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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Butternut Hill  
other names/site number Prospect Hill, Blake House, Ross House, 167-579-20170

2. Location

street & number 4430 Wabash Avenue N/A not for publication  
city or town Terre Haute N/A vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Vigo code 167 zip code 47803

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Paul R. Rabb* 4-19-93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper *Delores Byer* **Entered in the National Register.** Date of Action 5/27/93

Butternut Hill  
Name of Property

Vigo Co., IN  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19th CENTURY: greek revival

OTHER: central passage

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: cast iron

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1835-1902

Significant Dates

c. 1835

1869

1902

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

Butternut Hill  
Name of Property

Vigo Co., IN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6
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4	6	9	7	3	0
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4	3	6	9	4	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

4 

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 See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mary Ross McMillan

organization N/A date 6-5-92

street & number 96 Allendale Place telephone 812-299-4614

city or town Terre Haute state IN zip code 47802

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name See continuation sheet

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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Butternut Hill

Section number 7 Page 1

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Butternut Hill is a farm and residence maintained as a private home by one family for over 150 years. The two story brick house is an outstanding example of an early nineteenth century vernacular central-passage plan significantly enlarged at the turn of the century. It has remained virtually unaltered since that time.

The house is sited on a wooded lot at the crest of a hill immediately east of a large cemetery. Originally located several miles from the heart of Terre Haute, it is today an integral part of the city. While the house maintains a deep setback, the property abuts a four-lane highway on the south. The large amount of acreage and significant number of trees isolate the house well from its surroundings.

As it exists today, Butternut Hill bears little resemblance to the small farmhouse built by Major George Bourne c. 1835. The original house was a one and one-half story brick building with a central-passage plan. Though enlarged twice since construction, the house still maintains its original plan.

In 1869 a large bedroom with bay window and bath were added to the southeast corner of the house. In 1902 the full second story and attic were added extending, yet maintaining, the original cherry staircase. Also at this time, the kitchen house was moved and a new kitchen was incorporated into the main structure. The porch was also extended around the south side of the house. This information is documented by a newspaper account and the personal recollections of Helen Blake Ross who lived in the house during the 1902 additions.

No major changes have been made to the house since 1902. However, in 1949 a disastrous tornado required substantial repairs to chimneys, porches, windows, and the roof. The destroyed outlying buildings, consisting of a tenant house, garage and barn were replaced at that time.

A descendant of the hall-and-parlor style of architecture, the central-passage plan of Butternut Hill maintains the basic two-room plan of the earlier form. However, unlike the hall-and-parlor which placed the stairs off to a corner, the central-passage moved the stairway to the center of the house. This plan is reflected in the symmetry of the main facade of Butternut Hill.

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Butternut Hill

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The house is built in a modified T-plan with the front hall and adjacent parlors extending slightly beyond the rear portion of the house. The main facade (photo #1) faces west and has a hipped asphalt-shingled roof with box gutters. At each end of the house is a flush chimney. Surrounding the centrally-located double entrance doors are a diamond-paned transom and sidelights (photo #11). Located to each side of the door are two, 6/6 double-hung sash windows with shutters. The second floor has five, 2/2 double-hung sash windows with shutters. The width of the house is spanned by a one story porch with balustrade and seven octagonal wood posts, one of which is engaged at the southwest corner (photo #12). Set back from the front portion of the house, which is two bays deep, is a small screened porch that provides access to the dining room (formerly a bedroom). The house has four porches with the one on the north facade now acting as the main entrance (photo #13).

Visible on the northern facade (photo #2) are a hipped attic dormer and an interior chimney. The door located on the porch is surrounded by a multi-paned transom and sidelights. Also located on the first floor are three 2/2 double-hung sash windows. The second floor has four 2/2 double-hung sash windows.

The east facade (photo #3) reveals a frame enclosed porch with screened openings and door which leads to the kitchen. An iron balustrade forms a small balcony off a full-length 4/4 double-hung sash window located in the dining room (photo #4). The second floor has six 2/2 double-hung sash windows. There is also a hipped dormer on this facade and an interior brick chimney.

