Littleton Historic Register Nomination

Property (Historic Name): Pray-Parsons House

Address: 6777 Southridge Lane Littleton, CO 80120 Arapahoe County

Current Owner (Private): Sally H. Parsons Trust

Preparer: Dr. Mary Therese Anstey (HistoryMatters, LLC) on behalf of Historic Littleton, Inc. for the owner

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Pray-Parsons House is located at 6777 Southridge Lane in Littleton, within Arapahoe County. The Modern Movements home was constructed in 1962 and sits on a small cul-de-sac in the Barts Brae subdivision. Architect Bruce Sutherland designed the house and worked with builder Clyde Mannon on the property. The spacious house is virtually unaltered, in pristine condition, and spans 3,820 square feet. The expansive, .62-acre lot features not only mature landscaping (grass lawns, a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees, and multiple large flower beds) but also stunning views of the Front Range mountains. The name Pray-Parsons refers to the only two families who have owned and resided in the home over its sixty-three-year history.

Architectural Description

Oriented on a north/ south axis allowing for impressive views of the mountains from the living room and the exterior, L-shaped rear balcony, this Modern Movements style home rests on a concrete foundation. The roughly irregular-shaped house is faced in horizontal siding painted tan and a subdued mixture of red and dark brown Roman brick. The home has a complex, cross-gabled roof with overhanging eaves and modified bitumen (synthetic) surface. It features wooden windows throughout and all have trim painted tan to match the horizontal siding. The house is a one-story building with a full basement.

A curvilinear, concrete driveway featuring decorative brick edging extends from Southridge Lane toward the attached, two single-car garages with cream-colored, paneled, roll-up doors. The front-gabled roof at the streetside end of the garage features overhanging eaves, an exposed rafter end, and five fixed-pane clerestory windows in the gable face of the brick wall. East of the garages there is a narrow, black, metal gate leading through an enclosed breezeway to the backyard. A span of brick wall adjacent to the breezeway completes the garage wing of the home. Terra cotta-colored decorative tiles define a front porch area with access to both the breezeway and the home's front door. The recessed primary entry is located near the junction of the attached garage and façade wings. The front door is solid wood painted cream with a rectangular, vertical panel. There are three fixed-pane windows with patterned (vertical ridges) Lexan to the east of this entrance. The remainder of the façade features three windows on the main story. Each of these windows is a small, horizontally oriented, operative, rectangular slider located underneath the overhanging eaves. Partially obscured by juniper bushes, there are also three basement windows on the façade. These windows all appear to be rectangular, vertically oriented, with two fixed panes. The main story of the façade is faced in narrow sections of horizontal siding painted tan, with vertical dividers. The basement level is faced in brick.

The rear of the house has southeast-facing and southwest-facing wings. Around the streetside end of the garage wing is the southeast-facing side of the house. It features the rear of the

garage, the breezeway with access to the kitchen, and a large patio. The wall from the corner of the house to the breezeway is faced in brick. This brick wall has a pair of adjacent, rectangular, horizontally oriented, slider windows. The breezeway is paved in identical tiles as the front porch/ is a continuation of the front porch. The west-facing (interior) side of the garage mimics the side along Southridge Lane, with brick siding, exposed rafter end, and clerestory windows. There is a single, solid, cream-colored wooden door offering access from the garage through the breezeway and to the rear patio or kitchen. The breezeway has a simple, wooden, open, trellis-like roof that spans the area between the garage and the kitchen. The spacious, front-gabled, partially covered patio is paved with terra cotta-colored tinted concrete. The north side of the patio roof is open wooden slats, with the back side covered in asphalt/ composition; it is an extension of the home's roof. There are fixed pane clerestory windows along the dining room's exterior brick wall. A large, rectangular, vertically oriented slider window looks out from the kitchen and there is a sliding glass door offering on-grade access to the patio from the dining room. The patio roof intersects with the front-gabled living room roof, with only some of the eight fixed-pane clerestory windows visible from the backyard. The living room wall is mostly brick with horizontal siding between a main-story corner window and a similar basement-level opening. Both windows are narrow, rectangular, and vertically oriented. The upper window features two fixed lites with a small bush obscuring detail of the basement window. The top of the brick chimney is visible from the southern (rear) corner of the house.

