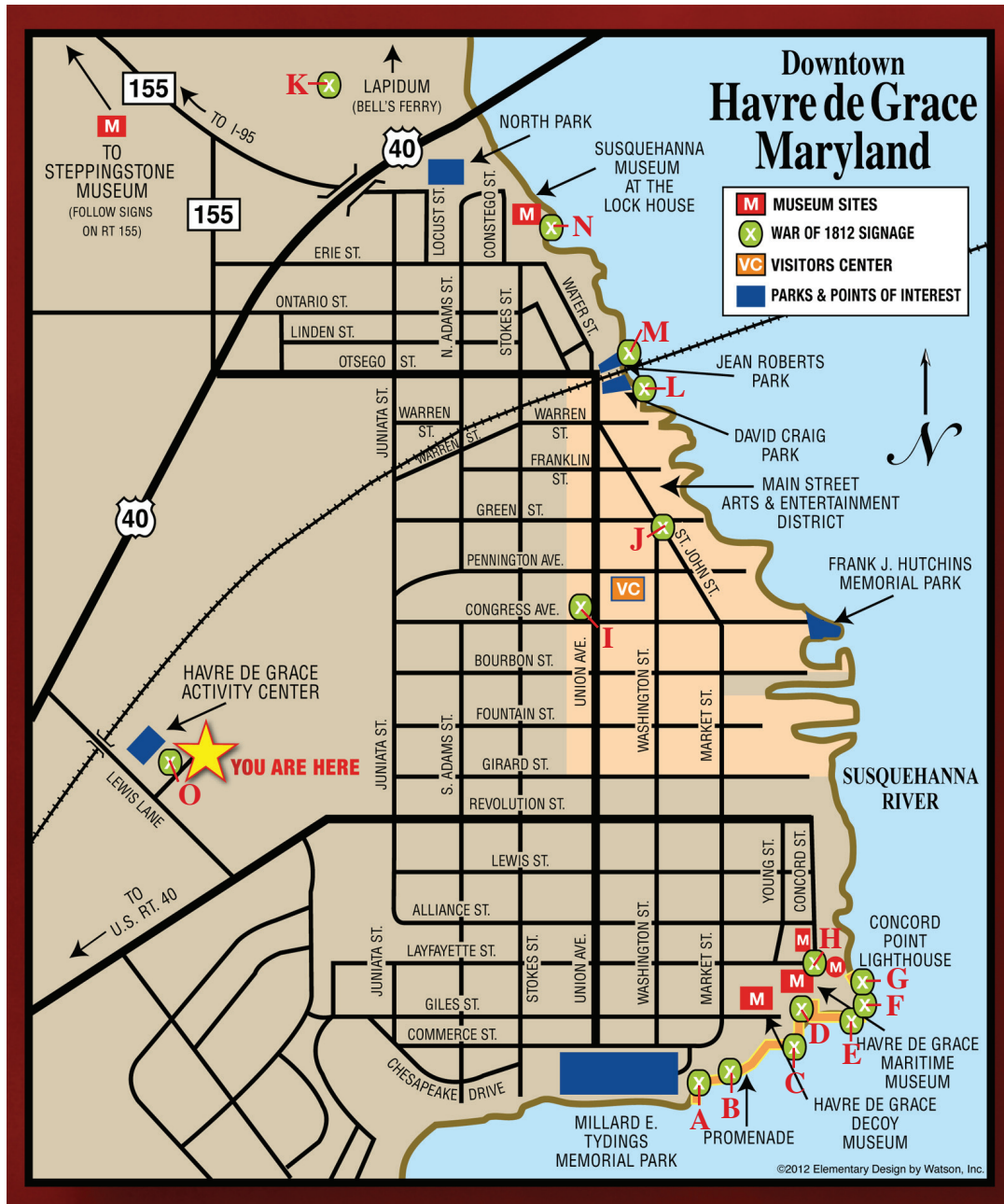


# Wayside Signage Around Havre de Grace



## Wayside Signage

Titles and Locations:

- A - Home Base (promenade)
- B - State of Readiness (promenade)
- C - Invasion at Dawn (promenade)
- D - Attack at Frenchtown (promenade)
- E - Screaming Rockets (promenade)
- F - Principio Destroyed (promenade)
- G - Brave Defense (promenade at Lighthouse)
- H - Hero's Reward (Keeper's Dwelling)
- I - No Respect (St. John's Church)
- J - Out of the Flames (Elizabeth Rodgers House)
- K - River Crossing (Lapidum)
- L - Under Attack (David Craig Park)
- M - Susquehanna Lower Ferry (David Craig Park)
- N - Nineteenth Century Travel (Lock House)
- O - Home Refuge (Activity Center at Lewis Lane)

# Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Home Base

Five days before the 1813 attack on Havre de Grace, British ships anchored at Spesutia Island, just south of here. Island residents were “greatly terrified” upon their arrival, but were assured they would not be harmed. The Royal Navy used the anchorage off the island as their “home base,” returning after each of their attacks in the Upper Bay.

