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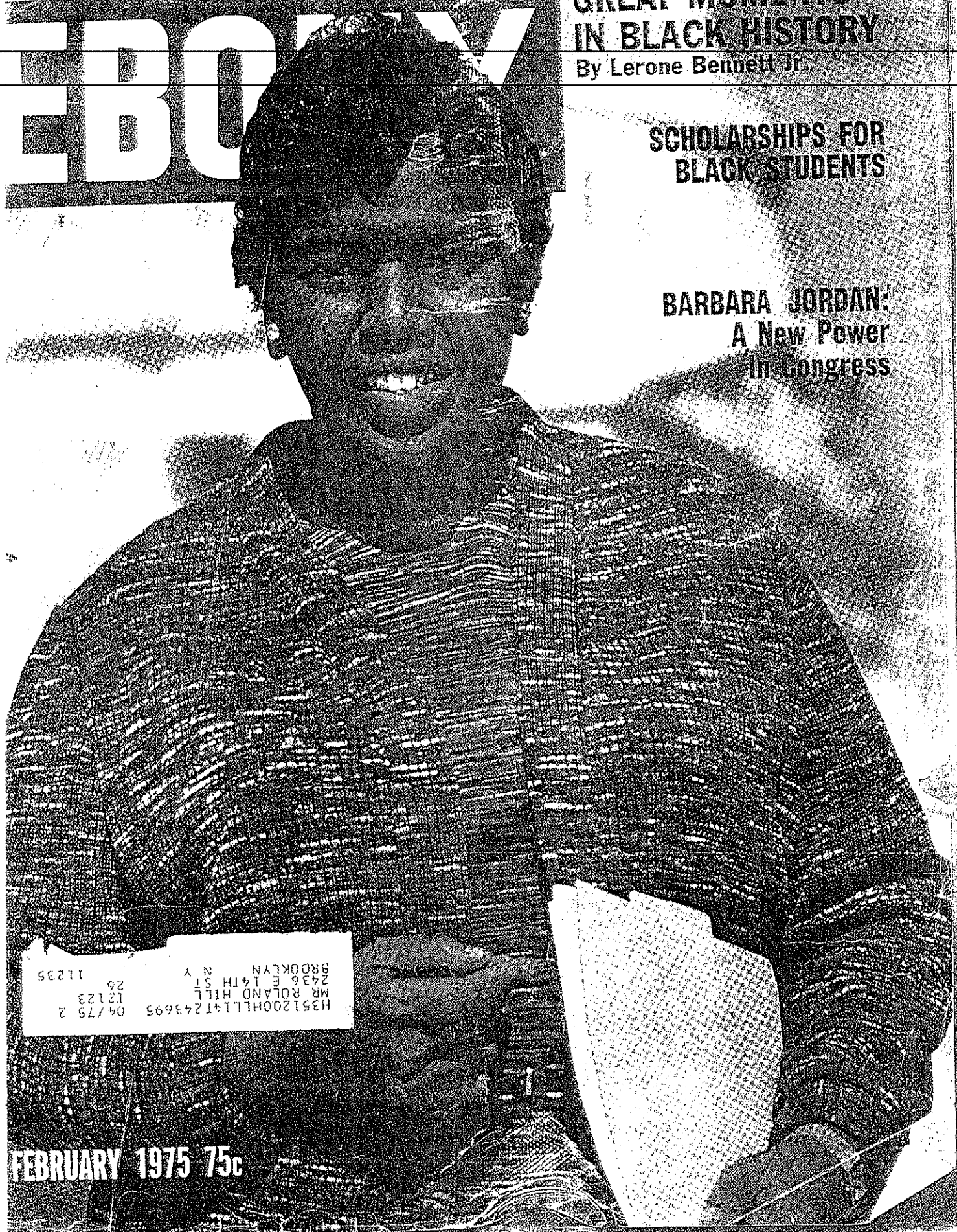
# EBO

## GREAT MOMENTS IN BLACK HISTORY

By Lerone Bennett Jr.

