



## Terrorism on the Bay

The May 3, 1813 attack on Havre de Grace by the British was one of many that Rear Admiral George Cockburn led his bluecoated sailors and Redcoats on during the War of 1812. He devoted most of the spring of 1813 to terrorizing locations along the Chesapeake, including the Upper Bay's Freetown, Principio Foundry, Bell's Ferry (present-day Lapidum), Georgetown, and Fredericktown. He also launched an attack on Elkton, but was rebuffed by the town's gun batteries.



Rear Admiral George Cockburn

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London



### British Attacks: April 29 - May 6, 1813

- ▶ Freetown: April 29
- ▶ Elkton: defended April 29
- ▶ Havre de Grace: May 3
- ▶ Bell's Ferry: May 3
- ▶ Port Deposit: defended May 3
- ▶ Principio Iron Foundry: May 3
- ▶ Georgetown: May 5
- ▶ Fredericktown: May 6



## The British Attack!

After anchoring off Spesutia Island, the British launched a surprise attack on the sleeping town of Havre de Grace early on the morning of May 3, 1813. The townspeople awoke to the sound of Congreve rockets whizzing overhead and cannon booming. While most militiamen ran for the hills, John O'Neill famously rushed to the town's battery and began firing back at the British. Although he was eventually taken prisoner, his heroic actions remain the high point of the horrible attack.

The British pillaged the town and set fire to many of the buildings. They confiscated much of the furniture and belongings of the townspeople before torching their dwellings. It is believed that 20 to 40 of the approximate 60 dwellings in town suffered damage.

### Several buildings survived the fires of the British attack, including three town icons.



Averlie-Goldborough House

300 North Union Avenue

Built in 1801, this house has a cannonball fly through its wall and still it stands today.



St. John's Church

100 North Union Avenue

The British destroyed the church's windows, altar, and pews, but left the walls standing. The congregation was able to rebuild, and the church is still used today.



Elizabeth Rodgers House

240 North Washington Street

Owned by Colonel John Rodgers and his wife Elizabeth, this house survived the attack on Havre de Grace even though it was set on fire and destroyed at least three times.

Images courtesy of Hager Foundation



*"Heaven and earth seemed never to have agreed better to frame a place  
for man's commodious and delightful habitation."*

– Captain John Smith, 1608, about the Upper Chesapeake Bay region

*"C'est Le Havre."*

– Marquis de Lafayette, 1783



*"Havre de Grace necessarily has all the advantage of the improved navigation  
of the Susquehanna... This is already so perceived that one Million Bricks  
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and double that number is expected this year."*

– Benjamin Henry Latrobe, 1803, architect of the U.S. Capitol, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson





















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