

**Home Builder/Developer:** Burns, Franklin L.  
**Birth/Death Dates:** 1914-1997  
**Practice Dates:** 1940-c.1980  
**Firms:** Burns Realty and Trust

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## Biographical Information

Franklin Lane Burns was born in Denver on August 1, 1914. He graduated from Denver's East High School and went on to attend the University of Southern California for a year and then enrolled at the University of Denver as a pre-med student for two years. He married his first wife, Evelyn Denahey, in 1939 and that same year sold his first home for \$1,250; it was just two rooms and 288 square feet. In 1940, he dropped out of school to take over Burns Realty and Trust (established in 1899) after the death of his uncle (*News*, 08/14/1997).

Burns anticipated the post-war housing boom and began developing the Burns Brentwood subdivision in southwest Denver in 1946. He offered small Minimal Traditional type houses to returning servicemen and their families, taking advantage of the generous loan provisions of the G.I. Bill. Burns also led the development of post-WWII housing near the Fitzsimmons Army Base in Hoffman Heights and Aurora Hills. Active in regional and national home builder organizations, He served as the Treasurer of National Association Home Builders (NAHB) in 1957.

In 1955, Mayor Nicholson named Burns as Denver's representative on the Inter-county Regional Planning Commission (*News*, 07/28/1955). He stated the commission "plans to make recommendations for the development of residential areas, industrial, commercial and agricultural areas, locations for public ways and places, playgrounds, etc." The commission was expected to create a regional master plan for the four-county area. Later that year, he filed for divorce (*News*, 01/27/1957).

In 1959, Burns filed a request asking that Denver annex 239½ acres of Arapahoe County, near West Warren and Yale Avenues [south], and South Monaco Parkway [east] and Albion and Ash Streets [west] (*News*, April 17, 1959). The parcel eventually became part of Denver's Goldsmith neighborhood in the 1960s.

Burns announced his engagement to Joy Steelman Colwick, formerly of Texas, in 1960. At the time of the announcement, the *News* noted that Burns was President of Burns Realty and Trust; a member of National Home Builders; director of the Denver United States National Bank; and a member of the Denver Club, Denver Country Club, Denver Athletic Club, Cherry Hills Country Club, and Columbine Country Club (*News*, 05/14/60). Burns organized a successful political campaign in the 1960s to establish Denver's two percent sales tax.

In 1970, Franklin and Joy Burns purchased the old Hampshire House in downtown Denver. Joy eventually oversaw its conversion into a five-star, all-suite hotel, renamed the Burnsley Hotel (*Colorado Builders Forum*, March-April, 2003).

Burns was elected to the then newly-organized NAHB's Housing Hall of Fame in 1970. The nomination noted that he had "built more than 13,500 residential and commercial buildings in the Denver area. The homes and buildings are valued at more than \$120 million" (*News*, 02/11/1977). Using a personal donation of \$5 million, the University of Denver formed the

Franklin L. Burns School of Real Estate and Construction Management in 1997. Franklin Burns passed away on August 10, 1997, at the age of 83. In 2002, Franklin and Joy Burns were elected to the Colorado Business Hall of Fame (*News*, 12/05/2001).

*(Biography by Paul Malkoski)*

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**Credited Projects (partial list)**

<b>Project or Development</b>	<b>Location*</b>	<b>Building Types</b>	<b>Date**</b>	<b>Status</b>
Burns Better-Built Bungalows	South Federal Blvd and West Jewell Ave., Denver	Minimal Traditional	1946	
Havana Park, Aurora	730 Havana; 11160 E. 7 <sup>th</sup> Ave. (1953); 798 Havana (1957); Aurora	Ranch	1953-57	
Harvey Park	2627 S. Osceola St., 2505 S. Lowell Blvd., (1955); 2597 S. Osceola (1956), Denver	Ranch	1955-63	
Cherry Hills Vista	2794 S. Vine St., Denver	Ranch	1955-	
Lynwood Heights	1321 Worchester, Aurora	Ranch	1957-	
Hillside Manor	5211 S. Meade (1960), Littleton	Ranch, Bi-level	1960-	
Norwood Park	7990 Larkwood St. (1963), Commerce City	Ranch	1963-64	
The Pinery			1962-	
Aurora Hills	11592 E. Dakota Ave (1963), Aurora	Cape Cod, Bi-level	1963-	
Brentwood Shopping Center	W. Evans Ave. and S. Federal Blvd. Denver			Extant; altered and expanded
Green Mountain Shopping Center	Lakewood			
Inverness	Denver			

\*Model home addresses are given when known.

\*Completion date or construction span is stated if known. Plan, building permit, or assessor dates are used if completion date or period is unknown.

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## Reference Material

"Arapahoe Annexation Request Reduced," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 17, 1959.

"Chamber Inducts Husband, Wife; Burnses Two of Six To Be Honored In State's Business Hall of Fame," *Rocky Mountain News*, December 5, 2001.

"Denver Home Builder Honored," *Rocky Mountain News*, February 11, 1977.

"Denver Real Estate Man Joins Regional Planning Commission," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 28, 1955.

"Home Builders in Denver Parade of Homes: 1953-1963," database, National Register and State Register Programs, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

"Joy Colwick Is Engaged To Franklin Burns," *Rocky Mountain News*, May 14, 1960.

"Late Real Estate Giant Helped Many Fulfill American Dream; Affordable-Housing Work Wins Colleagues' Praise," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 14, 1997.

"Parade of Homes Plan Book," Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Denver, 1959.

"Portrait of a Pioneer," *Colorado Builders Forum*, March-April, 2003.

"Real Estate Man Seeks Divorce," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 27, 1955.

Site Files Database, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

## Research Notes:

The Internet yielded few valuable sites that contained biographical information, and none that made specific reference to Burns's activities as a builder of affordable single-family homes in the Denver area.

The *Rocky Mountain News* obituary (08/14/1997) of Franklin Burns provided the most complete biographical sketch of his life and major accomplishments, but did not provide much detail regarding his developments or home building activities, either by sites or numbers of homes built. Other *News* entries add additional details of positions, accomplishments, or events. Still other newspaper articles, not cited here, appeared on society news columns and articles but did not reference Burns's home building efforts.

The *Colorado Builders Forum* article (Mar-Apr, 2003) provided good overview of activity, but focuses more on wife, Joy Burns, and her work after Franklin's death.