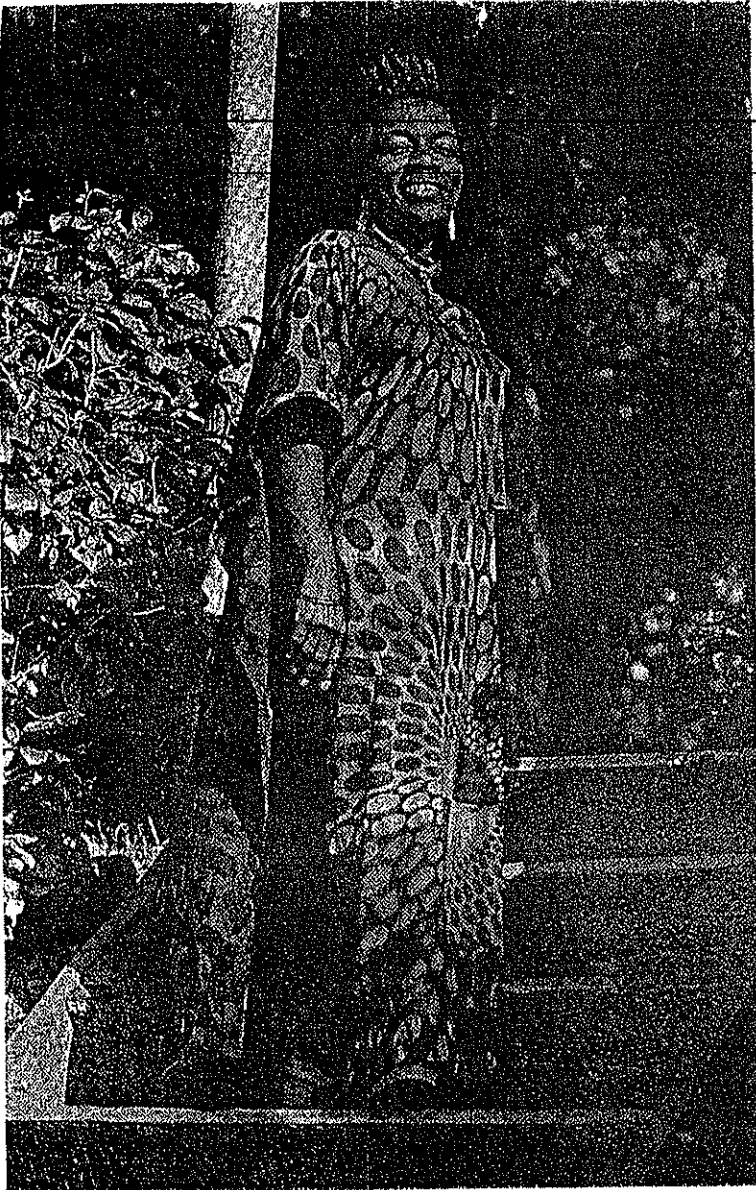
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**FEBRUARY 1975 75c**



Great, great, granddaughters of patriarch Scipio Vaughan, Ayo Vaughan-Richards (l.), and Jewel Stradford Lafontant, first met in 1956 when Nigeria's principal nursing officer visited Chicago cousin, first woman U. S. deputy solicitor general, Mrs. Lafontant has visited African relatives several times. Her mother wrote only biography of Scipio.

## THE VAUGHAN FAMILY: A Tale Of Two Continents

African and American descendants of former slave have kept in touch for more than a century

BY ERA BELL THOMPSON

**M**ORE than two decades before the Emancipation Proclamation, an ex-slave named Scipio Vaughan lay dying in Camden, S. C. Calling two of his sons to his bedside, he made them promise that they would leave the South and its "oppressive laws against colored men" and go to Yorubaland (now Western Nigeria), their ancestral home.

Burrell Churchill and James Churchill Vaughan carried out their father's wishes. A prosperous merchant, James later returned to Camden to see his family. From that reunion began a trans-Atlantic communication between the African and American branches of the Vaughan tree that has continued uninterrupted for more than 100 years.

