

RETURN FORM BY EMAIL OR MAIL TO: Broward County Historic Preservation Board c/o Rick Ferrer
Email: hpb@broward.org or rferrer@broward.org
Mailing Address: Urban Planning Division
1 N. University Drive, Box 102, Plantation, FL 33324

2024 PIONEER DAY NOMINATION AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

In selecting a nominee for Broward County Pioneer, please include as a primary consideration the individual's contribution to his/her community. Length of residence in Broward County should not be the basis for selection. Please include sufficient biographical information and 2 photographs of the nominee (1 current; 1 'historical').

Nominating Entity (Including email, phone number):

City of Fort Lauderdale

Pioneer's Name:

George Burrows

Pioneer's Mailing Address (Including city, state, zip):

Burrows Electric
1552 NW 6 St, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

Pioneer's Telephone and Email:

Sonya Burrows, bee1552@bellsouth.net, 954-605-8307

Pioneer's Place and Date of Birth:

11/12/1926 in Fort Lauderdale.

Date of arrival in Broward County; if born elsewhere:

Spouse/Domestic Partner Name (if applicable):

Agnes Burrows

Child(ren) Name(s) (if applicable):

George, Jr., Avis, Iris, Sonya

Mother's and Father's Names:

Bishop Albury; Firstina Burrows

Education:

Grad of Old Dillard School
US Marines
Bethune-Cookman (Electrical Voc)

Memberships/Hobbies/Volunteerism:

State of FL Electrical Advisory Board (gubernatorial appt.)
Broward County Minority Builders Coalition
Fort Lauderdale Negro Chamber (founder)
NAACP, Phi Beta Sigma, Masons
St. Christopher Episcopal Church

Reminiscences of the Pioneer's Life in Broward County:

George was the first resident African American licensed master electrician in the City of Fort Lauderdale. In 1948 he established Burrows Electric Company, still in operation.

See attached.

George L Burrows, Sr. was born in Fort Lauderdale on November 12, 1926. He was the 6th of 14 children born to Bahamian immigrants Bishop Albury and Firstina Burrows. His parents worked a farm in Deerfield, to make a living and provide food for the family. George and his siblings would also work the farm after school to help his parents. In addition to farming, George's mother was a domestic worker on the beachside area of Ft. Lauderdale and his father was a Pentecostal Pastor first at the Little River Church of God in Miami and then at the Church of God in Deerfield. George attended school at "Old Dillard" which was located right across the street from his home on 10th Avenue. After school, George moved to New York to join his older sister Blanche, and from there joined the US Marine Corp.

After serving in the US Marine Corp and completing his electrical vocational education at Bethune-Cookman College, he returned to Fort Lauderdale in 1948 and successfully passed the municipal licensing board examination to become a licensed master electrician. He was the first resident African American licensed master electrician in the city of Fort Lauderdale. In the same year he established Burrows Electric Company. Although at that time he was only allowed to work in the black community, it did not at all diminish his vision to establish a city-wide electrical contracting business. In the early 1950's George moved his business from his mother's home to his newly built office located at 1552 NW 6th Street in Fort Lauderdale. Burrows Electric Company now operates throughout all of Broward County in the same location, and will continue to operate under the leadership of his youngest daughter Sonya Burrows.

In the same year George returned to Fort Lauderdale as a licensed electrician, he was called on to install the electric lighting at the football field

of his own high school, the historic Dillard High School which is now the site of the Old Dillard Museum and Walker Elementary School. At that time Dillard High School was located on NW 4th Street & 10th Avenue directly across the street from where George grew up and where his mother lived. After another contractor had backed out of the job, George took on the project and completed the lighting installation on a Friday night. Dillard High School was able to play its first night-time football game "under the lights" against its rival Dorsey High of Miami the following Saturday night. This was one of Mr. Burrows proudest moments. Not only did the entire community come out to Dillard's first night-time game, but his mother could also see the lights from her house across the street. This motivated George to illuminate the entire black community. At that time many homes did not have electricity. George began wiring homes for electric service, and as the community grew he also wired all the newly constructed homes. It is safe to say that Burrows Electric Company is responsible for installing electrical service for over 90% of the historically black community of Fort Lauderdale and also in the then unincorporated areas of Broward County within the NW section.

