



The Burge Story - Fourth Generation

The Family Returns to Burge



The Bolton family, 1920: Dorothy, son John, daughter Dorothy, and Louis



Ida Gray Morehouse and her son Dutton, 1906



Fletcher Glass, Merritt Morehouse, and son Dutton Morehouse, 1909



The present "main house" at Burge was built in 1920 and modeled after Homewood, an 1805 elaborate country villa near Baltimore exemplifying the Federal architectural style, located on the Johns Hopkins University campus.

The children of Sadai and John Gray reached adulthood in their adoptive homes and established their own lives. Ida married Chicago architect Merritt Josiah Morehouse and had one son, Dutton. Dorothy married Louis Davout Bolton, a successful salesman in the bicycle and automotive industries in Detroit, and had two children, John and Dorothy. These two sisters and their families emerged as stewards for the next generation at Burge.

In 1906 Ida Morehouse and her husband Merritt purchased the shares of Burge owned by her four siblings for \$500 each, returning the farm to single ownership. In 1920 Merritt designed and built a new home at Burge on the site of the old house. The old house was rolled on logs across what is now highway 142 to its present site as a home for Dorothy and Louis Bolton, who renovated and expanded it. At this time and later Dorothy Bolton purchased 230 acres of the farm back from her sister, including the site of Wiley Burge's original farm home and the family graveyard as well as the land surrounding the Bolton house.

Even though both families maintained primary residences in Evanston, Illinois, and Detroit until the 1930s, they visited their homes at Burge often and became involved in the community as had their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents before them. In the 1920s, in response to the lack of education facilities

for local African Americans, Ida Morehouse established Parks Grove School on Burge land near the corner of Jeff Cook Road and Morehouse Road. The school also served as a church on Sundays. The Morehouses provided a home at Burge during the week for teachers at the school and maintained a close and supportive relationship with pastors of the church.



Parks Grove School and Church, about 1925

In the 1930s Louis Bolton took a leadership role in restoring Mt Pleasant Church, which had fallen into a critical state of disrepair during the depression years. Dorothy took active roles in women's clubs and in the local DAR chapter. Her profound interest in music led her to collect the spirituals

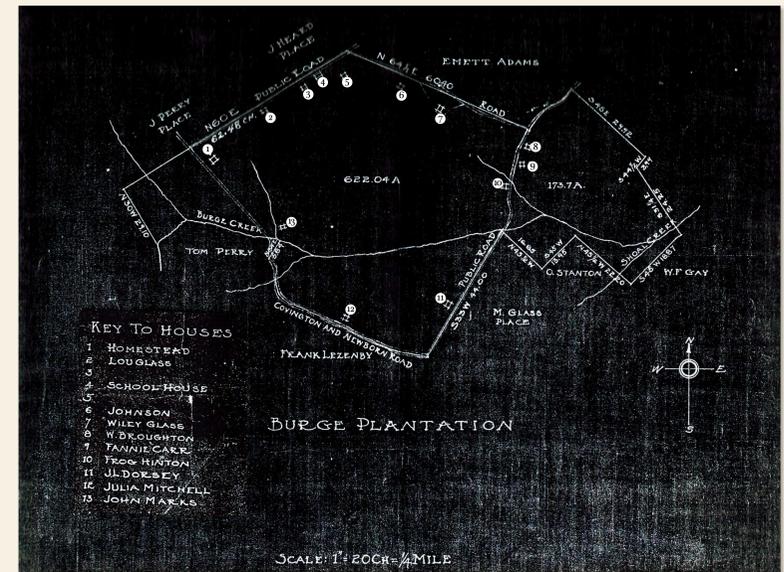
she heard sung at Burge by the African American tenants and workers and transcribe them in 1925. Many are found in The Old Songs Hymnal, a collaboration between her and noted African American composer Harry Burleigh, as well as in Twenty-six Spirituals and Folksongs, arranged by her grandson Nick Bolton. Dorothy credits Josie Marks as her source for much of the music she collected: "Josie was our best singer and had a prodigious memory. I owe to her three fourths of these songs."

The Morehouses' son Dutton and the Boltons' daughter Dorothy (Beam) married and established lives in Lake Forest, Illinois, and Detroit, where they had grown up. The Boltons' son, John, and his wife, Molly, settled nearby, and their sons, Nick and Jack Bolton, grew up in Newton County with a close relationship to their grandparents and to Burge. Dorothy Bolton Beam's two daughters, Barbara and Dolly, lived with their grandparents at Burge for extended periods during the World War II years.

Grave for Josie Marks: "Our Singer - She was needed in the heavenly choir"



The Farm Thrives Again



Map of Burge, 1925. The Covington and Newborn Road is roughly today's highway 142; the three public roads are Jeff Cook, Morehouse, and Sewell Roads. The Schoolhouse and most of the tenant houses are gone, though traces remain. Number 6 and number 7 still stand on Morehouse Road. Josie Marks (Our Singer) lived with her husband John at the site of number 13, near the southwest corner of the Coastal field. Number 1 is the site of the current main house.

In 1930 Merritt Morehouse took over the farming of the land, and devoted himself tirelessly to learning all he could about agriculture in order to make Burge a successful and profitable operation. He developed and followed a long term plan of building and maintaining good soil, rotating crops and pastureland, managing planting and harvesting, growing trees, maintaining beef cattle herds, and running a dairy. Merritt's love of the land in field and forest was matched by Ida and Dorothy's dedication to planting, cultivating, and maintaining beautiful gardens around their Burge houses, which became noted showplaces.



Plowing at Burge in the 1930s

The Burge farming operation grew in the mid 1930s as Merritt purchased in four transactions 385 contiguous acres, including the present Deer Shack area, the Sixty Acre field, the Key field, the land at Second Entrance, and 50 acres at the corner of Jeff Cook Road and Morehouse Road which was later sold to Lewis Davis. Previous owners of these properties were James T. Patrick, H. C. Adams, R. W. Campbell, G. C. Adams, and Emmett Adams.



Family members (probably Dorothy Bolton, Ida Morehouse, and Dutton Morehouse, age ten) at Burge about 1915

Ida and Merritt Morehouse died in the early 1950s, leaving the farm to their son, Dutton. Louis Bolton died in 1959, and his wife, Dorothy, died in 1964, leaving the old house and their 230 acres to their son, John Bolton.

Merritt and Ida Morehouse, about 1935