While other black families delve into genealogy in search of identity,

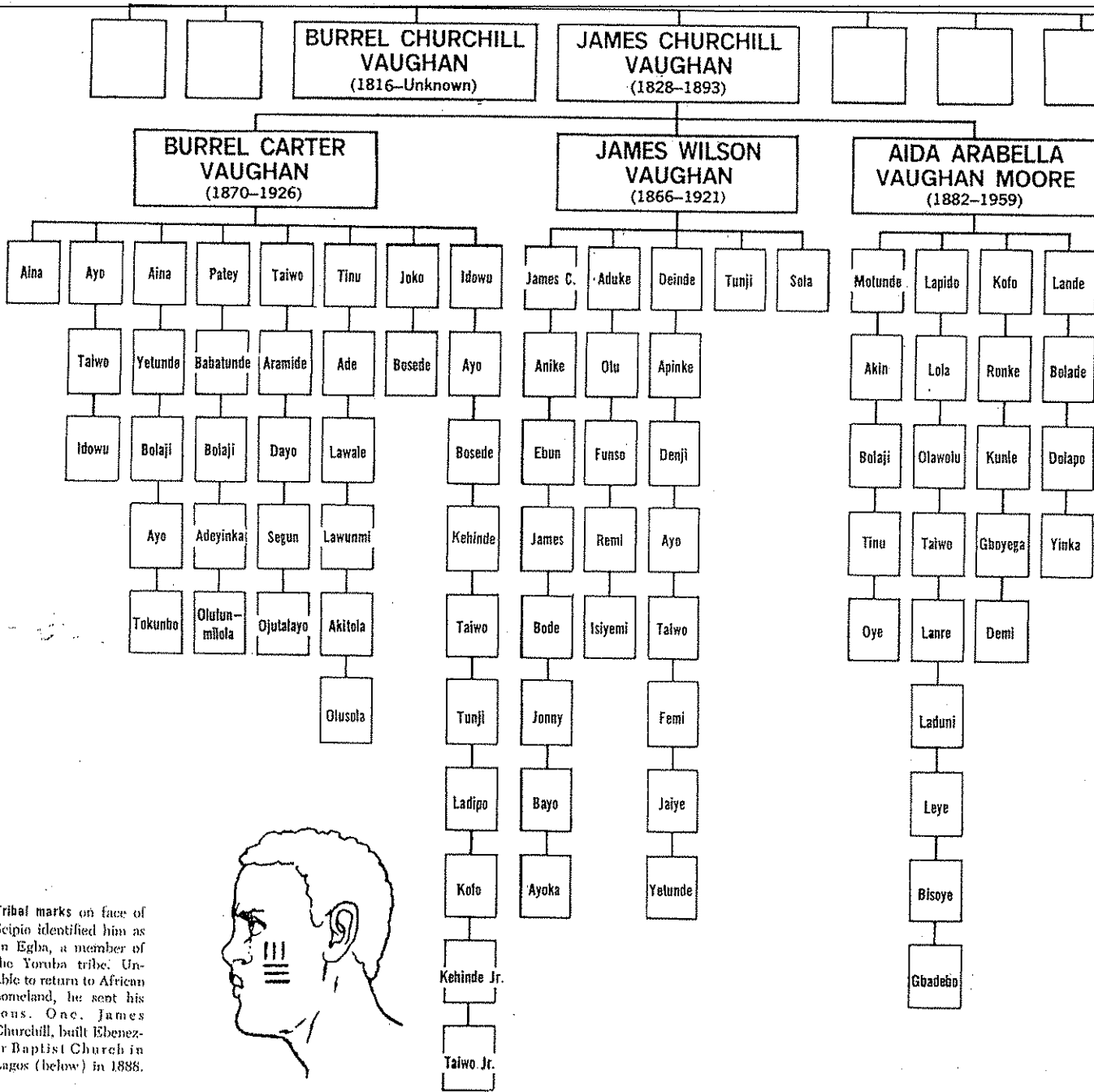
the descendants of Scipio know who they were, where they are and enjoy each others company.

The great-great-grandchildren of Scipio, like Ayo (pronounced eye-oh) Vaughan-Richards of Lagos, and Jewel Stradford Lafontant of Chicago, take their kinship seriously.

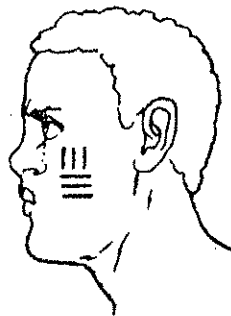
"We've kept in touch through the years," says Mrs. Vaughan-Richards, principal nursing school officer. "But I have a commitment to persuade all of our relations in the States to come home. Those who have visited us had tears in their eyes when I showed them the graves of their ancestors."

"Mother was always talking about our African relatives," recalls

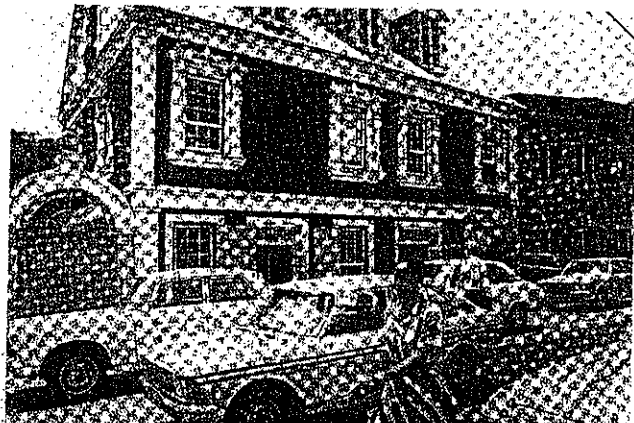
**SCIPIO**  
(Brought to South)