The southwest-facing wing on the rear of the Pray-Parsons House features the west-facing wall of the dining room, a bump out to the west (for the living room on the main level and basement-level den), the massive brick chimney for both main and basement fireplaces, and the long, western wing of the home. The dining room exterior has horizontal siding and three evenly spaced windows. These windows are nearly square fixed panes. The bump out is divided in half, with one side featuring windows on the main and basement levels and the other side dominated by the brick chimney that extends from the foundation to above the roofline. The main-level living room window is oversized, rectangular, horizontally oriented, and extends nearly to the corner offering impressive views to the west from the living room. The basement window spans the same area as the one above, but it is a narrow, horizontally oriented, rectangular fixed pane. The western wing of the house-- containing (on both levels) the bedrooms, bathrooms, and a narrow hallway to access them-- intersects with the main public wing of the home and is most visible from near the western corner of the lot. Access to the main level balcony is via two west-facing sliding doors. One is in the hallway near the intersection of the two wings. The other, with access from the main bedroom, is centered on the main level of the home and marks the northwest corner of the balcony. The balcony surround has simple wooden slats painted tan. Half of a corner window appears at the west corner of the main story. Both the west- and (roughly) north-facing portions of this unit feature two rectangular, vertically oriented, fixed panes. There is another sliding glass patio door on the basement level. It is located near the intersection of the public and private wings of the home. Just north of this secondary entrance, there are two nearly square, horizontally oriented, fixed pane windows. There are also two other windows on the basement level located closer to the northwest corner of the house. Each of these windows features paired, rectangular, vertically oriented, fixed panes.

The northwest-facing side of the public wing of this house also is most visible from the western corner of the lot. The front-gabled rear roofline features clerestory windows, overhanging eaves, and exposed rafter end as previously described. Immediately underneath the clerestory windows and adjacent to the side of the massive brick chimney, there is an oversized, rectangular,

horizontally oriented, fixed pane window. There is a smaller, rectangular, vertically oriented, fixed pane window with two lites located at the intersection of the two wings of the home on the main level. The shorter end of the balcony extends across nearly the entire width of the living room. On the basement level there are two sets of windows. The larger window mirrors the oversized living room window in size, shape, and orientation; however, it is tripartite. There also is a corner window on the basement level near the intersection of the home's two wings. This window is oversized, rectangular, vertically oriented, two-lite, and fixed pane.

The northwest end of the house is faced in horizontal siding with only the main story visible. As previously described, it features a front-gabled roofline with overhanging eaves, clerestory windows, and exposed rafter end. The corner window (described on the southwest-facing main story) wraps around from the rear of the house. This side, like the other, features rectangular, vertically oriented, fixed panes.

Alterations

According to Arapahoe County Assessor's records, this house was constructed in 1962. An analysis of the style, building materials, and other historical records corroborate this date of construction. An assessment of Google Earth images and an interview with current owner Sally Parsons confirm there have been no exterior alterations to the property. The southwest-facing living room windows (adjacent to the main fireplace) were replaced with identical materials and no changes to the fenestration pattern.

Integrity Assessment

Constructed in 1962, this residential building exhibits an extremely high level of physical integrity relative to the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Park Service and the City of Littleton: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. The home is in its original location and, despite widescale changes in the city at large, the setting still feels rural. There is a horse property to the west and both the cul-de-sac street pattern and mature landscaping enhance the sense of privacy. This virtually unaltered home remains pristinely intact and has benefitted from loving maintenance over its sixty-three years of existence in the caring and capable hands of only two owners. This home, due to its impeccable midcentury design and craftsmanship, still appears as a distinctive, architect-designed and craft-built residence. Its association with architect Bruce Sutherland and builder Clyde Mannon remains obvious. Overall, this property exudes high quality home construction with numerous character-defining features of the Modern Movements style. Sally Parsons lived in this home during her ten years of governmental service, both on City Council and as Littleton's first female Mayor; this fact makes the property strongly associated with her local importance. This building retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its historical and architectural significance for listing as a City of Littleton local landmark.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Pray-Parsons House is eligible for designation as a City of Littleton local landmark under three criteria. First, the home displays characteristics of Modern architecture. Second, it is identified as the work of an architect and builder-- Bruce Sutherland and Clyde Mannon-- who both influenced Modern architecture in the Denver metropolitan area. Third, the house is associated with an individual who made a significant contribution to the development of Littleton: the city's first female mayor, Sally Parsons, who has resided at this property since 1968. The period of

