

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Boone, John W., House

other name/site number Boone, John William "Blind", House

2. Location

street & town 10 North Fourth Street not for publication

city or town Columbia vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Boone code 019 zip code 65201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles 05/19/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
0	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Social Institutions of Columbia's Black Community TR

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls aluminum

roof asphalt

other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Boone, John W., House
Name of Property

Boone County, MO
County and State

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Performing Arts

Period of Significance

circa 1891-1927

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Boone, John W.

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

unknown

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Boone, John W., House
Name of Property

Boone County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 5/5/7/8/5/0 4/3/1/1/4/9/0
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lucille Salerno and Greg Olson/board members
organization John William Boone Heritage Foundation date January 26, 2003
street & number 806 B Bourne Avenue telephone 573/445-2539
city or town Columbia state MO zip code 65203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title City of Columbia [Raymond A. Beck, City Manager]
street & number P.O. Box N telephone 573/874-6338
city or town Columbia state MO zip code 65205

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section number 7 Page 1

**Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO**

Description

Summary:

The John W. Boone House is a two-story frame house that was the home of internationally renowned ragtime pianist and composer, John William "Blind" Boone from the time of its construction around 1891 until Boone's death in August of 1927. Located at 10 North Fourth Street, the house measures roughly 46 feet by 45 feet and sets on a lot measuring 71.25 feet by 122 feet. At the time Boone occupied the house, it was sided with wooden weatherboarding and featured a two story front porch that was open at the second story level. The house has since been covered with stucco and, more recently, aluminum siding by subsequent owners who used the property as a funeral home. The two story porch remains, but has been closed at the second story level. Two additions have been built on to the house. One on the east side of the house that was constructed during Boone's lifetime the second, on the north side, was added in the 1940s. As a result of these changes, the exterior of the house no longer retains its original late Victorian appearance. However, the interior of the house does retain much of its historical integrity. Original windows, woodwork, fireplace and open staircase look much as they did at the time of Boone's life. Unfortunately, many of these features, most notably the windows and staircase, have deteriorated significantly. Termites have caused significant structural damage to the exterior walls of the house. Since November 2000, the city of Columbia, Missouri has owned the house. Since that time, the city and the non-profit John William Boone Heritage Foundation to stabilize and restore the home.

The John W. Boone House is a two-story frame building constructed between 1889 and 1891 and is located at 10 North Fourth Street in Columbia, Missouri.¹ Set with its narrow facade facing Fourth Street on the west, this basically rectangular building occupies a lot measuring 71.25 feet by 122 feet. There is a small front yard sloping toward the street and a paved driveway south of the house that leads to the rear of the property. The original part of the house is two stories tall and measures roughly 46 feet by 45 feet. To the rear of the house is a 12-foot addition constructed early in the house's history. On the north side of the house there remains a single story addition measuring roughly 45 feet by 16 feet that was constructed in the 1948.

The front door of the house is located on the south elevation beneath a two-story porch. The porch is open at the ground level and was enclosed on the second story sometime prior to 1940. The original porch was also a two-story porch that was open with a balustrade encircling the second story. None of the historical integrity of this original porch is evident today. The front door is a modern replacement.

The house was originally sided with narrow weatherboard siding. A historical photograph taken in the 1890s reveals that pairs of exterior wooden shutters flanked the original windows. While the shutters have been replaced with modern metal ones, many of the original windows still remain. At some point in the 1930s or 1940's, the entire exterior of the house was covered with a layer of stucco. This was, in turn, covered with a layer of aluminum siding in 1970. These successive layers of exterior wall coverings have obscured all of the original window trim and have likewise obscured the historical integrity of the house as a whole.

¹ The information used in this description is taken from a survey of the house done by Debbie Sheals in February 1997 and from an adaptive use study done by Peckham and Wright Architects, Inc. in August of 2000.

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Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO

Description (continued)

The oldest sections of the house have shallow hip roofs and the front porch is covered with a shed roof. The roof on the north addition is flat.

The front door opens into a front stair hall. The open stairway still features the original newel post and balustrade with turned balusters. The parlors are in good condition and are separated by a wide cased set of pocket doors. Both rooms retain most of the original woodwork, which in the case of the rear parlor includes an ornate fireplace. Both of these rooms open to the north addition. The stair hall leads to a small side room and a bathroom on the southeast corner of the house. The east addition is accessible through this room. This east addition is divided into two rooms.

