



Celebrate  
Greensboro

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# Blandwood

BY LESLIE DUNNE SADLER

## A touchstone for change



Photos (clockwise from above): the west parlor with many of the original furnishings, a view of the Italianate addition, commissioned in 1844 by Governor John Motley Morehead, the original farmhouse and kids experience hands-on history.

If a house could speak, imagine what we could learn. Thanks to Preservation Greensboro and the John Motley Morehead Commission (formerly the Greensboro Preservation Society) the house called Blandwood does indeed speak.

A visitor can readily deduce part of the story. One sees a humble farmhouse attached to a stately Italianate home. Part of the story, one might surmise, farming to fortune? A curious visitor need only enter

the house, a National Historic Landmark, to learn more. Much more. There are knowledgeable docents on hand six days a week to give a guided tour. And there's a gift shop filled with period reproductions and history books.

Blandwood, built in 1795, was expanded in 1822 by its second owner. With its third proprietor, John Motley Morehead, who purchased the home in 1827, Blandwood became a symbol of progress and vision. Mr. Morehead, who would serve two terms as governor from 1841–1845 is known as the “father of modern North Carolina.” And his beloved Blandwood led the way. In a telling

act, Governor Morehead hired a “starchitect,” a star architect, to the wealthy and powerful, Alexander Jackson Davis of New York City, to build an Italianate addition — one of the earliest examples in America. In building what stands today as one of the best examples



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLANDWOOD



of Italianate architecture, Governor Morehead also put a symbolic stake in the ground, establishing Greensboro and Blandwood as symbols of the “new South” — a South embodying progress, vision, and worldliness. When people think about life in the antebellum South, images of Tara perhaps come to mind. With Governor Morehead’s selection of A.J. Davis he, in effect, demonstrated that Greensboro and the new South were as important as Philadelphia or New York. Benjamin Briggs, executive director of Preservation Greensboro says “This building began an international dialogue of architecture and stands as the beginning of modern North Carolina.”

In fact the site of Blandwood, once a rural parcel in Guilford County, is now surrounded by a thriving city with a diverse cultural and professional presence. Governor Morehead was a pioneer for

innovation and progress in North Carolina, including state-of-the-art water transportation, rail expansion, and free education for children. His Blandwood stands as a testament to his

appetite for progress. Blandwood today offers both an unsurpassed look into an authentic antebellum lifestyle, complete with many original furnishings, and also a chance to enjoy the property on 21st-century terms. From outdoor concerts to lectures and special Christmas tours, Blandwood invites the historian and the modernist alike. After all, in 1844, when A.J. Davis was commissioned, it was a very modern move.



Governor John Motley Morehead



Blandwood is open for tours Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. and Sunday, 2–5 p.m. For information on membership and support, visit [blandwood.org](http://blandwood.org) or call 336.272.5003.