significance for the first two criteria is 1962. The period of significance for its association with Sally Parsons is 1973-1983 to represent the period she served on Littleton City Council and as Mayor.

Narrative

I. The home displays characteristics of Modern architecture

The Pray-Parsons House exhibits several characteristics associated with Usonian architecture. American architectural master Frank Lloyd Wright developed this new style in the 1930s and other professionals, including several practicing in Littleton, continued to build in this Modern expression into the 1960s.

A history of Modernism places the home at 6777 Southridge Lane into its proper architectural context. Modernism sought to make a break from the past. Instead of relying upon historical examples and traditional building methods, Modern architects emphasized functionalism, rationalism, and the latest technology in their commissions. Modernism has its earliest roots in mid- to late-1800s Europe, with Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace and Gustave Eiffel's iconic tower. Both buildings were groundbreaking because they proudly displayed their structure on the outside rather than having it buried beneath decorative elements. For the most part, the public was not ready for such audacious design, but these works and others inspired members of the international architectural profession.

The avant-garde De Stijl movement, established in the Netherlands during World War I and gaining international popularity in the 1920s, sought to develop a harmonious balance between horizontals and verticals in art, interior design, and architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright's experimentation with space and forms influenced this movement and others into the later- 1920s. But it was Wright's former boss, Louis Sullivan, who provided one of the key guiding principles for Modern architecture. He stated, "form ever follows function" and adhered to this tenet in his designs for Chicago skyscrapers. Such emphasis on function inspired Modern architects, increasingly, to consider machines when designing buildings. French architect Le Corbusier voiced a second principle of Modern architecture in his 1923 book *Vers Une Architecture* (*Toward a New Architecture*), stating, "a house is a machine for living in." A belief in mass production, another concept related to the machine age, influenced both Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, an architectural and applied arts movement that German Walter Gropius established in 1919. Gropius and fellow Bauhaus architects Marcel Breuer and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe rejected Arts & Crafts sensibilities to create buildings with an appearance traditionalists considered severe, elegant, and spare.

Modernism came to the United States when Gropius, Breuer, Mies van der Rohe, and others emigrated after fleeing Nazi Germany in the 1930s. In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art in New York applied the term International Style to their architecture. These and other mid-twentieth century architects viewed the clean lines and machine aesthetic of Modern architecture as an ideal response to an increasingly complex world, especially when applied to large swaths of land and integrated with new street layouts; Modern architecture was a favorite for new construction in bombed-out European cities and for urban renewal projects worldwide. Modern architects employed technological and material advances, integrating a wide variety of prefabricated components into their designs. Both Gropius and Mies van der Rohe accepted positions as architecture professors at American universities and, through their numerous students, influenced American architecture during the postwar period and beyond.

Frank Lloyd Wright

This famous American architect was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, in 1867, to a teacher mother and a father who rarely held a steady job, but attempted positions as varied as preacher, musician, and school superintendent. Wright's parents divorced in 1884, and the son never saw his father again. After the marital split, the future architect changed his name from Frank Lincoln Wright to Frank Lloyd Wright, adopting his mother's family name as a sign of esteem and offering an indication of the family influence upon him.