*“On the 28th of April, a brig and two or three schooners came to anchor in the bay, a little below Havre de Grace... On the next morning another brig and schooners joined those which came up the day before.”*

- Jared Sparks, *North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal* 14, 1817

From Havre de Grace, citizens could see the ships anchored at Spesutia Island prior to the War of 1812 attack. This view is from the hill behind where you stand, with a ghost image of today's modern promenade that lines the shore.



Spesutia Island was owned in 1813 by William Smith, who was directly related to Major General Samuel Smith, commander of the defense of Baltimore in 1814. Today the land is part of Aberdeen Proving Ground.



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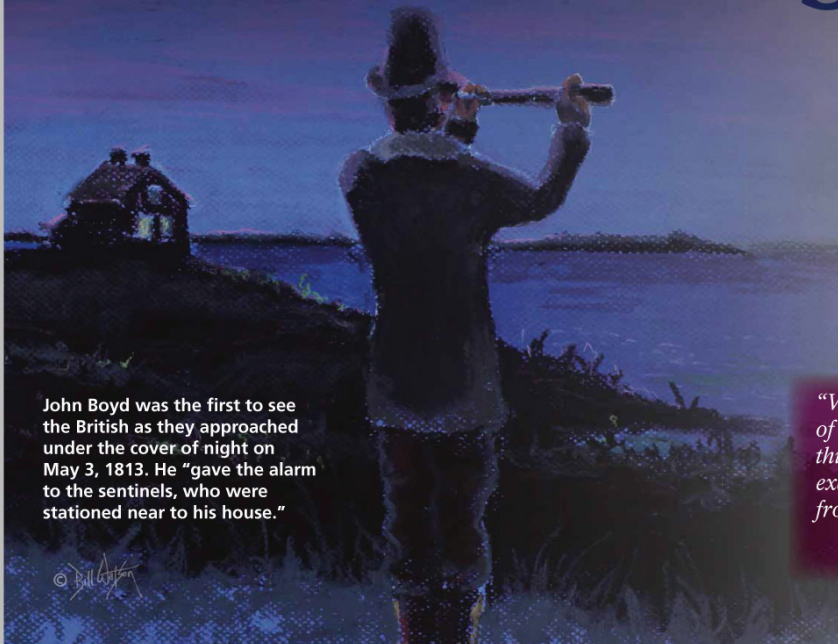


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A - on the promenade near Tydings Point



# State of Readiness



John Boyd was the first to see the British as they approached under the cover of night on May 3, 1813. He "gave the alarm to the sentinels, who were stationed near to his house."

During the War of 1812, Havre de Grace was a fishing village, but also played host to many travelers. The Post Road, the main route of land travel in the day, came through town, and travelers used the local ferry at the north end of town to cross the Susquehanna River.

When the British docked at Spesutia Island, Havre de Grace residents went on high alert, but lost their urgency after a few days of safety.

*"Vigilance continued till within three or four days of the time when they were actually attacked. At this time, the inhabitants, wearied with continual excitement and laborious exercise, began to relax from their exertions..."*

- Jared Sparks,  
North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal 14, 1817



Spesutia Island is approximately four miles south of Havre de Grace.



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B - on the promenade near Tydings Point



# Invasion at Dawn



British Rear Admiral George Cockburn led the Upper Bay campaign of the War of 1812.

Image courtesy National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

The British fleet approached Havre de Grace at dawn on the morning of May 3, 1813 in small launches. Rear Admiral Cockburn favored attacking towns at first light. Havre de Grace residents awoke to the terrifying sounds of bombs exploding and rockets hissing.

*"...just at the dawn of day, he discovered four boats ... [About sixteen boats] then appeared... and made their landing at the Point, the first four boats continuing up the river, and kept up an increasing fire with large cannon, shells, rockets, and musketry."*

- Reverend James Jones Wilmer,  
*Narrative Respecting the Conduct of the British, 1813*



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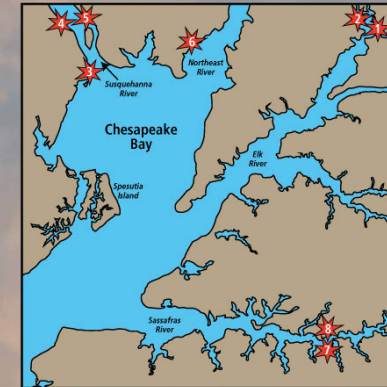
C - on the promenade



# Attack at Frenchtown

Frenchtown, on the Elk River, was struck on the morning of April 29, 1813. Rear Admiral Cockburn attempted a surprise attack and was greeted with a barrage from the town's battery. The guns had little effect and the British landed and burned the government supply houses.

The citizens of nearby Elkton had prepared by building defensive batteries and stretching a chain across the Elk River. After attempting an attack on the same day, British were not able to get close enough and returned to their base near Spesutia Island.



