 1936 the first licensed female architect in Maryland, and together they designed the 1942 wing of the Jesup Blair House.



Remodeled Jesup Blair House, 900 Jesup Blair Drive. The photo is from the 1940s.

**Historic properties.** The Jesup Blair House and Park are on Montgomery County’s Master Plan for Historic Preservation and are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the Maryland Historical Trust in 2002. Both the house and park have **Civil War connections.**

**The Vietnam War.** The House served as the Silver Spring Draft Board No. 53 and was raided by anti-war protesters in May 1969.

The Jesup Blair House is the **only remaining Blair family home in Silver Spring.** Montgomery Blair’s “Falkland” and Francis Blair’s “Silver Spring” were destroyed.

**Violet Blair Janin** (1848-1933) was ahead of her time as a visionary and entrepreneur, paving the way for the **women’s rights movement.**

**Education.** From 1978-1989, the Chelsea School was in the Jesup Blair House---the first high school to specifically serve the needs of teens with learning differences in the DC metropolitan area.

**Transitional housing.** From 1990-2008, the Housing Opportunities Commission provided transitional housing for single mothers at the Jesup Blair House.

## The Vision: Bringing the House Back to Life

We envision the Jesup Blair House and grounds becoming a vibrant community hub for culturally diverse visual, literary, and performing arts. Carpe Diem Arts, the Silver Spring Historical Society, and several other Silver Spring and Takoma Park-based nonprofits propose to share office space upstairs, and to partner with numerous other arts presenters and community groups in providing multicultural and intergenerational programs. Included would be daytime offerings for preschoolers, seniors, and everyone in between, along with special evening and weekend events and major outdoor festivals on the lawn in spring, summer, and fall.



## Join Us!

We invite you to join us as we work to honor this landmark that connects us to history and to respect Violet’s magnanimous gift to Montgomery County by making it once again hum with activity in celebration of our diverse community. Please contact us if you are interested in being involved in the restoration of the Jesup Blair House as a volunteer, a donor, or a programming partner and help us bring this vision to fruition.

For more information, please visit:  
**JesupBlairHouse.org**

**CARPE DIEM ARTS!**  
Bringing the Arts to Life

**SILVER SPRING**  
Historical Society