

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: District of Columbia
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Blair House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Blair House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1651 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW			
CITY OR TOWN: Washington		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
STATE: D.C.	CODE:	COUNTY:	CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Official Guest Residence

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: U.S. Department of State, c/o Chief of Protocol	STATE: D.C.
STREET AND NUMBER: 2201 C Street, NW	
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	
CODE:	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds		COUNTY:
STREET AND NUMBER: 6th and D Streets, NW		
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D.C.	
CODE:		

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey	ENTRY NUMBER
DATE OF SURVEY: 1953; 1961 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Division of Prints and Photographs	
STREET AND NUMBER: Library of Congress (Annex)	
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	
STATE: D.C.	

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

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7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Blair house was built by Dr. Joseph Lovell between 1824 and 1827 on land purchased by Stephen Decatur in 1818. After the death of Dr. Lovell in 1836 the house was sold to Francis Preston Blair and remained in Blair ownership for over 100 years until 1942 when it was purchased by the Federal government and used as a guesthouse for visiting dignitaries.

The original house was a square two-story brick building with a basement. It had a brick stable and carriage house adjoining an alley and a cultivated fruit and flower garden.

By about 1860 a two-story bay had been added on the east end of the house and the roof raised two times to provide for the upper two stories. The present yellow stucco finish was applied to the formerly exposed brick work at about the time of the Civil War. The doorway and portico appear to be restorations.

Within the house the architecture is obscured by the fixture and appointments. Alterations in its original appearance are primarily superficial for the original doors, hardware, most of the trim, and the plan have been little changed. A good many of the internal details have been modified from time to time, but the changes made when the house became government property were relatively slight.

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1826-present

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Blair House is significant for the great number of nationally prominent dignitaries who resided and were received there. A few residents, such as Francis Preston Blair, Sr. and George Bancroft were individuals of exceptional importance. The house through all its changes remained an important residence, a prominent center of social gatherings, the meeting place of great men and the setting for great events for a century-and-a-half down to the present day.

Blair House was the residence of Francis Preston Blair, Sr., member of Andrew Jackson's "Kitchen Cabinet" and co-publisher of the Globe, the influential mouthpiece of the administration. George Bancroft, historian and Secretary of the Navy, resided here when he laid the foundation for the U.S. Naval Academy. Bancroft's successor John Y. Mason followed Bancroft as tenant and still later, the first Secretary of the Interior, Thomas Ewing, resided there. The wedding of William Tecumseh Sherman and Ewing's daughter Ellen took place here in 1850. Senator Thomas Corwin succeeded Ewing as tenant and John J. Crittenden, Attorney General, resided with the Corwins.

The Blairs returned to the house in the 1850's and came to be known by some as one of the most influential families in the country. Their house was a center of political discussion for men such as John C. Calhoun, John C. Breckinridge, Jefferson Davis, Webster and Clay. The Blairs were backers of the Free Soil Party who shifted behind Fremont and the Republicans in 1856. Montgomery Blair became Postmaster General and adviser to Lincoln. During the Civil War a number of vital decisions were made at conferences at Blair House.

Following the Civil War, the Blairs remained prominent but their political influence waned as they became estranged from radical Republican circles and drifted back into the Democratic party. The national importance of the house re-emerged, however, when in 1942 it became the guesthouse of foreign dignitaries and temporary presidential quarters. In the last respect it was the scene of the attempted assassination of President Truman on November 1, 1950.

(continued)

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

United States Department of State, Blair House: Past and Present, 1945.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 53' 56"	77° 02' 21"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than one acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE: **June 18, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: _____

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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