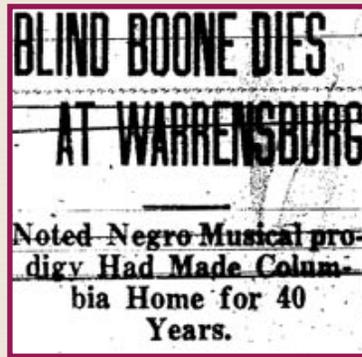


Boone could tell a child's age by putting his hand upon a child's head. He had a very happy and warm personality and children loved him.

John William Blind Boone died of acute deflation of the heart on October 4, 1927.



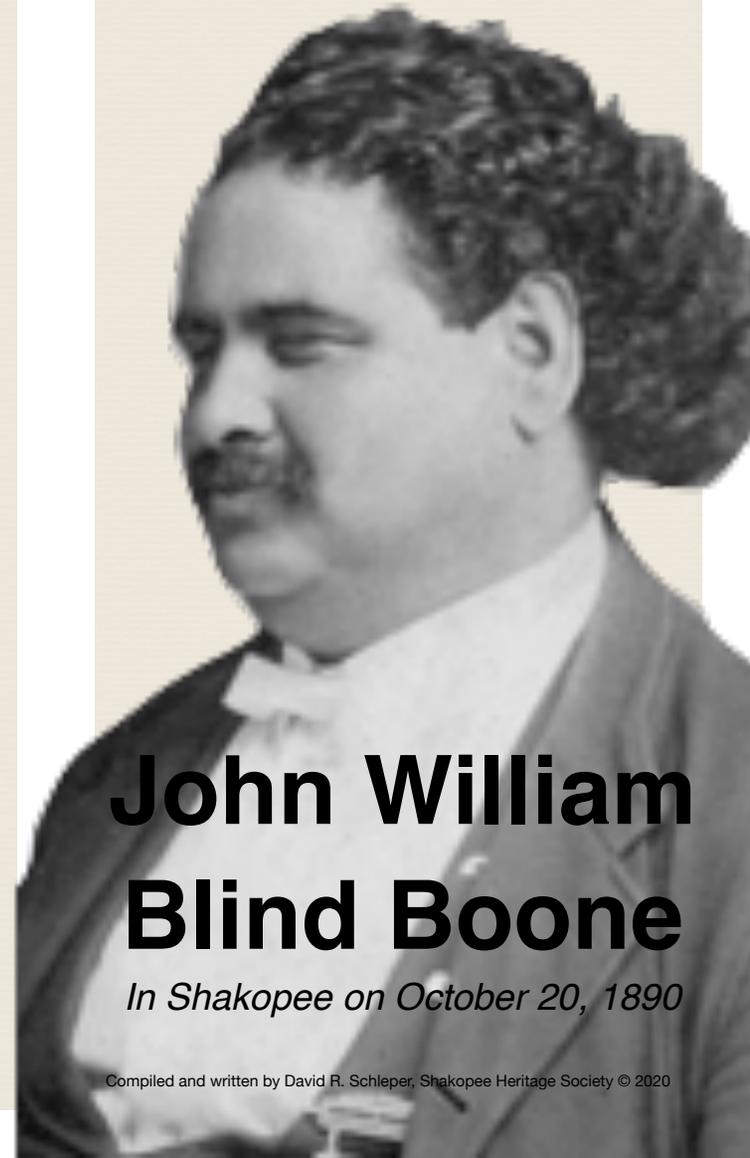
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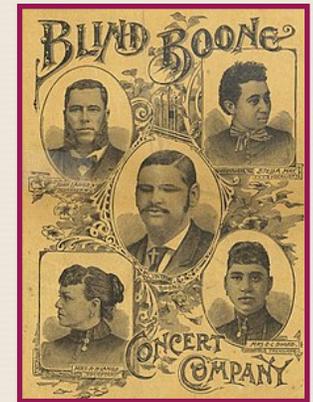
John William Blind Boone

In Shakopee on October 20, 1890



—The Boone concert was well attended on Monday night, and was as usual with him a fine performance, both in his piano playing and singing, for Boone is a very pleasing singer. His pieces were a grand selection, and his imitations of various instruments, cyclones and thunder storms, were as natural as possible. Miss Stella also sang well on several occasions. Blind Boone is a wonderful performer, and his concerts are always well conducted.

The Blind Boone Concert Company worked hard, traveling from town to town on a whistle-stop tour. And guess where they stopped? Shakopee! *The Shakopee Courier*, on Friday, October 24, 1890, included a short article by C.A. Stevens about Blind Boone on left. On right is an advertisement for the concert, in 1900. In the 1900s, Blind Boone was among the most popular acts in the country. They would play 300-plus dates annual, including one in Shakopee.



According to *Daniel M. Storer's Diary* about Shakopee, "The night of the 20th, Blind Boone gave a concert here. He is a splendid pianist, the best I have ever heard."

John William "Blind" Boone was an American pianist and composer of ragtime music. He was born near Miami, Missouri on May 17, 1864 to a contraband slave, Rachel Carpenter, who had been owned by descendants of Daniel Boone. His father, Private William S. Belcher, was a bugler in the 7th Missouri State Militia Cavalry.

Doctors removed both of Boone's eyes when he was six months old in an attempt to cure his brain fever.

Boone's mother, Rachel Carpenter Hendricks, worried that her son would find life too difficult without some education, so the hometown of Warrenburg, Missouri decided to pay for Boone to go to the St. Louis School for the Blind. It was here that he played the piano for the first time.

When John William Blind Boone returned to school after a break, he found a new superintendent who did not believe African American students should have

the same privileges as white students. The superintendent would not allow Black students to play piano at school. Unable to bear the new rules, Boone started skipping class to go to the Tenderloin District near the school. The area was poor and densely populated. Boone listened and played music with other African American musicians who worked in the saloons. Once the principal found out, Boone was dismissed from the school!

Returning to Warrenburg, Blind Boone was discovered by John B. Lange, Jr., who put Boone on the road in 1879.

John William Blind Boone was one of the first musicians to bring Black folk music to the concert stage. When the audience would become bogged down by his impeccable renditions of lofty classical standards, Boone would sense this, and break into a rollicking rag, a practice he affectionately referred to as "puttin' the cookies on the lower shelf."

It turns out John William "Blind" Boone was one of the first musical composers to blend European classical styles with folk music. He took African-American and Afro-Caribbean folk styles such as plantation

melodies and minstrel tunes, and put them in classical forms, then performed the pieces in concert halls.

And, he's perhaps not so much a ragtime musician - his music really didn't fall into the ragtime genre during his era - as he is an early innovator that created some of the musical building blocks that led to not only ragtime, but blues and jazz.

Boone was generous to those around him. He supported churches and other organizations. Once, in Kansas, he was denied a room at the only local hotel. An elderly relative offered Boone and his group to use her home. When Boone learned she had \$360 remaining on her mortgage, a large amount in those days, he paid off her loan. Lange often said, "Boone is charitable, and I have been authorized by him, whenever I see a deserving person in need of assistance to assist such person in his name."



The artist David Spear painted "Tribute to Blind Boone"