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June 16, 1980

Dear Rev. Dr. Robert Peoples:

I am writing you this letter concerning the History of my ancestors Brister and Hester Lawton, who were former Slaves, and lived on the Plantation of Robert and Harriet(or)(Martha)Lawton (White Plantation Owners) from Sylvania, Georgia.

I would like to know some information on our African Heritage, from the following questions.

- 1- Who were the African Slave parents of Brister Lawton?
- 2- What was our original African last name?
- 3- What part of Africa did our ancestors come from?
- 4- What year were they brought to the United States?

I am sending you some information that I have gathered on the "History of the Black Lawton". I have also copied some information on the "Lawton's" out of a book called "Pioneer Days, A History of the Early Days in Screven County, Georgia." By Clyde D. Hollingsworth. I was told that on most of the pages I am sending that some of these Lawton's are Black. Page 67 William J. Lawton (Black) a Member of the House of Representatives from Screven County. Please let me know who were the other Lawton's that are Black.

One important thing, I would like to have a copy of our "Freedman" papers that were issued to us after the Emancipation Proclamation.

I hope this information will assist you in finding more information on our African Heritage. Please respond back before June 26, 1980 because, we are

having our 3rd "Lawton Family Reunion" and I will need the information before or on June 26, 1980.

The person who recommended me to you is, Mr. James Reddick in Fairfax, South Carolina. I was very happy when he gave me the information to contact you.

Your assistance would be of gratitude in helping me find my roots.

Sincerely,

Ms. Viella Lawton Durham
Ms. Viella Lawton Durham

P.S. Our Black Lawton establishments are still standing today, "Lawton Grove Church 107 years old, Lawton Cemetary 107 years old, Lawton School over 100 years old.