### Form 10-300

#### National Register of Historic Places

**Inventory - Nomination Form**

*Type all entries – complete applicable sections*

**1. Name**

**Common:**

General Henry Knox's Headquarters

**And/or Historic:**

Knox Headquarters (John Ellison House)

**2. Location**

**Street and Number:**

Quassaick Ave. (State Route 94) and Forge Hill Road

**City or Town:**

Vails Gate

**State:**

New York

**Code:**

Orange

**3. Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category (Check One)</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Accessible to the Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ District</td>
<td>□ Public</td>
<td>□ Occupied</td>
<td>□ Yes: Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Site</td>
<td>□ Private</td>
<td>□ Unoccupied</td>
<td>□ Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Structure</td>
<td>□ Both</td>
<td>□ Preservation work in progress</td>
<td>□ Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Object</td>
<td>□ Public</td>
<td>□ In Process</td>
<td>□ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate):**

- [ ] Agricultural
- [ ] Commercial
- [ ] Educational
- [ ] Entertainment
- [ ] Government
- [ ] Industrial
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Religious
- [ ] Private Residence
- [ ] Scientific
- [ ] Park
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Other (Specify)

**4. Owner of Property**

**Owner's Name:**

State of New York, New York State Historic Trust

**State:**

New York

**5. Location of Legal Description**

**Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.:**

Courthouse

**City or Town:**

Albany 12226

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

**Title of Survey:**

**Date of Survey:**

**Depository for Survey Records:**

**State:**

New York

**Entry Number Only**

[Signature]

**Date:**

2-31
Built in 1754, the John Ellison House (or Knox Headquarters) is a two-
and-one-half story stone house with a full cellar, hipped roof, and two
interior stone chimneys set behind the ridge. A one-story frame wing,
added in 1799, with a gable roof, central chimney, and clapboarded
walls, adjoins the main house on the east side.

The main stone house is 44 feet or five bays wide and 36 feet deep and
has a 11 by 21 foot one-story porch inset in the northwest (rear)
corner, which gives the structure its L-shape. The hipped roof on the
north (rear) elevation slopes far down to a one-story height to cover
the rear porch. The wall of the main house is constructed of random
coursed field-stone and two feet thick. The south (front) elevation
and the east and west ends of the roof have a dentilated cornice.
Windows are adorned with exterior panelled shutters and the center
door in the south facade is topped by a rectangular transom.

A center hall, divided into two sections, extends through the main house
from front to rear and divides the four rooms on the first floor into
pairs. The stairs is located in the front hall of the hall. To the
left (west) of the hall are the dining room and in its rear, General
Knox's bedroom. On the right side of the hall is a parlor or sitting
room and behind this, the General's Office. The parlor has deep
window seats; floors throughout the house are of wide boards, and all
first-floor rooms have fully panelled fireplace walls. The kitchen, with
its huge fireplace, is located in the basement.

The second floor has two large and two smaller bedrooms. The large
master bedroom and guest room both have fully panelled fireplace walls.
The house, largely original and very little-altered, was restored in
1954. The John Ellison House is furnished in the period and is open
to visitors as an historic house museum.
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 16th Century
- 18th Century
- 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(s) (If Applicable and Known)
1779-1783

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Aboriginal
- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation
- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape
- Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music
- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation
- Urban Planning
- Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1754, the John Ellison House served during the period 1779 to 1783 as the headquarters of Major Generals Henry Knox, Nathanael Greene, Fredrich von Steuben, and Horatio Gates during the various encampments of the Continental Army at New Windsor, New York.

The Ellison House has been very little altered over the years.

History

In 1754 Colonel Thomas Ellison, a well-to-do settler, built this large stone house for his son, John, who operated an adjacent grist mill. The structure was erected by the mason William Bull. General Henry Knox, Washington's artillery chief, occupied the house four times during the War for Independence: June and July, 1779, the fall of 1779, November 20, 1780, to July 4, 1781, and from May to September 1782, when he left to command the fortifications at West Point, N.Y.

In June and July of 1779 General Nathanael Greene, then Quartermaster General of the Continental Army, also shared the house with Knox.

In August 1779 General (Baron) Fredrich von Steuben, Inspector General of the Army, made the house his headquarters.

From December 1782 to June 1783 the house served as the headquarters of General Horatio Gates, the victor of Saratoga, who was in immediate command of the 8,000 soldiers at the New Windsor Cantonment, about one-mile to the north. It is possible that Major John Armstrong, Gates' aide-de-camp, may have penned in this house the letters known as the "Newburgh Addresses", which called on the officers to reject the authority of the Continental Congress and to establish a new state in the wilderness. Gates was sympathetic to this plan but the scheme was brought to a halt by Washington's famous speech at the "Temple of Virture" at the New Windsor Cantonment on March 15, 1783.

The owner of the house, John Ellison, provided the army with flour and firewood and also, in 1778, served in the New York militia.
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Latitude and Longitude Coordinates

**Defining a Rectangle Locating the Property**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude (Degrees Minutes Seconds)</th>
<th>Longitude (Degrees Minutes Seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>41° 27' 21&quot;</td>
<td>74° 03' 05&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>41° 27' 16&quot;</td>
<td>74° 02' 43&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>41° 27' 07&quot;</td>
<td>74° 02' 53&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>41° 27' 15&quot;</td>
<td>74° 03' 06&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:**

- 50 acres

### List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. FORM PREPARED BY

**Name and Title:**

- Charles W. Snell, Survey Historian

**Organization:**

- Division of History, Office of Archeology and History Preservation, National Park Service

**Street and Number:**

- 801 19th Street, N.W.

**City or Town:**

- Washington

**State:**

- D.C.

**Date:**

- 5/9/72

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [ ]
- State [ ]
- Local [ ]

**Name:**

- 

**Title:**

- 

**Date:**

- 

**National Register Verification**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**Date:**

- 

**Attest:**

- 

**Keeper of The National Register**

**Date:**

- 

**See Instructions**
Later owners of the house allowed the property, mill, and a store to deteriorate. In 1917, the Knox Headquarters Association was formed to raise funds for its purchase and preservation. In 1922, the New York State Legislature accepted the house and grounds as a gift from that association. Restoration of the house was completed in 1954.
9. Major Bibliographical References (1)

Boundaries for Knox's Headquarters (John Ellison House), Vails Gate:

Approximately 50 acres of land, including Knox's Headquarters House, beginning at the northwest corner at the junction of Quassaick Avenue and Forge Hill Road at Latitude 41° 27' 21" - longitude 74° 03' 05", hence going east along the southern edge of Forge Hill Road about 1700 feet to the northeast corner at Latitude 41° 27' 16" - longitude 74° 02' 43", then continuing southwest about 1150 feet to the southeast corner at 41° 27' 07" - longitude 74° 02' 53", proceeding from here northwest about 1200 feet to the southwest corner at latitude 41° 27' 15" - longitude 74° 03' 06", hence running north about 600 feet to the point of beginning, the northwest corner.

Precise boundaries, as described above, are on record on a copy of U.S. Geological Survey Map: Cornwall Quadrangle, New York, 1957, 7.5 Minute Series, on file with the Historic Sites Survey, Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service.