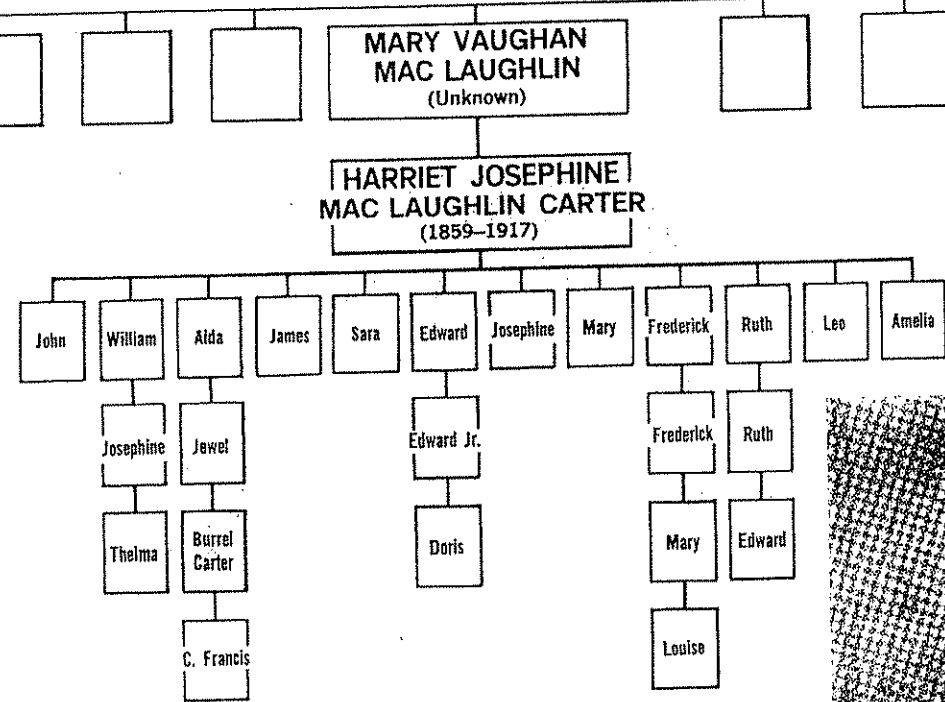
Tribal marks on face of Scipio identified him as an Egba, a member of the Yoruba tribe. Unable to return to African homeland, he sent his sons. One, James Churchill, built Ebenezer Baptist Church in Lagos (below) in 1888.



Hardware store (right) showing Brazilian influence, was built in Lagos by James Churchill more than 100 years ago. Family hopes to regain possession of sentimental landmark which now houses Kakawa Street architectural firm.



VAUGHAN  
Carolina about 1805)



ELIZABETH VAUGHAN ?  
(Unknown)

The African sector of the Vaughan family tree was prepared by Mr. J. Olubode Vaughan, great great grandson of Scipio. The rest was compiled from information given by Vaughan descendants in Europe and the United States. Great great great grandchildren and their children are not included. As the birth dates of only Burrel and James Churchill are known, the order in which Scipio's 13 children appear is purely arbitrary.

THE VAUGHAN FAMILY *Continued*

Mrs. Lafontant, U. S. deputy solicitor general. "As a small child I knew that Africa was not a jungle, and I was proud of my African cousins. But when I mentioned them to my friends, nobody believed me."

Mrs. Lafontant's mother, Mrs. Aida Arabella Stradford, was a direct descendant of Scipio through his daughter Mary, head of the one fully identifiable American branch of the Vaughan tree. When Mrs. Stradford died three years ago, she left a brief biography of the ex-slave and his sons, based mostly on information recorded by James Churchill Vaughan during his visits.

"I have related some of the facts concerning my family tree," she wrote, "not only because I regard it as interesting and somewhat inspiring, but also for the purpose of proving that while geneological trees do not flourish among us, nevertheless, there are some of which we may be justly proud."

Her facts, census figures, books, information furnished by the Kershaw County Historical Society, family Bible records and inscriptions on tombstones were supplemented by interviews on three continents with fourth, fifth and sixth generation Vaughans in order to piece together the following remarkable story.

Scipio came from the Owu district of Abeokuta, now a large city some 40 miles from Lagos, capital of Nigeria. Little is known of his early life except that he was a member of the Egba family of the Yoruba tribe, and was captured about 1805. Shipped to South Carolina, he was sold to Willie Vaughan, a Camden planter, whose surname Scipio assumed. Calculating from the age (35) found on a 1819 slave inventory, he was probably born in 1784.

An artisan of unusual capabilities and a trusted slave, he was hired out by the Vaughans to work in nearby towns as a carpenter and brick molder. He also became famous for his skill in smelting iron and fashioning wrought iron gates and fences.

Returning home one day, he stopped by the tent of an Indian for a drink of water. A Cherokee woman spoke kindly and invited him to rest. After many visits from Scipio, the woman consented to become

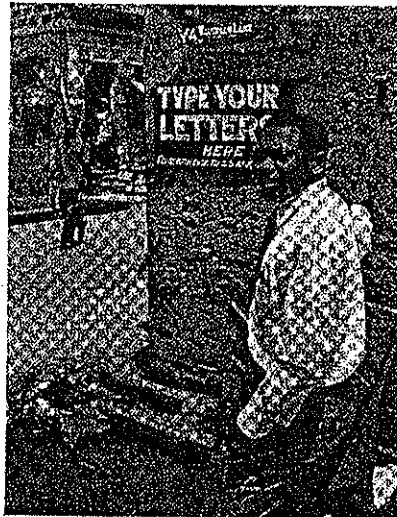


James Churchill Vaughan, son of a former slave, died in Nigeria in 1893. Says inscription on tombstone: "He migrated to Africa in year 1853 . . . owing to oppressive laws then in force against colored men in Southern States." His wife, Benin Princess Sarah Onotoyo (right), is buried in cemetery in Lagos beside her husband.