## War of 1812 British Attacks: Upper Bay

- 1 Frenchtown: April 29, 1813
- 2 Elkton: defended April 29, 1813
- 3 Havre de Grace: May 3, 1813
- 4 Bell's Ferry: May 3, 1813
- 5 Port Deposit: defended May 3, 1813
- 6 Principio Iron Foundry: May 3, 1813
- 7 Georgetown: May 6, 1813
- 8 Fredericktown: May 6, 1813

This 1806 watercolor by Benjamin Henry Latrobe depicts Frenchtown, looking up the Elk River from a wharf where Americans established a gun battery in 1813.

Image courtesy  
Maryland Historical Society.



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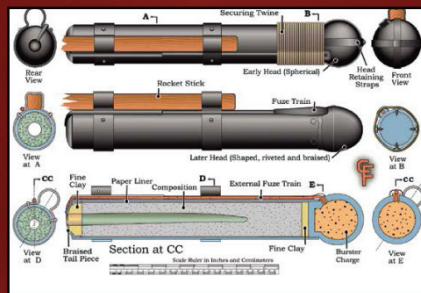
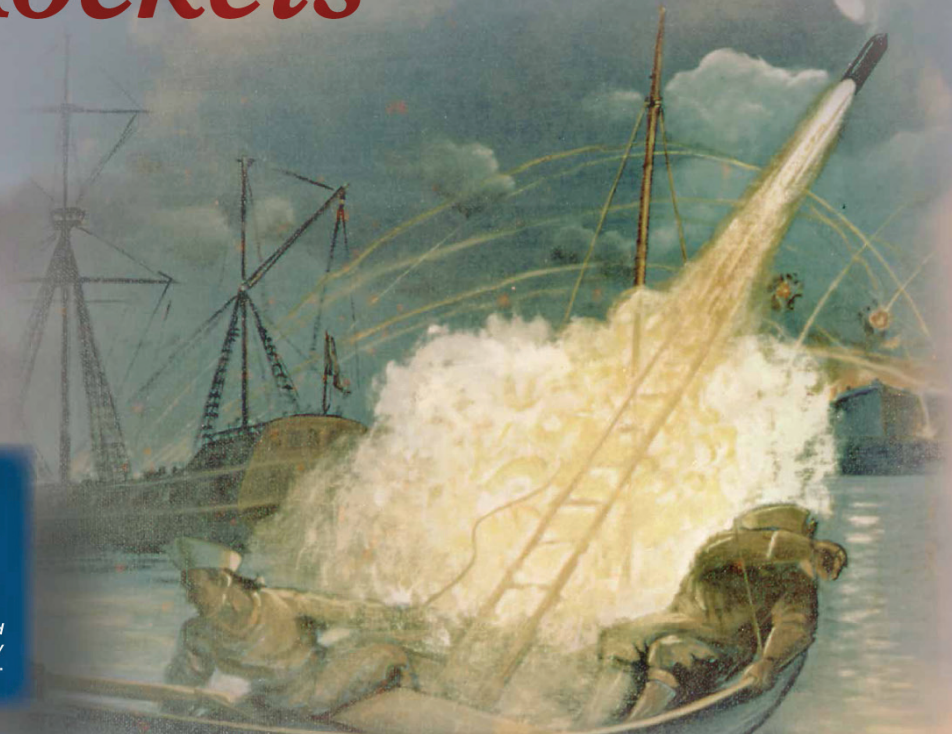
D - on the promenade



# Screaming Rockets

On the morning of May 3, 1813, the British came ashore at several points and set to work plundering and burning the town. They used Congreve rockets, which made horrible whizzing and popping sounds, to create chaos and terror.

The British confiscated belongings, destroying anything they did not take, and set fire to the buildings in town. Although initial reports said that every building in Havre de Grace was burned except one, later reports stated that 20 to 40 of the approximate 60 dwellings were lost.



Congreve 12-pound Shell Rocket, circa 1808. Congreve rockets were used by the British to create chaos and terror as they raided Havre de Grace during the War of 1812.

Image © Brown University Library.

*“The air seemed alive with Congreve rockets, squirming and hissing about like so many fiery serpents”*

-Daniel Mallory, *Short Stories and Reminiscences of the Last Fifty Years*, 1842.

This Charles Hubbell painting called *The Rockets' Red Glare* depicts the Congreve rockets the British used in their attack on Havre de Grace.

Image courtesy of NASA.



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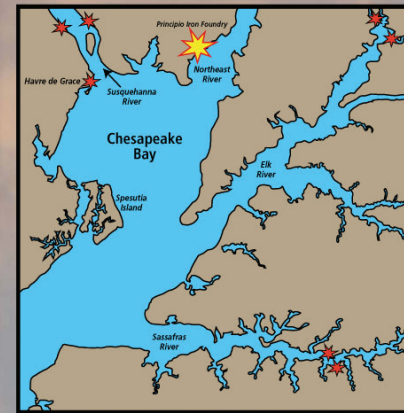
E - on the promenade



# Principio Destroyed

A target of the British during the War of 1812, Principio Iron Foundry was destroyed on May 3, 1813. The foundry, located on the Northeast River, was owned by Samuel Hughes and had a contract with the U.S. Navy.

In this raid, Hughes' losses included five 24-pound cannon in a battery meant to protect the ironworks and twenty-eight 32-pounders ready to be shipped. He never financially recovered.