The plan of the second floor echoes that of the first. The second floor stair hall opens onto the enclosed upper portion of the porch. Many of the second floor rooms retain their original doors and window trim. A bathroom is located in the southeast corner and there is a kitchen located in the northeast corner.

The overall physical condition of the house is compromised by a number of maintenance issues. A poor roof allowed water to damage wall and roof structural elements. Termites have caused significant structural damage to the studs and sill plates inside the exterior walls of the house. Unfortunately, some of the interior features, most notably the windows and staircase, have also deteriorated significantly.

From 1891 until 1927, the house was the residence of John William "Blind" Boone, an internationally known pianist and composer. After Boone's death in 1927, his widow Eugenia retained ownership of the property until 1929. In 1931, the house became the location of Williams and Parker Undertakers. One of the partners, Stuart Parker, took over the business in 1943. It was Parker who constructed the north addition in 1948, which he used as a funeral chapel. In the early 1960s, the south room of the eastern addition was renovated for use as an embalming laboratory. At about that same time, a 1,350 square foot garage constructed of concrete block was added to the east side of the house. From 1989 until 2002 Harold Warren, one of Mr. Parker's former employees, owned the property in which he operated Warren Funeral Chapel. The City of Columbia Missouri bought the house in 2000. They immediately set about making repairs to the roof and windows with the intent of stabilizing water damage that had occurred to the structure after years of deferred maintenance. In 2002, the garage on the east side of the house was demolished. The city and the non-profit John William Boone Heritage Foundation are working together toward the long-range plan to restore the house.

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Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO

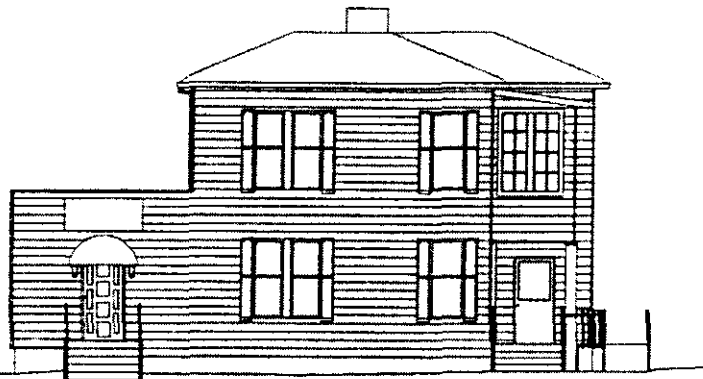
Description (continued)

Drawings

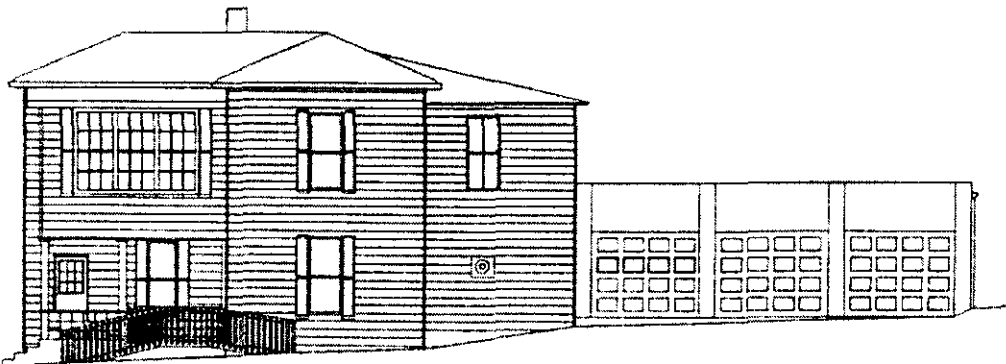
Boone Residence 2000

Elevations

Scale: 1/16" = 1'-0"



4th Street (West) Elevation



Alley (South) Elevation

Blind Boone House floor plan, 2000

1/16" = 1' 0"

Drawing by Peckham & Wright Architects, Inc.