Cap she designed is adjusted on student by Ayo Vaughan-Richards as class observes. New nursing school is in background. Host of own TV show, Mrs. Vaughan-Richards relaxes (right) at lagoon-side home with architect husband Allan and children (l. to r.) Elizabeth, 14, Arthur, 12, Kenneth, 7, Venessa, 10. She met husband while attending school in Scotland, persuaded him to add Vaughan to family name. Her maternal grandfather, Chief Taiwo Obowo, is buried in huge mausoleum in heart of Lagos.



"Oldest living Vaughan" is Michael Ayo Vaughan, 76, (above) great-grandson of Scipio. He attended college in Lagos, began banking career in 1920. Feeble, nearly blind, he clearly recalls events in life of grandfather, James Churchill Vaughan.

Vaughan Lane sign in Oko section of Lagos is pointed out by James Olabode Vaughan, 46. Great great grandson of Scipio is employed by Mobil Oil as supply and distribution manager. He prepared Nigerian side of Vaughan family tree.

**THE VAUGHAN FAMILY** *Continued*  
his wife and bore him 13 children.

Willie Vaughan died in 1820. His will stipulated that the annual labor of his "negro man Scipio" be appropriated as a fund for the education of his children. "Should Scipio survive the first day of January 1825, my will and desire is that he shall be freed and have the use of his time thereafter: That he shall also have his carpenter tools and one hundred dollars at that time."

Scipio was not listed as a free black in the Kershaw County census until 1840, so he may have remained in the employ of Vaughan's widow, Sarah, and was counted among her slaves. As his name did not appear on the 1850 census, he probably died in his early 60s.

Carpenters like their father, Burrel and James saved the money they were permitted to earn doing odd jobs, and purchased their freedom. Presumably Burrel sailed first, arriving in Liberia where he established a branch of the Vaughan family.

Authors writing about that period, mention only "J. C. Vaughan" (James), who left Liberia with Baptist missionaries and travelled to Yorubaland. James preached in Ijaiye and Ogbomoso but made his living—and a very good one—as a carpenter and farmer. He and another black American named Pettiford are mentioned several times as sharpshooters for the Egbas during the Yoruba civil war, then raging.

"The Old Man," a great-grandson says, "really shot up the place!" He was also handy with his fists. Bashed over the head by a man he hired to

London film producer (*The Moon and the Sledgehammer*) and distributor James (Jimmy) Wilson Vaughan, 47, plans to do movie on Vaughan family. The European-reared half-brother of J. Olatode Vaughan is "throwback" to Cherokee great-great-grandmother.