★ Other Upper Bay attack sites of the War of 1812 British campaign

The same day the British invaded Havre de Grace, they destroyed Principio Iron Foundry.

© Gerry Embleton,  
Courtesy of the National Park Service



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F - on the promenade



# Brave Defense

*The town's defenders—about 20 mostly militia exempts—failed to prevent some 400 British troops from coming ashore here May 3, 1813.*

A gun battery, probably located north of where the lighthouse now stands, was bravely manned by John O'Neill alone for some time. O'Neill was later caught with two muskets and imprisoned on a British ship for several days.

*"I observed Guns fired and American Colours hoisted at a Battery lately erected at Havre-de-Grace...[we] opened [fire] on the Place...which was smartly returned from the Battery for a short time..."*

— British Rear Admiral George Cockburn, May 3, 1813



## Family Trait

O'Neill's 15-year-old daughter, Matilda, reportedly helped negotiate her father's release. Tradition holds that British Admiral Cockburn was so impressed with the young girl's bravery he gave her a tortoise-shell box.

IMAGE / © NEED CREDIT

IMAGE / © NEED CREDIT



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G - on the promenade near the Lighthouse



# Hero's Reward

*"...an English officer on horseback followed by the marines, rode up and took me with two muskets in my hand."*

– John O'Neill, Baltimore Niles' Weekly Register, May 15, 1813

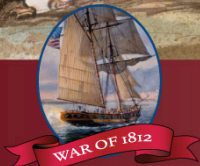
*John O'Neill led a futile defense when British raiders attacked Havre de Grace May 3, 1813. As other defenders fled, O'Neill briefly manned a cannon alone.*

His courage earned O'Neill a presidential appointment as first keeper of Concord Point Lighthouse. He lived here from 1827 until his death in 1838.



## Tributes

O'Neill's bravery was rare among inexperienced militia. He was honored in 1813 with a sword inscribed "to the Gallant O'Neill for his valor at Havre de Grace." A century later, the town dedicated the John O'Neill Cannon Memorial to this local hero.



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H - at the Lighthouse Keeper's Dwelling



*“One would suppose...they would have shown some respect to this building as...‘The English Church’... But it seems all sense of shame was lost...Plunder and devastation was the order of the day...”*

– Rev. James Jones Wilmer, 1813

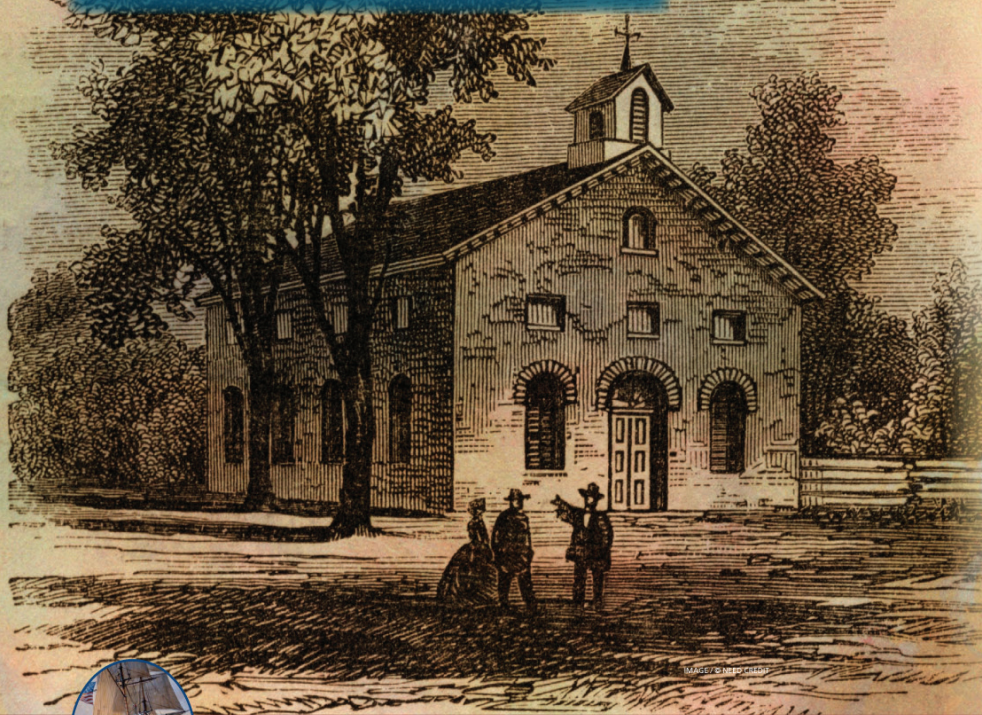
## No Respect

*St. John’s Episcopal Church survived the British attack on Havre de Grace, May 3, 1813. The enemy spared the 1809 structure but damaged the interior. According to a newspaper account: “Finding nothing to steal [the raiders] ‘magnanimously’ attacked the window[s] with brick bats and stones, and demolished them.”*



### Barbarians

First-person accounts of the devastation at Havre de Grace fueled newspaper reports of “wanton barbarity among civilized people.” British Rear Admiral George Cockburn, portrayed as a villainous “violator of all laws, human [and] divine,” struck terror as he made an example of Havre de Grace for other towns.