Wright studied civil engineering at the University of Wisconsin in 1887 but did not earn a degree. He learned a great deal from his apprenticeship with the Chicago architectural firm of Adler & Sullivan. Wright worked at the firm from 1887 to 1893, where he designed homes with Victorian influences, before establishing his own practice. He developed and popularized the Prairie style-- with an emphasis on horizontality and low, flat rooflines with extended overhangs-- from the late-1890s to the early-1900s. In response to a demand for more modest homes during the Great Depression, Wright developed and employed the Usonian style for middle class owners.

Throughout his career, Wright employed experimental materials like reinforced concrete and steel, often with mixed results. Key tenets of his designs included integration of buildings within the natural environment, creation of human-scale features such as built-in furniture, and the ideal of holistic building plans with well-integrated interiors and exteriors. He shaped the education and style of future architects via both Taliesin and Taliesin West, school-studio-cultural camps located in Wisconsin and Arizona. Wright died in 1959 after a seventy-two-year career.

The Pray-Parsons House exhibits influences from Usonian design, a modern expression American master architect Frank Lloyd Wright developed and in which other architects found inspiration. Usonian style homes were intended to be affordable for the middle classes. The houses were smaller than Wright's grand homes of the 1920s, featured little to no ornamentation, and often lacked attics or basements. Usonian homes were designed in three distinct zones: living space, small bedrooms, and a kitchen-dining core. The focus was on human scale and simple lines.

Integration with the landscape gave Usonian houses, almost always architect-designed, a different appearance than the boxy Minimal Traditional and Ranch homes other large-scale pre- and post-war subdivisions favored. *Colorado"s Historic Architecture & Engineering Guide* notes how the walls of Usonian homes "extended beyond the interior to the outside, intermingling the two." This source also describes how large windows brought the outside in and indicates "natural materials blended the house with the site and warm colors on the interior further contributed to the feeling of bringing the outdoors inside."

Common elements of Usonian style visible in the architecture of the Pray-Parsons House include:

1. dominant horizontal lines
2. overhanging eaves
3. siting that features both private and open sides of the home
4. zoned interior plan with kitchen-dining space, public living room (and basement), plus private bedroom wings
5. built-in furniture
6. inside-outside walls
7. dominant central hearths

Architect Bruce Sutherland's choice of a Usonian design for 6777 Southridge Lane may be attributed, at least partially, to two of his major influences, both professionals who executed Usonian designs themselves. Sutherland worked for Charles Gordon Lee from 1956 to 1961. Lee was an established architect in the Denver metropolitan area who studied at both Taliesin and Taliesin West. He is best known as the on-site architect representing Taliesin for the Rocky Mountain National Park Administration Building in Estes Park. He also designed multiple private residences,

including his own (no longer extant) at 6733 S. Windermere Avenue in Littleton. Joe Lort, jr., not a licensed architect but still a designer of multiple homes, also influenced Sutherland. He, too, studied at Taliesin and later designed noteworthy Modern residences in both the Hilltop and Bow Mar neighborhoods in Denver.

II. The home is identified as the work of an architect and builder-- Bruce Sutherland and Clyde Mannon-- who both influenced Modern architecture in the Denver metropolitan area

Both documentary and physical evidence within the style and design elements of 6777 Southridge Lane indicate Bruce Sutherland was its architect. Similarly, distinctive features of the home and the construction methods employed point to builder Clyde Mannon's involvement as well. The two professionals had an established working relationship, having met in 1956 after an introduction from Sutherland's father. Mannon hired Bruce Sutherland to design the home on the last remaining lot in the Arapahoe Acres subdivision. Then, the two worked together on at least thirty-six homes in the Arapaho Hills subdivision. The text below presents the biographies of both Sutherland and Mannon before providing evidence of their associations with the Pray-Parsons House.