Burrows Electric Company also served as the main training ground for many young black men wanting to learn the electrical trade in the 1950's and 60's. At that time blacks were not allowed in the unions and had little if any options available to learn building trade skills. Many of today's black electricians received their training at Burrows Electric Company. George had a vision of not only providing electric power to his community, but also and more importantly economic empowerment to it as well. In later years, at least 2 of Mr. Burrows' employees went on to become municipal electrical inspectors. Mr. Burrows served under the appointment of Former Governor Reubin Askew on the State of Florida Electrical Advisory

Board, and also served several terms on the City of Fort Lauderdale Unsafe Structures Advisory Board. He was also a member of the Broward County Minority Builders Coalition.

After establishing his business in 1948, George attempted to join the City of Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and was denied entry because of his race. So, in 1949 George along with several other black entrepreneurs founded the Fort Lauderdale Negro Chamber of Commerce, Inc. He served as vice president under Roy Mizell until 1991. In 1991 he was elected president and served diligently until the age of 89. The Negro Chamber of Commerce was responsible for bringing the first voter registration booths and voting polls into the black community. The organization is also responsible for challenging the authorities of the City of Fort Lauderdale to hire its first black police officer and mail carrier. George also along with a few other men challenged the public golf course owned by the City because they were not allowed to play on the course. They sued the city, and the city sold the golf course for \$1.00 to an individual so that it would become a private course and blacks continue to be denied entry.

In the early 1970's George was co-owner of Best Deal, a black owned and operated grocery store located within the black community of Pompano Beach, FL. Despite the numerous obstacles George has faced as a business owner and resident over the years, even at the age of 90 he continued to work part-time in his electrical contracting business as well as towards economic and social improvement of the NW Fort Lauderdale community and the city in general. He was also a life-time member of the NAACP, a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, and a member of the

Masonic Lodge. He was a member of St. Christopher Episcopal Church, the same church he and his wife Agnes were married in 1951.

. After almost 60 years of marriage, George's devoted wife Agnes passed away in December 2010. They had 4 children: George, Jr. Avis, Iris, and Sonya. In 2006, his youngest daughter Sonya left a successful career in risk management and returned to Fort Lauderdale to work side by side with her father in the business. His son George Jr. after a successful career with FPL also worked in the business with them until he passed away in 2013. Sonya hopes to continue her father's legacy in business and in the community.

For as long as he was able George continued to work towards economic and social improvement of his community. He has been a role model and mentor to many young men and women, and he has lived his entire life making a difference in Fort Lauderdale and throughout Broward County. George has received numerous awards down through the years for his service and dedication to his community. In 2011 when the City of Ft. Lauderdale celebrated its 100th anniversary Mr Burrows was selected as the city's Honored Founder. He was awarded the JM Family African American Achiever's Award in the 2008 and was featured on WPLG Local Channel 10 in 2009 for his achievements and lifelong contributions to the community. Also in 2009, he received the Broward County Alumni Chapter of Bethune Cookman University Service Award. In 2010 The Greater Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce honored George with a "Salute To Business" Award as founder and owner of Burrows Electric Company. In 2016, the State of Florida memorialized George and his wife Agnes with the naming of a pavilion at the Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson State Park

in their honor – The George and Agnes Burrows Osprey Pavilion located in Dania Beach, FL.

Also in 2016 George was honored with a star on the beach at the City of Fort Lauderdale's Walk of Fame. In celebration of his 90th birthday and during the last months of President Barack Obama's 2nd term George was able to visit the White House. As part of his birthday celebration he also visited the newly opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.

George L Burrows, Sr. passed away on September 20, 2021 after a long, blessed, and fulfilling life.