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I - at St. John’s Church (100 North Union Avenue)

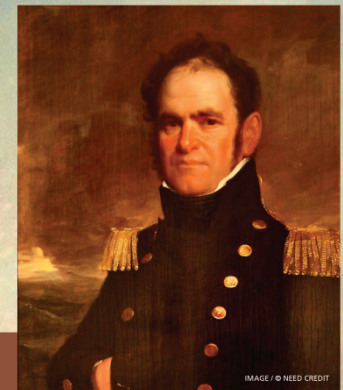


# Out of the Flames

*Rodgers House miraculously survived the 1813 burning attack on Havre de Grace, May 3, 1813. The enemy spared the 1809 structure but damaged the interior. According to a newspaper account: "Finding nothing to steal [the raiders] 'magnanimously' attacked the window[s] with brick bats and stones, and demolished them."*

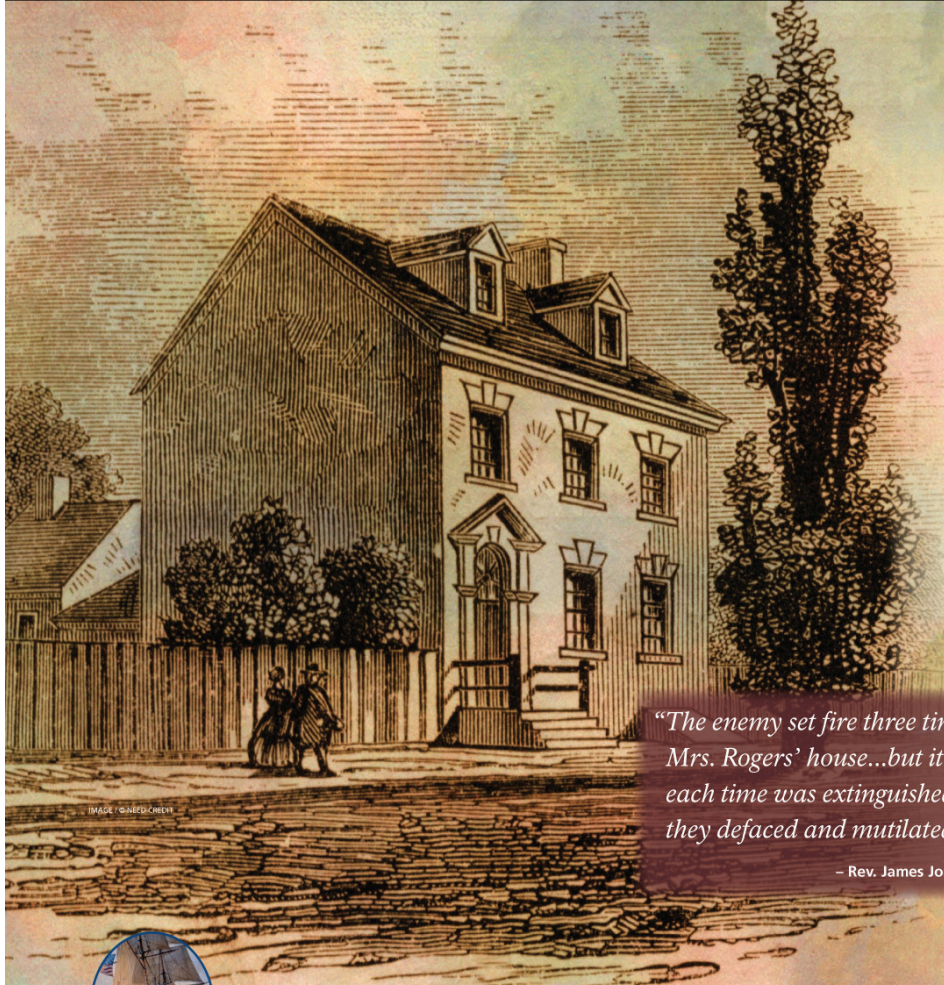
*"The enemy set fire three times to Mrs. Rogers' house...but it fortunately each time was extinguished, though they defaced and mutilated much..."*

— Rev. James Jones Wilmer, 1813



## Naval Dynasty

Commodore John Rodgers is credited with firing the first shot of the war, June 23, 1812. His son, John Rodgers, born at the family home Sion Hill, commanded ironclads in the Civil War. In all, the Rodgers family includes four generations of naval officers.



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J - at Elizabeth Rodgers House (226 N. Washington St.)



A Ferry Scene on the Susquehanna at Wright's Ferry, near Havre de Grace, ca. 1811 by Pavel Petrovich Svinin  
IMAGE © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

*"The Boats which I sent up the Susquehanna returned after destroying five vessels in it and a large Store of Flour, when every thing being completed to my utmost wishes, the whole division re-embarked and returned to the Ships..."*

— British Rear Adm. George Cockburn to Adm. John B. Warren, May 3, 1813

## River Crossing

*Little evidence remains of what was once the northernmost navigable deep-water port on the Susquehanna River. The "Upper Ferry" crossed between here and Port Deposit.*

When the British attacked May 3, 1813, they helped themselves to a barrel of whiskey from John Stump's warehouse, then torched the building with its 500 barrels of flour.



