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Form 10-445
(5/62)

1. STATE Maryland COUNTY Cecil County TOWN Elkton VICINITY Old Frenchtown STREET NO. Frenchtown Road, one mile west of Rt. 200 213. ORIGINAL OWNER — ORIGINAL USE port PRESENT OWNER — Frenchtown Tavern, Inc. PRESENT USE private club WALL CONSTRUCTION — NO. OF STORIES —	HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY INVENTORY CE-18J
	2. NAME FRENCHTOWN (site) DATE OR PERIOD 18th & 19th centuries STYLE ARCHITECT BUILDER
	3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE

4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION OPEN TO PUBLIC **no**

marker:

FRENCHTOWN

FRENCHTOWN, ONE MILE WEST OF THIS MARKER, WAS AN IMPORTANT LINK IN THE NORTH-SOUTH TRAVEL ROUTE DURING THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES. AS A DEPOT, IT WAS BURNED BY THE BRITISH UNDER ADMIRAL COCKBURN ON APRIL 29, 1813.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE **Endangered** **Interior** **Exterior**

6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)	7. PHOTOGRAPH Coln 4009
8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages) INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.	9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER Michael Bourne Maryland Historical Trust DATE OF RECORD July 29, 1968

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE

Gallagher, Trish

1988 Ghosts and Haunted Houses of Maryland.

Centreville, Maryland: Tibewater Publishers, pp 18-20

The Once and Haunted Frenchtown Tavern

Located in Cecil County about three miles south of Elkton along the Elk River is Frenchtown, a port of significance for the state of Maryland over a century ago. Frenchtown's road to New Castle, Delaware, a popular way to travel between Baltimore and Philadelphia, was used by many stage or wagon travelers as the land part of their journeys to either Maryland or Pennsylvania. Frenchtown was badly damaged by the British in the War of 1812, but Frenchtown Tavern, a large brick structure built around 1800 and used as a public inn, survived the war.

Today, Frenchtown and its tavern are no more, but Mildred Alagia of Elkton fondly remembers the day over forty years ago when she and her husband decided to purchase the mansion, its farm and tenant houses, and the 300-odd acres of land that went with it. The property had been put up for sale in 1944 by an old gentleman from Philadelphia whose granddaughter had drowned in the river in front of the tavern. Said to have never recovered from the tragedy, the owner had decided to have nothing more to do with it. Somewhat overwhelmed by the idea of purchasing such a substantial piece of property, Mrs. Alagia nevertheless gave in to her husband, who had set his heart on owning Frenchtown Tavern.

According to Mrs. Alagia, the first sign anyone in the family had that all was not normal with the old mansion was observed before the Alagias moved in. Mrs. Alagia and her daughter Mary

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The Once and Haunted Frenchtown Tavern

were in the basement. The two had decided to take a look at the original kitchen and were happily immersed in an inspection of the old stove and brickwork when the room suddenly turned extremely cold. A strange "whirlwind" seemed to form, growing in intensity until it was sweeping up dirt and small debris and twisting them in the air. The two women couldn't get out of the basement fast enough.

Once, a group of workers came from Philadelphia to lay carpet. The workmen had been told by the Alagias that, as a matter of convenience, they could spend the night in the still-uninhabited house. From all accounts, the workmen got something less than a peaceful rest in the old tavern. They later complained that they had been kept awake by the sounds of footsteps and rattling chains. They refused to stay another night at Frenchtown Tavern.

Although the Alagias had originally dismissed the ghost stories they had heard about their home, they soon came to give them greater credence as more family members experienced ghostly manifestations. One daughter, Rose, heard such loud talking and laughter one day while she was alone in the house on the second floor that she started down the steps to the first-floor living room to investigate. As soon as she reached the landing between the two floors, all of the sounds suddenly ceased. She was unable to find anyone in the living room or anywhere else in the house, for that matter.

Another daughter, Loretta, had a considerably more frightening experience. Walking up the stairs between the first and second floors, she saw a hand appear on the stairway. The strange hand grabbed the girl's ankle, forcing her to fall forward onto the steps. Unable to release herself from the mysterious fingers, Loretta screamed for help. As soon as other family members came to her side, the hand disappeared as inexplicably as it had appeared. No one was ever able to account for either its appearance or the bruises it left on Loretta's ankle.

Another episode which rivaled the ankle-grabbing in terms of sheer scariness occurred one evening when the family was in a

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second-floor sitting room watching television. After an extraordinarily loud noise caused them to jump in surprise, a look at the bedroom from which the noise had appeared to come revealed disturbing evidence of a supernatural nature. A crucifix on a wall over the bed had been ripped off its hanger and apparently thrown across the room.

Other strange things about Frenchtown Tavern included a bizarre cold spot on the third floor which everyone seemed to notice, and the sighting by Alagia grandchildren of a man in a uniform whom they called "the gray man."

Despite the fact that some of the Frenchtown incidents were frightening, Mrs. Alagia says that no one in the family ever felt threatened by any of the tavern's invisible guests. Although a clear explanation of the supernatural activity was never found, there were some oddities about the property which may provide a clue to solving its mysteries. A secret, windowless room was discovered by the Alagias in the tenant house. The room may have been used to hide slaves escaping north to freedom. There is another local legend that a boat full of slaves burned on the Elk River in front of the tavern with the loss of all the slaves, who could not escape from their chains. Unfortunately, the secrets of Frenchtown Tavern will never be revealed. Two fires, the first probably started by a faulty furnace, the other by kids playing around, completely destroyed the house in the 1960s.



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Frenchtown Landing (WPA)

MSA SG 908-08-00570