Architect: Sutherland

Bruce Roswell Sutherland was born on 20 October 1931 in Denver. His parents were Charles and Angie Sutherland, and he had an older brother, Charles Jr. Sutherland graduated from South High School in 1949 and continued his education at Denver University, studying in the School of Architecture and Planning under architect Eugene Strernberg. On 10 December 1950, he married Joanne James in Denver. Two years later he, and several of his fellow architecture students from DU, transferred to the University of Utah. Sutherland earned both a BA in Architecture and BFA from this institution. While in college and immediately after graduation, he worked as a draftsman for several prominent architects, including Joe Lort, jr. in Denver from 1949 to 1952 and two Salt Lake City firms: Ashton, Evans & Brazier from 1952 to 1953 and Underwood & Ehlers from 1953 to 1954. At the age of 25, Sutherland became the youngest registered architect in Colorado. He accepted a position with established Modernist architect Charles Gordon Lee, working in that office until March 1961. Lort and Lee (as described in section I above) were both adherents to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

In 1958, while working for Lee, Sutherland designed the "High Country Home" for the twelfth annual Denver Home Show. This show was held at the University of Denver fieldhouse, offering attendees opportunities to view the latest in home design and see the newest models from mostly builders. Federal mortgage rules, financial means, and personal tastes significantly impacted the postwar housing market and most new houses were standard Ranch (and later Split-Level) homes within large subdivisions. These mass-produced properties integrated many modern appliances but only made brief nods to Modern architecture. These homes were small-"m" Modernism or Modernism for the Masses. However, Sutherland's model home was different because it was architect-designed, expressed Modernist architectural influences, and cost significantly more. Mannon and Associates, Inc. was responsible for the construction of Sutherland's show home at 1940 S. York Street. *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal* referred, in a 5 February 1958 article, to the architect-designed home as the "House of the Future." An article in the 13 April 1958 *Rocky Mountain News* focused on both the aesthetic beauty and functionality of the home, emphasizing

its massive stone fireplace in the living room and flexible design suitable for entertaining both inside and out along with "every modern convenience any housewife could want, plus spacious, easy-to-clean living areas and a flexible floor plan." This same story also credited builder Mannon with "installing electric plug mold throughout with outlets at every four feet" and noted how "copper plumbing and waste system should conquest difficulties along that line."

In 1961, while still working in Arapaho Hills, Sutherland opened his own firm. This firm was responsible for the design of the house at 6777 Southridge Lane. As demand for architect-designed, single-family homes declined, Sutherland became well-known as a designer of lodges, condominiums, and apartments complexes in and near ski and resort areas nationwide. Sutherland joined the firm of Frederic A. Benedict & Associates, Architects and Planners, in Aspen in 1967. This firm was influential in making Aspen not only a ski town but also a mecca of Modern architecture with its Aspen Institute campus and several other landmarks. Sutherland worked briefly, in the late-1970s, in Oakland for Tom Wilson who developed the Aspen Square condominiums. He returned to Aspen in 1982, becoming a named associate in Benedict, Sutherland, and Duesterberg Ltd. This firm was renamed Sutherland Fallin, Inc. in 1987. A year after a heart transplant surgery, Bruce Sutherland died on 8 June 1993.

Current owner Sally Parsons provided the original blueprints for her home, an amazing asset and proof that 6777 Southridge Lane is a Bruce Sutherland design. Even if the original blueprints did not exist, however, the links to this architect are clear. There is an architectural throughline from the House of Future through Arapaho Hills to the Pray-Parsons House. All of them have the hallmarks of Bruce Sutherland designs.

Architect-Designed Makes House Custom to Owners

Advertisements for Arapaho Hills touted the superiority of custom design, noting how the architect would study the family and build a home suited to their preferences in terms of closet space, room placement, and any required specialized features.

Sutherland offered this exact service for Lloyd and Carrel Pray, the original owners of 6777 Southridge Lane. Carrel was an amateur musician and taught piano lessons at the house. She requested specialized storage for sheet music. Sutherland designed this shelving and Mannon constructed it in the rear of the living room.

Common elements of architect Bruce Sutherland's domestic designs evident at the Pray-Parsons House include:

1. Bringing Outside In – This feature is most evident in the entry foyer of 6777 Southridge Lane where the exterior horizonal siding covers the interior wall above the stairs heading to the basement. Other techniques Sutherland employed to blend interior and exterior spaces included use of large picture windows offering scenic views toward the Front Range mountains and a glass patio door leading towards a covered area and landscaped backyard.