### Day of Terror

In one day, British raiders burned two-thirds of the buildings in Havre de Grace, raided a warehouse here, and destroyed the Principio Iron Works. Port Deposit—its battery visible from the water—was spared.



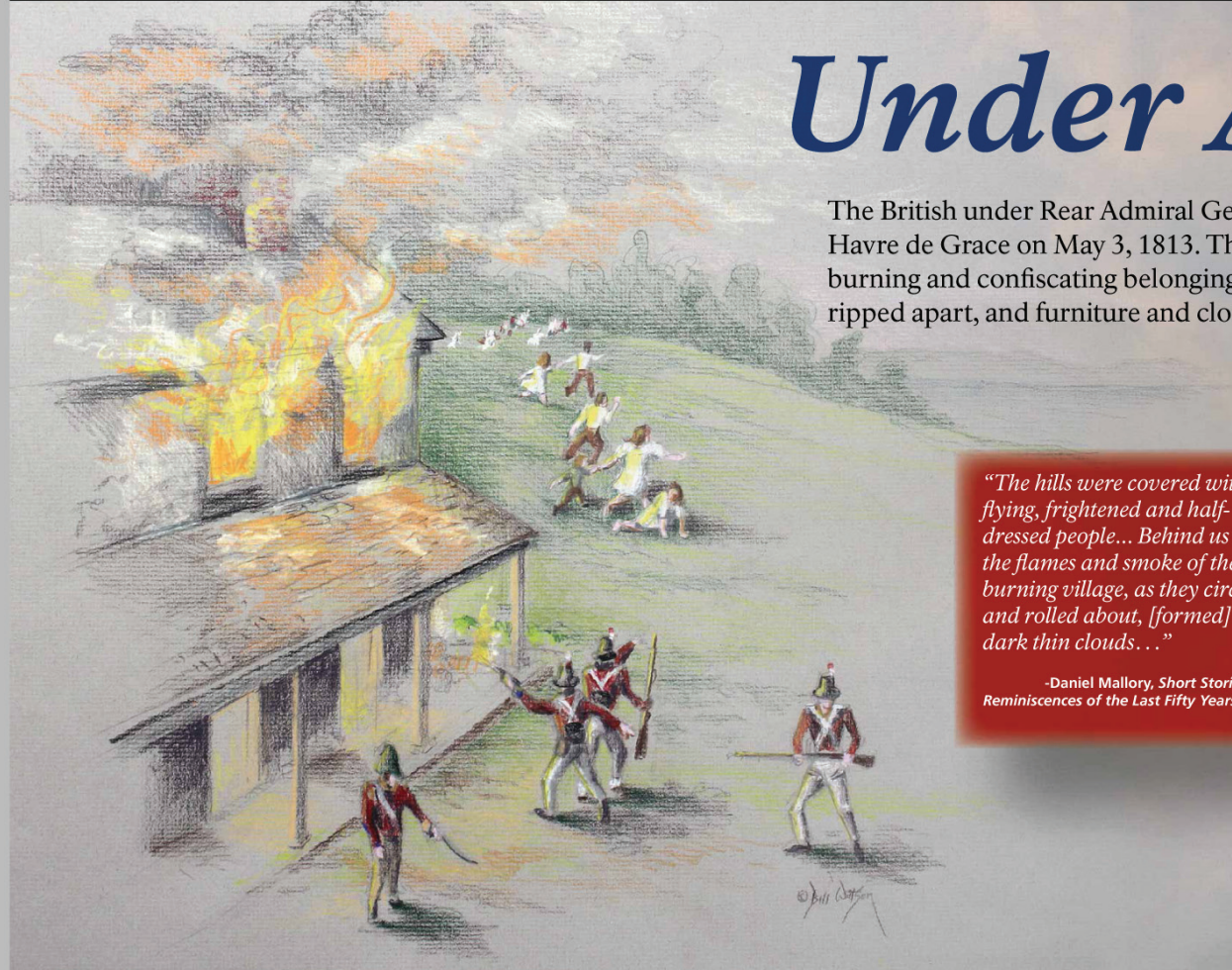
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K - at the Lapidum dock



# Under Attack

The British under Rear Admiral George Cockburn attacked Havre de Grace on May 3, 1813. They went from house to house, burning and confiscating belongings along the way. Beds were ripped apart, and furniture and clothing were ruined.



*"The hills were covered with flying, frightened and half-dressed people... Behind us the flames and smoke of the burning village, as they circled and rolled about, [formed] dark thin clouds..."*

-Daniel Mallory, *Short Stories and Reminiscences of the Last Fifty Years*, 1842



This famous image of the British plundering and burning Havre de Grace during the War of 1812 endures and shows first-hand the destruction the British caused. The building on fire to the left is Mrs. Sears' tavern. Rear Admiral Cockburn is in the middle with the sword.