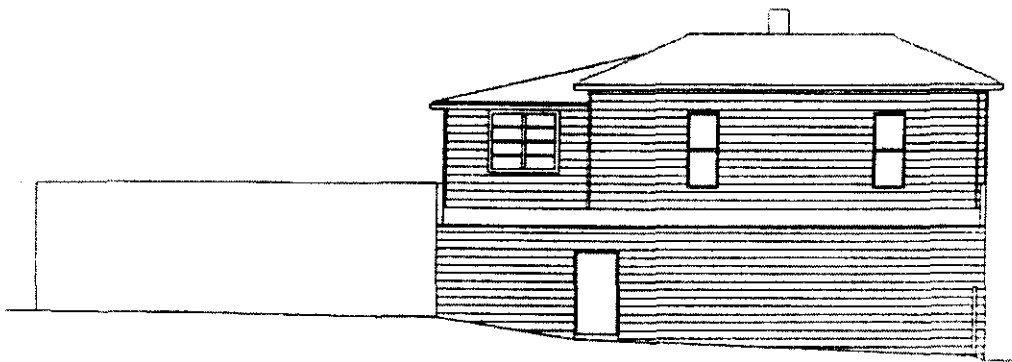
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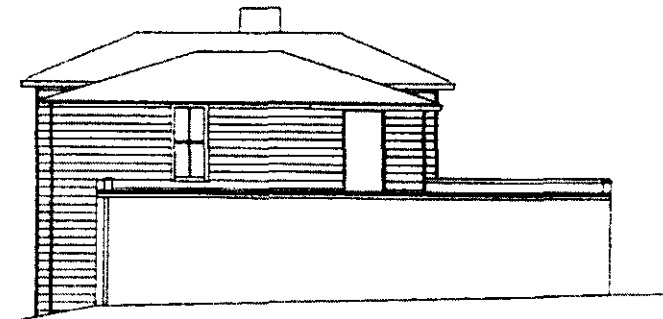
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**Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO**

Description (continued)



North Elevation



East Elevation

Blind Boone House floor plan, 2000
1/16" = 1' 0"
Drawing by Peckham & Wright Architects, Inc.

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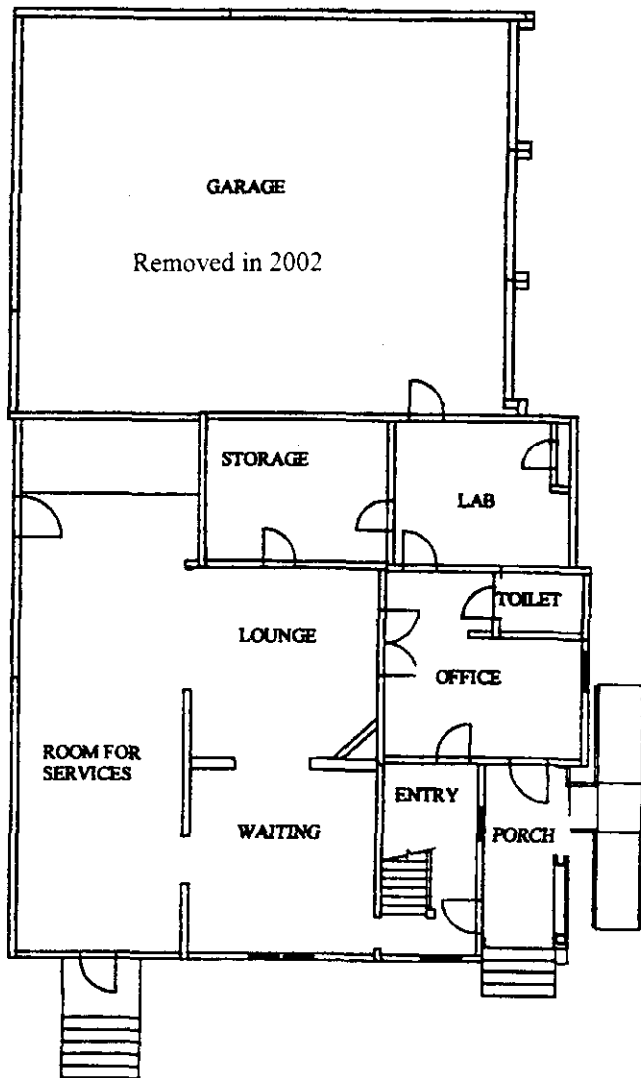
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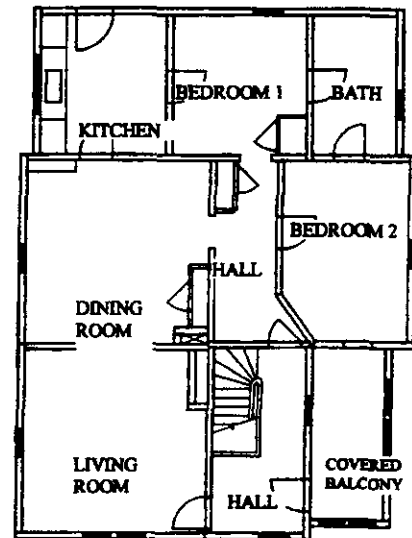
Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO

Description (continued)

First Floor



Second Floor



Blind Boone House floor plan, 2000
1/16" = 1' 0"
Drawing by Peckham & Wright Architects, Inc.