2. Complex Rooflines Visible on Interior – Sutherland used exposed beams and intersecting roof planes, giving the living room at 6777 Southridge Lane an expansive, open feel and appearance.

3. Dominant Hearth – A floor to ceiling brick fireplace appears in both the living room and the basement-level den. The massive chimney also is visible on the rear of the house.

Builder: Mannon

Clyde Mannon was born on 18 May 1918, the second of four children and only son of James and Gertrude Mannon. The family lived on the farm his great-grandfather, an immigrant from Bavaria, acquired near Golden in 1882. He graduated from Golden High School in 1935, aspiring to become an aeronautical engineer. His grandmother promised him the funds to attend Colorado A&M (now Colorado State University in Fort Collins), however, she died before he graduated from high school. Mannon worked briefly at the Coors Porcelain Plant, but his position ended when the company closed in response to a bid for unionization. Mannon accepted his first job in construction, as the carpenter's helper, at Ralston Dam. He married Barbara Haak in 1938 and the couple, ultimately, had two daughters, Jean and Linda. Mannon returned to Coors between 1939 and 1945, working at the brewery on machine inspections and maintenance.

Mannon served in World War II with the Army Air Corps, doing his pilot training in Texas and California. He returned to Golden after the war and soon after, through his role as a charter member of the Golden Lions Club, met fellow member Verne Lacer, the co-owner with Edward Hawkins of the prefabricated housing firm Construction Products Company. When this duo closed their business, Hawkins acquired the site of the company's first prefab home; this land ultimately became Arapahoe Acres where Hawkins and Mannon collaborated until 1957 when Hawkins asked Mannon and Associates, Inc. to complete all work. It was at this time that Mannon also established his working relationship with architect Bruce Sutherland.

In 1964 Mannon left the construction business. For ten years he owned the first fast food restaurant in Golden, a Dairy Delite located near the School of Mines campus. He established Foothills Realty in 1974 with his business partner and friend Lauren Babb. He retired in the mid-1980s, but remained active in the Golden community, especially with the Chamber of Commerce and efforts to promote tourism in his hometown. Mannon died in 2015, with his obituary describing him as a quiet man and noting how much he loved his family.

Mannon's construction legacy is most relevant to this nomination. He built approximately 100 architect-designed homes throughout the Denver metro area, working with Modern architects Eugene Sternberg, Carl Groos, and, of course, Sutherland. Mannon was responsible for two subdivisions (Arapahoe Acres and Arapaho Hills) that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, *Better Homes and Gardens* chose Mannon to construct their annual show home for seven years. Mannon also was active in the Homebuilders Association of Denver, serving as president of the organization in 1964. His last construction project was the Golden subdivision of Rimrock.

No written documents were uncovered that definitively state Clyde Mannon was responsible for the construction of 6777 Southridge Lane. However, known history and physical evidence within the Pray-Parsons House offer near proof. Architect Bruce Sutherland had an established working relationship with Clyde Mannon that spanned at least seven years by the time this house was constructed. In addition, Mannon was the go-to builder for numerous Modernist, architect-designed homes within the metro area. Looking at the Pray-Parsons House also identifies Mannon as the builder. As with his numerous other projects, this property employed high quality materials and superior construction techniques. The visible dovetail joints above the front door at 6777 Southridge Lane are nearly identical to those within multiple Mannon-built homes in Arapaho Hills. This house also has several features this builder routinely created in other domestic commissions,

including sliding closet doors, accordion doors to screen of the laundry area, and a checkerboard design for the built-in laundry hamper.

III. The home is associated with an individual who made a significant contribution to the development of Littleton: the city's first female mayor Sally Parsons

Sally R. Holz was born in April 1934 in Sandpoint, Idaho, to Walter and Hilda. She had a twin brother Fritz and an older sister Doris. Sally showed an early interest in government, studying civics in high school and participating in Girls State. This competitive, American Legion Auxiliary-sponsored program, established in 1937, chose a single male and female from each high school to spend the summer at a college campus in the state capital and learn the realities of state government. On 29 August 1954, Sally married Sandpoint native Robert W. Parsons. The newlyweds soon moved to Champaign-Urbana where Bob completed the final year of his undergraduate degree and then enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Engineering at the University of Illinois. Sally earned an MS in Food Sciences in 1956.