*Admiral Cockburn Burning and Plundering Havre de Grace*, William Charles, ca. 1813.  
Image courtesy Maryland Historical Society.



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L - at David Craig Park

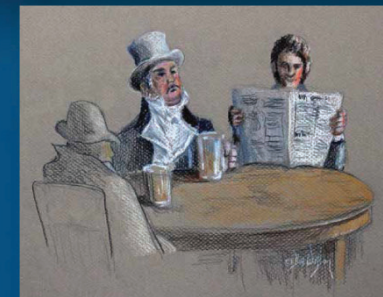
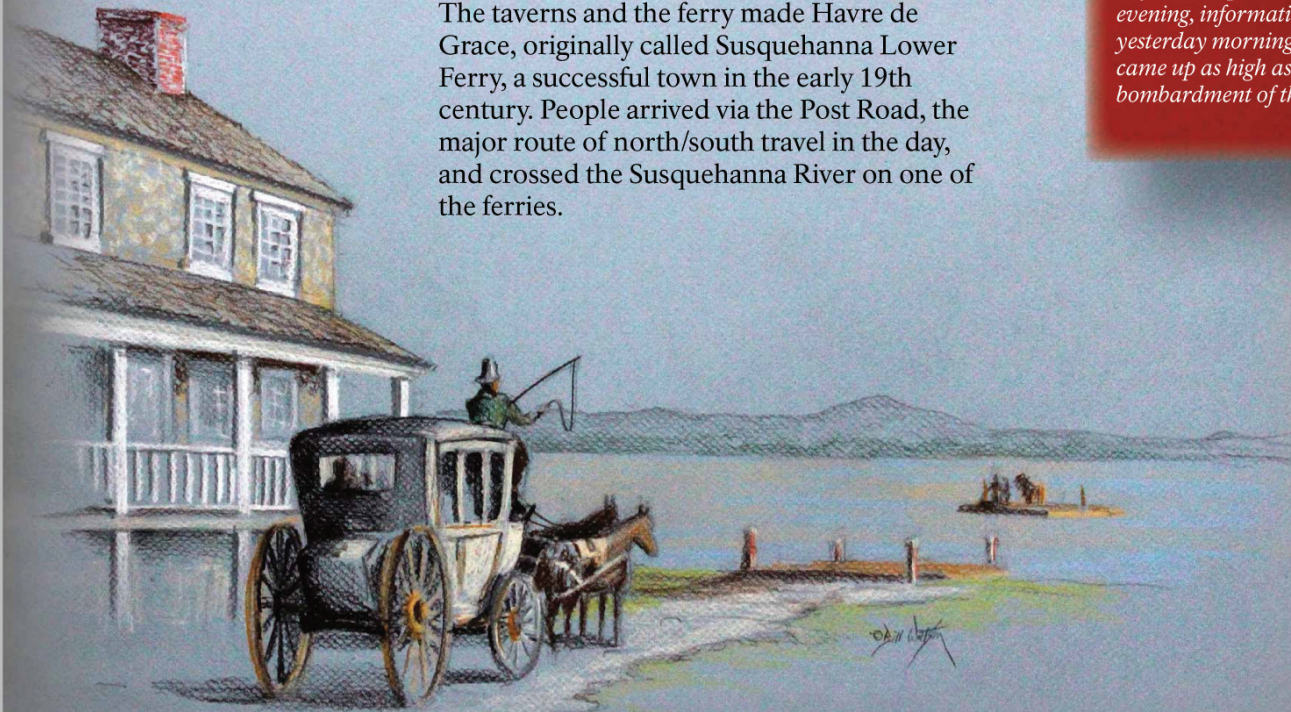


# Susquehanna Lower Ferry

The taverns and the ferry made Havre de Grace, originally called Susquehanna Lower Ferry, a successful town in the early 19th century. People arrived via the Post Road, the major route of north/south travel in the day, and crossed the Susquehanna River on one of the ferries.

*"By several passengers in the stage, which arrived last evening, information is received that about the dawn of day yesterday morning, a considerable number of the enemy came up as high as Havre-de-Grace and commenced the bombardment of that place with shot, shells, and rockets."*

- Baltimore Patriot, May 4, 1813



Taverns provided food, drink, and lodging for travelers as they waited for river conditions to allow passage. Mrs. Sears' Tavern stood near this location and Mr. Mansfield's Tavern was just north. News traveled into town with the passengers on the Post Road, and locals would frequent the taverns to hear the latest happenings in Baltimore and Philadelphia.



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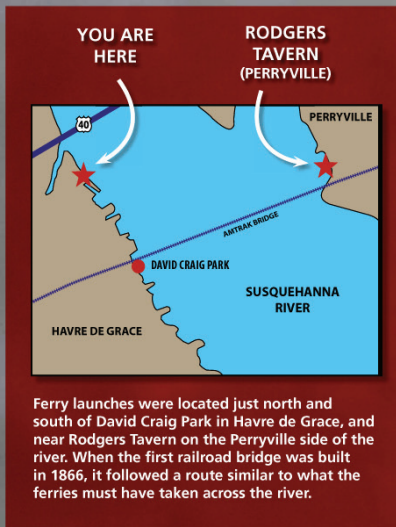
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M - at David Craig Park



# Nineteenth Century Travel

Travelers on the Post Road, the main route of north/south travel, passed through Havre de Grace and crossed the Susquehanna River on a ferry to Perryville. The ferry was chartered in 1695 and remained in use until the first railroad bridge was built in 1866. Because of the ferries' importance to commerce, the British burned them during their 1813 attack on Havre de Grace.



