

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Clinton S. Burns Named Historic Civil Engineer by the American Society of Civil Engineers**

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — Burns & McDonnell co-founder Clinton S. Burns has been named a Historic Civil Engineer by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). Burns joins his longtime business partner Robert E. McDonnell in earning recognition for career achievements by the ASCE. He becomes the 46<sup>th</sup> civil engineer to earn this accolade. Founded in 1852, the ASCE represents more than 150,000 civil engineers and is the oldest engineering society in the U.S.

“Clinton Burns and Robert McDonnell were ideal business partners, and the foundation they laid is the reason Burns & McDonnell continues to thrive today,” says Ray Kowalik, chairman and CEO, of Burns & McDonnell. “We are thrilled with this recognition because it will help shine the light on Clinton Burns’ accomplishments outside the walls of our firm.”

Clinton Sumner Burns was born in Waverly, Iowa, in 1871 and moved with his family to New York state a few years later. In 1890, he won a scholarship to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, majoring in civil engineering. Because of his family’s limited financial means, Burns had to work during his time as an engineering student, holding a series of engineering assistant jobs with several nearby municipalities. In 1896, Burns transferred to Leland Stanford Junior University (now Stanford University), where he continued to earn his way through school with a series of engineering jobs for the City of Palo Alto, California.

While at Stanford, Burns met McDonnell and formed a friendship that would span the rest of their lives. Following their graduation in 1897, they agreed to meet a year later and investigate the possibility of forming an engineering partnership. During that subsequent meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, they decided to specialize in water and sewer engineering for municipalities and name their firm Burns & McDonnell, Consulting Engineers. After further research, they concluded that towns and communities located in the Midwest had the most need of their services and that Kansas City, Missouri, would be the best location for their firm. On April 1, 1898, the partners launched their business in a small, rented office in Kansas City’s downtown district.

With his experience as an assistant city engineer, Burns took a position as an assistant engineer for the Kansas City Missouri Board of Park Commissioners as a means to earn some income in the interim until the firm became financially viable. This finally occurred in 1900, when Burns & McDonnell won its first major engineering project to design a waterworks for the City of Iola, Kansas. The partners soon began winning other projects and Burns was gaining attention nationwide for his expertise in appraisals of

waterworks and electric lighting plants. At the time, a number of municipalities and other public agencies were buying these utilities from private-sector owners. By 1911, the firm was widely recognized as the largest municipal engineering firm in the west.

Like his partner McDonnell, Burns was a prolific writer and speaker throughout his career, authoring a number of technical articles on engineering innovations. Burns was also an avid inventor, holding at least two registered U.S. patents, including one for a water-saving device installed on toilets in passenger train cars.

Burns died at a relatively young age on April 1, 1924 — the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Burns & McDonnell. By that time, the firm was well established — with projects completed in 30 states and Mexico — and had employees working in large offices in Kansas City and Los Angeles, California.

According to one obituary: “The death of Clinton S. Burns is a loss to the engineering profession and to Kansas City as well...he was a man to be trusted. He built well and he had the confidence of his friends and associates. He was a student in technical engineering work of widely recognized ability. His interest in civic affairs was quiet but sincere and persistent. Added years that might have been his would have been filled with service of a notable and enduring character.”

###

### **About Burns & McDonnell**

Burns & McDonnell is a family of companies bringing together an unmatched team of 7,600 engineers, construction professionals, architects, planners, technologists and scientists to design and build our critical infrastructure. With an integrated construction and design mindset, we offer full-service capabilities with more than 60 offices globally. Founded in 1898, Burns & McDonnell is 100% employee-owned. Learn how we are [designed to build](#).