

A Walk Through History

By Ron Browning and Ellie Mencer

The fall-winter season offers a wonderful time to stroll the historic district of Havre de Grace. Architectural details are easily noticed when the leaves of many trees and vines are gone.

As you casually stroll a few blocks, you'll soon realize that you're being exposed to a plethora of architectural styles covering 200+ years of history. Although examples of a particular architecture may be found, Havre de Grace builders often adapted styles to available building materials, locale or individual tastes. You—the explorer—will discover blended styles and even eclectic applications of architecture.

With about 800 structures making up the Havre de Grace Historic District, you'll find our city an uncut jewel of historic treasures. Sometimes you'll need to look closely. Modifications to various structures over the years may disguise their early origins.

Six general periods loosely divide the timeline of our historic district:

1. The earliest period dates from the 1780s to the 1830s. Although the town has earlier origins, a ferryboat crossing began here in 1695 across the Susquehanna River. These very early colonial structures have perished.
2. The construction (1836) and opening (1839) of the Susquehanna & Tidewater Canal and the completion of the Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad brought great prosperity to the ferry boat town/terminus of Havre

RODGER'S HOUSE: 226 N. Washington Street.



- de Grace. This prosperous era (1830-1850) embraced Gothic, Federal, early Victorian and other styles.
3. By the mid-19th century (1850-1880), the earlier Victorian styles began to influence Havre de Grace architecture.
4. The High Victorian era (1880-1910) is well represented in our historic district with numerous captivating examples.
5. The late era (1910-1940) reflects Havre de Grace as a regional recreation center. Sportsmen flocked here to gamble at the racetrack and to gun ducks on the Susquehanna Flats.
6. The contemporary time period from 1940 to the present can be seen in buildings such as the City Hall, High School, the new U.S. Post Office building and other government and commercial buildings. All of the buildings contribute to a changing cityscape.

In this article we'll share the earliest period from the 1780s to the 1830s.

GEORGIAN STYLE: One of the oldest structures is the *Rodger's House* located at 226 N. Washington Street. It's a brick Georgian townhouse. Note its oversized entrance portal. Colonel John Rodgers, a tavern keeper in Perryville and a ferryboat captain, bought the house in 1788 and operated a tavern here.

A humorous comment was often made by Matt Johnson, who operated A-1 Tours before he died, "Rodger's House and Rodger's Tavern (Perryville) were probably the first American franchise."

FEDERAL STYLE: The *Currier House Bed & Breakfast*, 800 Market Street, has its origins in a federal style, wood-framed

CURRIER HOUSE BED & BREAKFAST: 800 Market St.

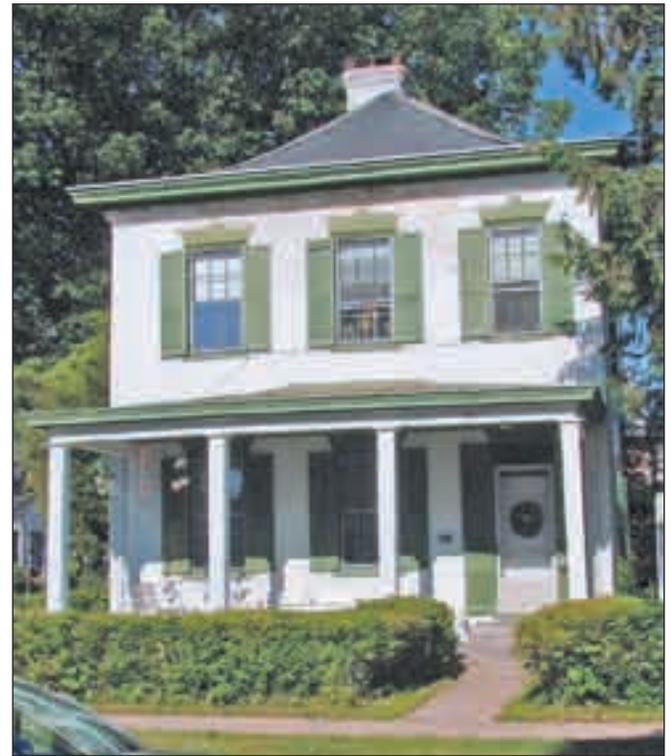


ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH (C. 1809): 200 N. Union Avenue



The British burning of Havre de Grace on May 3, 1813, caused severe damage to 60% of the existing houses and resulted in a watershed cutoff point. Although a number of damaged structures were rebuilt, architectural styles may have changed from the original.

An example is *St. John's Episcopal Church* (c. 1809), 200 N. Union Avenue, Havre de Grace's oldest church. Damaged by the British burning of the town, the church was further gutted by fire in 1832. Reconstruction involved changes, such as the minimization of the second story windows. A slate roof and belfry were added circa 1884. The building is remarkable for its Flemish bond brick walls and graceful arched windows.



cottage (c. 1790). A major restoration occurred in 1994. Low ceilings on the second floor and high ceilings on the lower floor attest to early construction.

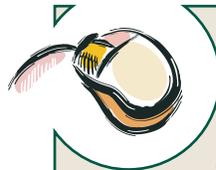
FRENCH INFLUENCE: Several structures show a French influence. The *Baptiste Aveilhe-Goldsborough House* (c. 1801), 300 N. Union Avenue, has an outstanding hipped roof, slate-covered with a step, concave curve, rising to a peak.

The *Old Ordinary* (c.1800), 100 St. John Street, has the balconies reminiscent of New Orleans's French colonial structures, perhaps due to the wrap-around porch and the hipped roof with gabled dormers. This structure was restored in 1986.

OLD ORDINARY (C. 1800): 100 St. John St.



A special *thank you* to Ron Browning of La Cle D'or Guesthouse for his diligent research for this article. As a member of the Historic Preservation Commission of Havre de Grace, sharing this history is a passion for him. He is a wealth of information, details and stories. **Thank you, Ron.**



To discover the other historic periods, please go to our website, www.HavredeGraceTheMeetingPlace.com and login for four installments to be offered during the winter months. We will also have a downloadable version of the Self-Guided Tour brochure of the Nationally Registered Historic District of Havre de Grace, sponsored by The Historic Preservation Commission no later than January 2007.