Ferry launches were located just north and south of David Craig Park in Havre de Grace, and near Rodgers Tavern on the Perryville side of the river. When the first railroad bridge was built in 1866, it followed a route similar to what the ferries must have taken across the river.

*"[The British] took, plundered, and burnt the small vessels passing from one shore of the bay to the other, belonging to individuals, and loaded entirely with private property. This was their uniform practice."*

- Jared Sparks,  
*Conflagration of Havre de Grace, 1817*



A Ferry Scene on the Susquehanna at Wright's Ferry near Havre de Grace, ca. 1811 by Pavel Petrovich Svinin. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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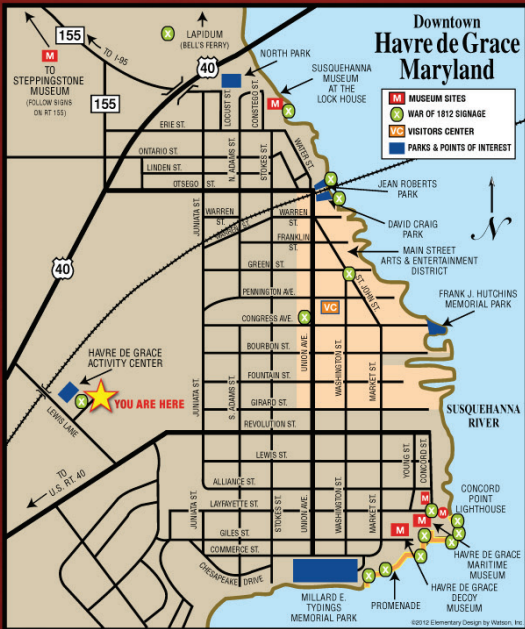


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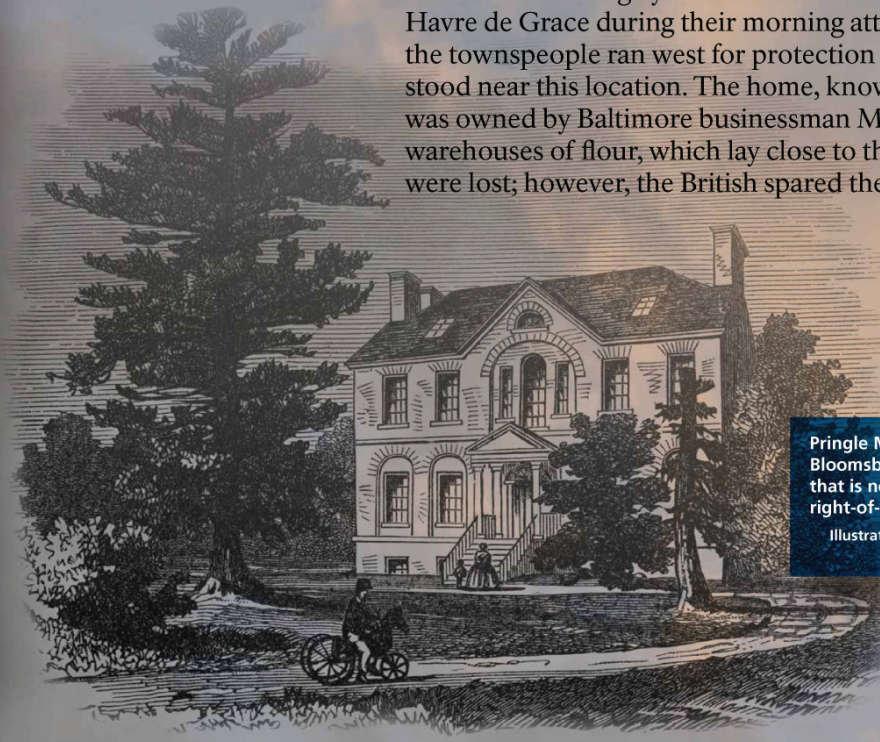


# Home of Refuge

Be sure to visit all of the sites marked on the map to learn about the British attack on Havre de Grace during the War of 1812.



As the British savagely burned the buildings in Havre de Grace during their morning attack May 3, 1813, the townspeople ran west for protection to a home that stood near this location. The home, known as Bloomsbury, was owned by Baltimore businessman Mark Pringle. His warehouses of flour, which lay close to the water's edge, were lost; however, the British spared the home.



Pringle Mansion, known as Bloomsbury, was located on land that is now part of the railroad right-of-way.  
Illustration by Benson J. Lossing, *Field Book of the War of 1812, 1868*



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O - at the Activity Center on Lewis Lane