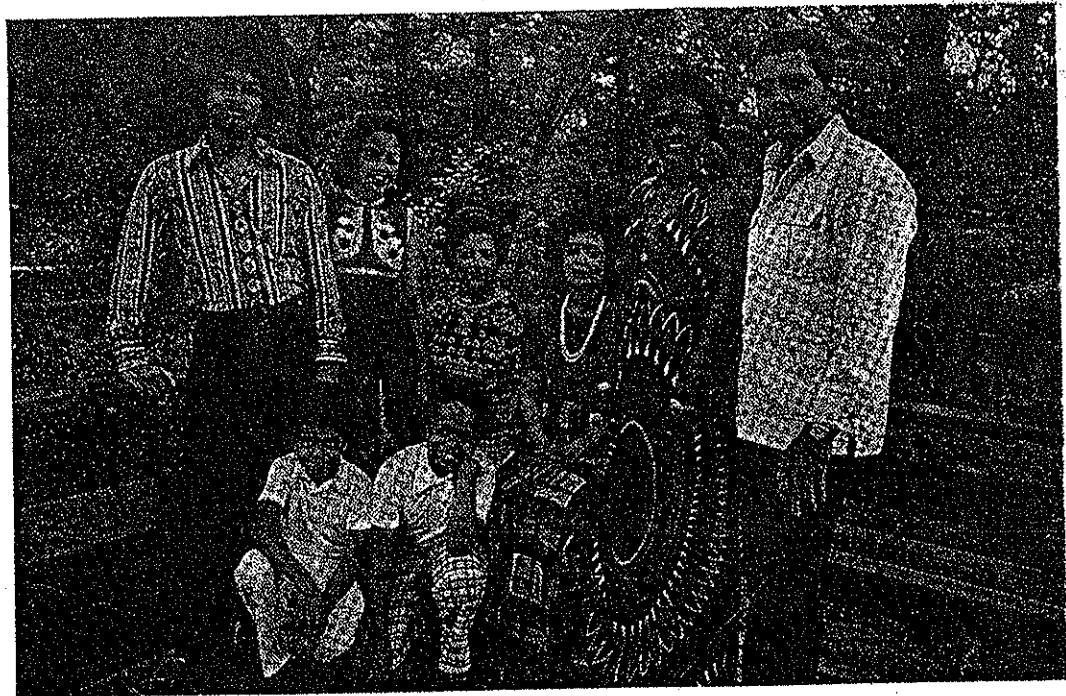


Thelma C. Robinson, retired department of labor employe, stands in front of New York home in landmark area once known as Strivers Row. House was purchased in 1919 by father, Dr. William J. Carter, a podiatrist who practiced there with brother, Dr. J. Emmett Carter, for 40 years.

Mary McDonald, retired New York public health employe, holds antelope, wood carving brought back from Africa by aunt, Mrs. Sara Comacho, first American Vaughan ancestor to visit their relatives in Nigeria.



Ruth Mouson Moseley (third from l.), retired New York social worker, has first visit with cousin in Abiodun Vaughan (second from r.), a university student. With them are Mrs. Moseley's grandchildren, Christopher Gant (l.), Stephan and Burnett Jackson, (kneeling). Children by previous marriage are Dorian Gant Jackson and Edward Gant (r.). Seated is Edward's wife Jean. Mrs. Moseley and three cousins (top row), are all great-great-grandchildren of Scipio.



help move from his farm, James returned the blow, leaving him for dead.

Despite the ever presence of kidnappers (the slave trade still flourished) and tribal conflict, James played a leading role in establishing the Baptist church in Nigeria. Twice his property was plundered, once by the "Ibadan dogs of war" and again by the Egbas when the Christians were expelled from Abeokuta where his father was born and where James and his Benin wife had established an industrial school for orphans.

Now penniless, he walked three days to reach Lagos, carrying their first-born, James Wilson, on his back. In Lagos his home was destroyed by fire. He made a new beginning as an iron dealer and eventually went into the hardware business. In his two stores he sold

palm oil, cocoa nuts, ivory and other products to a ready market in Europe. James Churchill Vaughan became a wealthy man.

How Burrel fared is unknown and efforts to contact his descendants in Liberia have been unsuccessful. According to Mrs. Stradford, both of Scipio's sons visited Camden. When Burrel returned is unclear, as is the date of James' first visit. His last, however, could not have been much earlier than 1889, as Mrs. Bessie Boykin Rayford, a distant cousin, was a small girl when "the African" returned.

"He wore a jacket of several different colors with a top hat to match," recalls the 91-year-old Chicago Christian Science reader. "The whole town, both black and white, turned out to see him, and there was a parade for him down the main street of Camden."



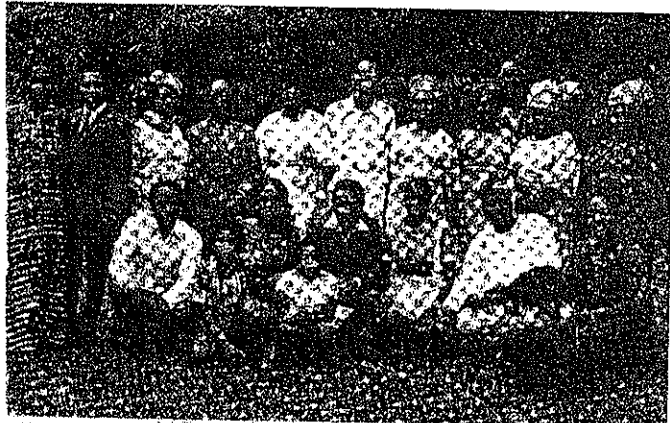
Daughter of Scipio, Mary Vaughan may be woman (r.) in picture with granddaughter Sara Carter. Mary married Scotsman named Mac Laughlin, beginning only identifiable American branch of Vaughan tree.



Grandson of Scipio and son of James Churchill, James Wilson Vaughan died in 1921 in Gambia on way home from Europe where he had gone to regain health. Two years later his body was brought to Lagos for reburial.



Great-grandson of Scipio and son of James Wilson, Dr. James Carter Vaughan was founder, first president of Nigerian Youth Movement. Jimmy Vaughan is only one of his four children born to Scotch wife still living.



Three generations of Vaughnans gather at Vaughan-Richards home to greet cousin Jewel and husband H. Ernest Lafontant (rear, c.), during their 1974 visit to Lagos. Former Haitian consul, Lafontant heads Chicago law firm. Others represent only fraction of descendants of Scipio in Lagos. Their ages range from seven to 71.