The south facade (photo #5) shows the 1869 bay window addition. Reflective of the Greek Revival style, popular at the time, are the dentils accentuating the top of the bay. Each of the three windows is a 2/2 double-hung sash with shutters.

The present house consists of four large rooms on the first floor, including the parlor (northwest corner of house--photo #14), library (southwest corner--photo #15), dining room (immediately east of library) and kitchen (east of parlor), together with three pantries, ice room, breakfast room, china closet, and two large halls. A former storage pantry now functions as a bathroom. In 1902 the first floor 1869 bedroom addition was converted into a dining room and a hall fireplace was installed. Typical of the early construction of this portion of the house, the woodwork is plain, as evidenced by the rear staircase, window trim, and chair rail seen in photo #16. Greek Revival style

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Butternut Hill

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mantles surround the fireplaces in the parlor and library (photo #6), while a cast iron surround decorates the c.1870 dining room fireplace. The floors consist of planks five inches wide; the majority of painted baseboards on the first floor are 10 inches tall. The most ornate room on the first floor is the dining room with a bay window (photo #7). The centrally-located c. 1835 dogleg staircase (Photo #17) is very simple, consisting of a cherry banister and rail supported by painted square spindles. Metal dust catchers are placed at the intersection of each riser and tread.

The main stairway, from the front hall (photo #17), and back stairs (photo #16), from the kitchen area, lead up to the second floor where there are five bedrooms and two baths. Photo #18 shows the main staircase and upstairs hall. Photo #19 again shows the simplicity of design which defines the house. Evident are the plank floors and plain door and window surrounds of this bedroom.

The house contains six fireplaces--two in the bedroom area and four on the first floor, and a coal stove in the kitchen. There is a full attic and a full basement. The latter contains a furnace room with two gas furnaces, laundry room, milk cellar, darkroom, and other storage spaces, some with brick floors and others with dirt floors. The basement is entered by stairs from the kitchen area or through one of the outside entrances.

The house maintains an extremely high degree of architectural integrity and displays characteristics associated with construction techniques of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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Butternut Hill

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Butternut Hill is significant for its outstanding architecture--a combination of early building styles exhibiting fine detailing on the exterior and interior. The house represents the transition of a small vernacular structure enlarged significantly to become a beautiful family home well-maintained through two centuries.

Although the house was built by Major George Bourne circa 1830, he shortly thereafter rented it to Dr. Richard Blake and his wife Franceska. The Blakes purchased the house in 1853; their descendants have maintained ownership of the property through four generations.

Known at first as Prospect Hill because of the beautiful view it afforded of the Wabash Valley and the town of Terre Haute several miles away in the distance, it became known as Butternut Hill at the time of the Civil War because the Blakes were southern sympathizers referred to as "butternuts."

The Blakes were a prominent Maryland family, the first of whom, Captain Thomas Blake, settled in Calvert County about 1671 on a grant from Lord Calvert that is still called His Lordship's Favour. Richard Blake was born there in 1808, graduated from Washington Medical College in Baltimore, and came to Terre Haute in 1832 where he established himself as a doctor as shown by copies of the Western Register printed in Terre Haute in March and April 1832. There he is listed as a physician.

Although he did not live in the house, Colonel Thomas H. Blake, a cousin of Dr. Blake, came to Terre Haute in 1817 and served as the first judge of the circuit court, a member of Congress from this district, U. S. Land Commissioner appointed by President Tyler, trustee of the Wabash and Erie Canal, a founder of Indiana University, and the first Senior Warden of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Dr. Blake's eldest son, Joseph Henry Blake, was born in 1834 and lived at Butternut Hill until his death in 1895. He was a respected lawyer, serving several terms as City Clerk and County Clerk. In 1870 he was elected County Commissioner and was active in the development of a number of progressive plans for the growth of Terre Haute including the street railroad east to Highland Lawn Cemetery.

Mr. Joseph Blake's daughter, Helen Gilbert Blake married John Clifford Ross, a Terre Haute businessman whose grandfather had come to the city in 1848. Mr. Ross died in



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1932 and Helen Blake Ross continued at Butternut Hill until her death in 1969. During the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the founding of Terre Haute she was honored as an outstanding member of the community.