Upon graduation, multiple corporations recruited Bob for full-time employment. With the Soviet launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, the American government, believing they might fall behind their main Cold War rival, encouraged scientific education and space exploration. As part of this pro-science initiative, established businesses also sought to apply advanced science to their methods and products, focusing on technological innovations. Sally was interested in moving back West and encouraged Bob to take a position with Marathon Oil Company in Littleton. It was the only recruiting visit where she accompanied her husband. The couple stayed several days at an Englewood motel (now the Lucky U) close to Marathon's newly built research and development laboratory at 7400 S. Broadway. While Marathon engineers interviewed Bob, the corporate wives wooed Sally with details about the Littleton community: its new homes, schools, and social opportunities. The recruitment continued into the evenings with Marathon couples inviting the Parsonses to dinners at the best area restaurants. The couple ultimately chose to move to Littleton and Bob accepted a job as a senior researcher with Marathon.

Marathon Oil in Littleton

In the post-World War II era businesses were drawn to Colorado's climate, central location, and educated workforce. The Ohio Oil Company, a crude oil producer and gasoline processor/distributor originally established in 1887, broke ground for their new research and development laboratory in Littleton in 1955.

The lab originally employed 75 scientists and 25 support staff. By 1962, the facility had grown to accommodate 220 employees and formally changed its name to the Marathon Oil Company Research Center. The lab reached its peak employment of 351 scientists and staff in 1981.

In 2000 the Littleton lab closed, with much of the remaining research workforce relocating to Houston. Marathon donated surplus equipment to local schools. The seventy-seven-acre site is now a mixed-use development with more than 900 residences and a central greenspace.

Sally and Bob's first Colorado home was at 6064 S. Fairfield Street. Coincidentally, it, too, was designed by architect Bruce Sutherland. That house was significantly smaller than 6777 Southridge Lane but featured similar Modern Movements design elements like a dominant brick chimney that extended from the foundation to above the roofline, clerestory windows, a roof with

overhanging eaves, and a breezeway between the garage and backyard.

The culture at Marathon was inclusive and community minded. There was an active recreation committee that organized softball, basketball, volleyball, and bowling leagues. The in-house *DRC Week* newspaper, according to Bob's history of Marathon, was established in 1963 and featured Dr. G.K. "Joe" Gunnel's column, "a more up-close and personal look at various goings-on around the lab… written in a Damon Runyonesque style." The lab made monetary contributions to nascent educational and cultural institutions in Littleton, including the Town Hall Arts Center, Bemis Library, YMCA, Little Britches Rodeo and Craig Hospital. Employees also donated their time. Bob Parsons was a Boys Scouts leader for several troops and mentored young scientists. Other employees became involved with the South Suburban Parks and Recreation Board, South Arapahoe Sanitation Board, and Littleton School Board. The wives of the scientists played their roles, too. Most volunteered to assist with new employee recruitment, serve on the local PTA, hold teas and social events for relocating scientists and their families, and welcome wives and children to Littleton with advice on schools, extracurricular activities, shopping, and available homes.

Bob and Sally Parsons had two sons: Brian, born on 24 March 1958, and Alan, born on 17 July 1961. Their growing family caused them to consider a larger home. Two important Marathon connections were instrumental in the Parsonses finding and financing 6777 Southridge Lane. The original owners of the home were Lloyd and Carrel Pray. Lloyd was a carbonate researcher at Marathon. The couple had four children, with the fourth born in 1968. The Prays decided they, too, needed a larger home and he accepted a job as a geology professor at the University of Wisconsin. To sell their Littleton home, Lloyd posted an advertisement on a bulletin board at Marathon. Bob Parsons saw Lloyd's "For Sale" notice and he and Sally quickly toured the home. Sally loved the house and promised Bob, if they were able to purchase it, she would never leave. Marathon made this dream come true by signing a promissory note for $30,000 on 19 July 1968. The Parsonses agreed to make monthly payments of $225 to the company to repay this sum at 6.75 percent interest. Sally remembers this process of obtaining financing from the company as "very simple, we just applied." But she noted it may have been easier because the Prays had a similar arrangement with Marathon. The company assisted with their financing for construction of this house; their deal was at 5.25 percent interest on a $20,000 loan with monthly repayments of $150.