First meeting of Jimmy Vaughan with American cousins took place last year in New York hotel where he was greeted by Mrs. Moseley (r.) and children, Mrs. Jackson, Edward Cant. Stationed in Germany is another cousin, Mrs. Moseley's brother Edward Mouzon, regional co-ordinator for veterans counselling, U. S. Labor Dept.

### THE VAUGHAN FAMILY *Continued*

After the first reunion James continued to correspond with his family. He also sent gifts, including small canvas bags of gold coins, to his niece, Harriet Josephine Carter.

When he died in 1893, his stores were taken over by James Wilson and a second son, Burrel Carter. Both boys continued their father's support of the church. Of the five other children, there is record only of Aida Arabella, who married a Lagos attorney, Eric Moore. Like her brothers, she was educated in Europe.

Wishing to see some of their American relatives, Mrs. Moore invited

her namesake, Mrs. Stradford, to come to Africa in 1922 at the Moores' expense. Illness kept Mrs. Stradford from accepting but her sister Sara Thompson Comacho went instead. Soon after, Mrs. Moore brought her daughter Omotunde to the States to attend private school.

Mrs. Vaughan-Richards stayed with the Stradfords in Chicago for two months in 1956 and returned in 1973 while on a Ford fellowship. Accompanying her husband Sir Adetokunbo Ademola on trips to the States before he retired as chief justice, afforded Lady Kofo Ademola many opportunities to visit with New York and Chicago cousins.

In **Ikoyi cemetery**, Lagos, expensive tombstones of imported Italian marble mark graves of James Churchill Vaughan (tall, r.) and nine of his descendants. Daughter Aida Arabella Moore and her son Chief Ladipo Moore Q.C., are buried nearby.

In "**colored cemetery**" in Camden, S. C., where Scipio lies in an unmarked grave, are tombs of granddaughter Sullie Rebecca Lee, her husband Eugene H. Dibble and son Andrew. Of Scipio's 13 children, only gravesite of James Churchill is known.



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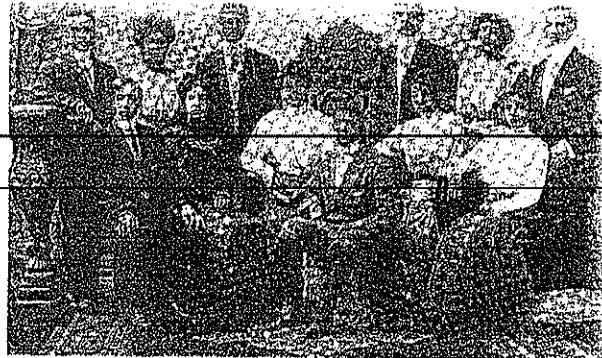
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Harriet Josephine Carter, only daughter of Mary Vaughan Mac Laughlin, poses with 11 of her 12 children. Seated (l. to r.) are John, Ruth, Mrs. Carter, Leo, Mary, Sara. Standing are Edward, Amelia, Frederick, J. Emmett, Aida, William. Husband William W. Carter was Camden, S. C. school principal and commissioner of education following Reconstruction. Night Riders set fire to Carter home because of rights activities. Mrs. Carter was born 1859, died 1917.

Living children of Aida Arabella Carter (great granddaughter of Scipio) and her husband Atty. C. Francis Stradford are (right, e.) Atty. C. Francis, Jr. (with two of his four daughters, Laurel, 26, (l.) and Carolyn, 38) and Jewel Stradford Lafontant, shown below with her son by former marriage, John Rogers III, 16.



#### THE VAUGHAN FAMILY *Continued*

In 1964 Mrs. Lafontant went to Africa for the first time. "I was so excited about going to see my people," she recalls, "that I cut my hair and wore it natural. When Ayo met me at the airport, she cried, 'Cousin Jewell! What happened to all of your lovely hair?' I told her about 'black is beautiful' and about hair. 'Of course black is beautiful,' she said, impatiently, 'but why do they have to do that to their hair?'"

Jimmy (James Wilson Kennedy) Vaughan of London, is the son of Dr. James Carter Vaughan, who attended medical school in Glasgow, Scotland. "My father married the landlady's daughter," he says, "so I spent most of my adult life in Europe." In the 1960s Jimmy worked three years in New York as an associate movie producer. He returns frequently now for Vaughan Films, Ltd., his own production and distribution business, but met his first American relatives, Mrs. Ruth Moseley and her family, at an Ebony photo session last fall.