Mrs. Ross' daughters are the present owners of the Hill. They are Frances Ross Chase Smith, Mary Ross McMillan, and Elizabeth Ross Merrill.

In Vigo County there are five contemporary houses which compare to the various stages of Butternut Hill. Site numbers 28273 and 28347 in the Farrington's Grove Historic District both display some of the characteristics present in Butternut Hill prior to the 1902 remodeling. Site number 28273, the Williams-Warren Zimmerman House, is a one and one-half story Greek Revival house which, based upon oral history interviews, most closely reflects the design of the original Butternut Hill. Other examples such as the Markle House (site 05026), site 05006, and the Paul Dresser Birthplace (site 20426), are of the period but display more Federal and/or Greek Revival detailing than Butternut Hill. Each of these has a gabled roof, while the hipped roof, lack of cornice returns, and small porch columns seen on Butternut Hill are not as indicative of the Greek Revival style. The occasional use of dentils and some interior ornamentation on Butternut Hill reflect the popularity of the Greek Revival during its early period of significance.

Butternut Hill exists today as an outstanding example of a vernacular building type excellently maintained and preserved through the years. The continued preservation of Butternut Hill and its architectural significance make it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

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Butternut Hill

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Bibliography

- Beckwith, H.W. History of Vigo and Parke Counties, Indiana. Chicago: H.H. Hill & N. Iddings, 1880.
- Bradsby, H.C. History of Vigo County, Indiana. Chicago: S.B. Nelson & Co., 1891.
- Condit, Blackford. History of Early Terre Haute 1811-1890. New York: Barnes & Co., 1900.
- Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. Vigo County Interim Report. Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1984.
- Peddle, Juliet. "Early Houses of Terre Haute," series published in the Terre Haute Star, various dates, c.1930.
- Deed Books 1, 8, 9, and 19, Vigo County Recorder's Office.

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Butternut Hill

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Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at a point 5' Northeast of the iron pump, proceed west to a point 20' west of the west wall of the house (this line hereafter known as line 1), then proceed south to a point 10' south of the southernmost wall of the house, then proceed east to a point 20' east of the east wall of the house, then proceed north to a point 5' south of line 1, then proceed east to a point due south of the point of origin, then proceed north to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

The above boundaries were selected because they include the immediate property surrounding the house, as well as the historic iron pump. Outbuildings were not included because of their non-contributing status. All were rebuilt following a tornado in 1949.

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Property Owners

The current owners of the property are the daughters of Mrs. Helen Blake Ross. They are:

Frances Ross Chase Smith  
The Barn, Sarven Court  
Tarrytown, NY 10591

Mary Ross McMillan  
96 Allendale Place  
Terre Haute, IN 47802

Elizabeth Ross Merrill  
4530 Poplar Street  
Terre Haute, IN 47803

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Continuation Sheet**

Butternut Hill

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The following information is identical for all photographs:

Butternut Hill  
Terre Haute, Indiana  
Mary Ross McMillan  
May 13, 1992  
Mary Ross McMillan, 96 Allendale Place, Terre Haute, IN 47802

- #1 West Facade, Camera facing east
- #2 North Facade, Camera facing south
- #3 East Facade, Camera facing southwest
- #4 Balcony off dining room, East Facade, Camera facing northwest
- #5 Bay Window, South Facade, Camera facing northwest
- #6 Mantle in Library, Camera facing north
- #7 Bay Window in Dining Room, Camera facing south
- #8 Typical interior trim, upstairs bedroom, Camera facing southeast
- #9 Kitchen detail
- #10 Pump, Camera facing southeast
- #11 Front Entrance, Camera facing east
- #12 Front Porch Detail, Camera facing southeast
- #13 North Entrance, Camera facing south

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- #14 Parlor, Camera facing southwest
- #15 Library, Camera facing southeast
- #16 Back Staircase
- #17 Main Staircase
- #18 Upstairs hall and landing, Camera facing west
- #19 Upstairs Bedroom

# BUTTERNUT HILL