Through both Marathon and her personal connections, Sally was active in the Littleton community. She was the first female elder at the First Presbyterian Church, served on both the school district study committee and as the PTA Board President, and was a member of the Mile High United Way Board of Trustees. Sally worked as a legislative analyst and lobbyist for Special Districts-Parks and Recreation for six years. She also was a member of the Ad Hoc Commission for I-470, served as president of the Arapahoe County League of Women Voters, and participated on the DRCOG Citizens Advisory Committee for three years.

Sally made her first foray into elected local politics in 1973 when she ran for Littleton City Council. Various campaign brochures illustrated her qualifications, personal background, beliefs, and goals. Overall, she was people-focused and wanted greater governmental transparency for local citizens. Sally listed her personal attributes of competence, perspective, energy, and integrity as assets for her election to City Council and promised to bring a positive approach to local government.

In 1977 Councilman Vaughn Gardinier nominated Sally for mayor. After a vote of the City Council, she became Littleton's first female mayor. Her two-year tenure included numerous accomplishments during a time when the city was growing and changing.

Key Milestones of the Parsons Administration included:

- Completion of South Platte Park
- Relocation of City Government to Littleton Center
- Solution for Bowles Avenue traffic congestion
- Depression of railroad tracks
- Launch of Littleton-wide traffic study
- Creation of South Industrial neighborhood
- Establishment of Youth Employment Office
- Enhanced services for young people with legal issues

She invited President Jimmy Carter to visit both the Littleton Center and solar projects for the local housing authority as part of his "Sun Day" trip to Colorado. Showing her signature good humor, she distributed annual, unofficial Crabby-Appleton awards to recognize the best and worst from municipal employees, City Council, and area agencies operating in Littleton. After her mayoral service was complete, Sally returned to the City Council until 1983.

In 1986, after Sally finished her political career and Bob retired from Marathon, the couple purchased the Spinning Wheel dry cleaners on Littleton Boulevard. They chose this business because, as noted in an *Exclusively Littleton* article, they felt like they "needed to be 'repotted'-- to get new roots-- a new challenge." This job also allowed both of them to apply their knowledge of chemistry and technology while learning the new skill of managing employees. Sally and Bob sold this business in 1994. Bob passed away on 13 March 2009 and Sally continues to live at 6777 Southridge Lane.

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PHOTO LOG

All images by Mary Therese Anstey - 24 October 2025

Image #	Description
southridgeln6777-1	Façade, garage, breezeway
southridgeln6777-2	Primary entry, facade
southridgeln6777-3	Breezeway from driveway
southridgeln6777-4	Primary entry
southridgeln6777-5	North side of garage
southridgeln6777-6	Rear (northeast) of garage, patio
southridgeln6777-7	Rear (east) of garage, patio
southridgeln6777-8	Rear (southeast) of dining room, patio
southridgeln6777-9	View from backyard looking west
southridgeln6777-10	Rear (west) dining room, living room, private wing (partial)
southridgeln6777-11	Rear (west) dining room, living room, private wing
southridgeln6777-12	Rear (southwest) private wing, living room
southridgeln6777-13	Side (north)

southridgeln6777-1

southridgeln6777-2


southridgeln6777-3

southridgeln6777-4


southridgeln6777-5


southridgeln6777-6


southridgeln6777-7


southridgeln6777-8


southridgeln6777-9

southridgeln6777-10

southridgeln6777-11

southridgeln6777-12


southridgeln6777-13