Scipio fathered 13 children but history can account for only five of his grandchildren: James Churchill's three offspring, Mary's

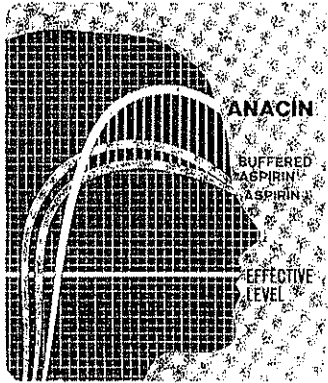


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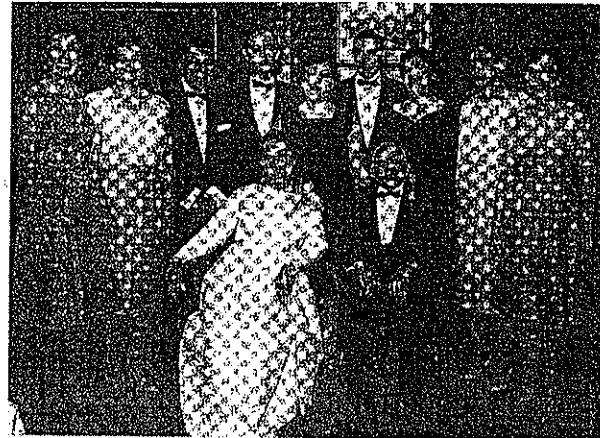
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Sallie Rebecca Lee (left), Scipio Vaughan's granddaughter, married Eugene H. Dibble, of another unusual family. Gathered (below) for 50th wedding anniversary of daughter Josephine (seated with husband Harry S. Murphy), are three other children: Eugene Jr. (third from l. beside wife Helen), Ellie Palmer and (Miss) James Dibble (second and third from r.). Harold is absent. Grandchildren (l. to r.) are Sarah Murphy Lemon, Dr. James Palmer, Doris Murphy Coates, Harry Murphy, Mahel Murphy Smythe.



Checking Bible in Chicago for family records are (l. to r.) cousins Sarah Murphy Lemon, Bessie Boykin Rayford, Ann Dibble Cook, Lee Edwards Reed. Mrs. Rayford, 91, became Chicago's first black Christian Science reader 44 years ago, is still a reader. She remembers return of "cousin James."



Bill Sutherland went to Ghana over 20 years ago, is in Tanzania with Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He remembers meeting "an African cousin" in New York when a young boy—and the palm fan she gave him.



Sister Muriel and husband O. Phillip Snowden are co-directors and founders of Boston's Freedom House. Bill and Muriel are children of William H. Sutherlands of Camden, S. C. and distant cousins of Vaughans.



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Lady Kofu Ademola and husband Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, then Nigerian Chief Justice, were guests in 1957 of Atty. and Mrs. Stratford and Mrs. Lafontant. Lady Ademola was first Nigerian woman graduated from Oxford.

**THE VAUGHAN FAMILY** *Continued*

daughter and Sallie Rebecca Lee. Said to be a cousin of the Carters, of Mary Vaughan lineage, Miss Lee could have been the daughter of Elizabeth, another known—by name only—Scipio sibling. As his granddaughter, her marriage to Eugene H. Dibble Sr., linked the Vaughans to a family which has a remarkable genealogy tree of its own.

One of their six children was Mrs. Josephine Dibble Murphy, an Atlanta educator who died last October while writing a book about the Dibbles. It is being completed by a daughter, Mrs. Mabel Murphy Smythe, vice president for research and publications at the Phelps-Stokes Fund.

The only living children of Sallie and Eugene Dibble are Harold, 78, a retired Washington, D. C., mechanical contractor, and Miss James, 72, a retired school teacher who is the only Dibble still living in Camden. The trustee for the family's property—five stores and 100 acres of choice land—is Robert Palmer, a mortician in nearby Sumter and grandson of Sallie and Eugene.

With 40,000 Vaughans and 75,000 Vaughns in this country, it is surprising that no known descendant of Scipio bears his name. In Winston-Salem, N. C., an Oscar Vaughan is national chairman of Family Reunion. Over half of its some 300 members are from South Carolina. The 1973 reunion was held in Camden. Made aware of the Scipio clan, Mr. Vaughn requested Vaughn records from the U. S. census bureau and is awaiting a reply.

The record of Scipio is incomplete. But that of the son who fulfilled his father's wish, who united his father's household, is etched in marble on the four sides of his tomb in his father's land.

*"Sacred to the memory of James Churchill Vaughan, native of Camden, South Carolina, born April 1, 1828. He migrated to Africa in the year 1853, leaving behind a large family, owing to the oppressive laws then in force against colored men in the Southern States. His life in Africa was characterized by many vicissitudes in all of which he proved himself equal to the attendant difficulties. He died on the 13th of September, 1893. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Job XIX. 26"*



Oscar 'Vaughn', Forsyth County (N. C.) deputy sheriff, is national chairman of Family Reunion, begun as gathering of Vaughns. Some 300-cousin strong, they were not aware of Scipio's clan. There are 115,000 Vaughans and Vaughns in the nation.