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Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO

Summary: The John W. Boone House, 10 North Fourth Street, Columbia, Boone County, was listed in the National Register on September 4, 1980, as part of the thematic resources nomination "Social Institutions of Columbia's Black Community [Partial Inventory]." The Boone House, three African-American churches, and an African-American school were "significant both as shapers and as marks of achievement of Columbia's black community."¹ While the Boone House was originally listed at the state level of significance,² it was noted that Boone "was a nationally and internationally reknown[ed] concert pianist and composer during the 1890's and early 20th century." This additional documentation is submitted to establish that the John W. "Blind" Boone House is nationally significant as the home of Boone from 1889 until his death in 1927. Boone was a virtuoso musician, between 1880 and 1915 performing in 8,400 concerts and bringing black music as interpreted by a black musician to thousands, both black and white. Accomplished in both classical and folk music forms, Boone was one of the earliest performers to meld European and African-American traditions to create what has been acknowledged as an early form of the first American musical style, ragtime. Boone was also the first performer to bring the Negro spiritual to the concert stage, as well as one of the earliest African-American concert performers. Despite the numerous alterations to the house, all of which were in place when it was originally listed in 1980, the John W. Boone House remains the most significant property associated with the man described by musicologist Terry Waldo as "one of the founding fathers of this music [ragtime] that is the basis of all of our popular music today."

Narrative: Few life sagas of transcendence match that of John William "Blind" Boone (1864-1927). Unquestionably extraordinary talents and a lust for life brought the prodigy/ virtuoso to overcome incredible odds: birth to a slave/contraband mother during the American Civil War, total blindness from age one, and cruelly repressive societal barriers rigidly enforced in post Reconstruction, late 19th century-early 20th century America. Yet by age 25, Boone was a world-renowned pianist/composer and the owner of an impressive two-story Victorian home in the heart of the growing university town of Columbia, Missouri. He would go on to be celebrated by Blacks for his warmth and generosity and by *all* for his stunning talents. His musical compositions were to become grist for analysis by the world's music scholars—therein they were to find documentation of the genesis of the first true genre of music created in the New World, America. In 2003—one hundred thirty-nine years after his birth, scholars continue to study his work—a body of music that lives in concert performances and brings pleasure to young and old—while simultaneously, they stand in awe of the transcendent facts of his life.

The house that was the center of his professional efforts and domestic pleasures from 1889 until his death continues to stand on the land upon which it was originally built. The Boone Home was placed on the National Register on September 4, 1980—as part of a Thematic Resources submission that encompassed five buildings—none with individual registration forms. What follows are the facts of Boone's life—some derived from oral history provided largely by the Black community of Columbia wherein he is a legend and by other individuals who detailed their recollections of his concert performances. Documentation of his national significance, however, is derived from the professional publications of musicologists and historians—and from

¹ Antonio Holland, Barbara Carr, and James M. Denny, "Social Institutions of Columbia's Black Community (Partial Inventory)," National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, April 4, 1980, copy in State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, MO.

² NRIS database, accessed May 1, 2003.

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**Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO**

perspectives conveyed in personal communications from the living professional cognoscenti who willingly came forth to contribute their knowledge of Boone to advance the probability of success of this application. Boone is seen as having absorbed the American music scene from age nine. He used his compositional skills to emulate and perfect the themes and styles of the very first true music of the New World as it was evolving. He shows us the creation of ragtime, America's first music—the marriage of European romanticism, folk strains and African polyrhythms. Without his musical compositions the genesis of ragtime would likely be obscured. It is Boone who has provided us with our musical history—not with words, but by “acting out our heritage” in his musical compositions. The musical saga he preserved begins with ragtime and continues with boogie-woogie and blues—even blending the latter two—a form that proliferated many years later into “the blues”.

Our goal in preserving the Boone Home as a museum is to make manifest this rich cultural heritage handed down to us by John William “Blind” Boone—making it available for pleasure and pride to all—especially to the young who largely learn through discovery. How better to convey to them the message of American musical heritage than through the actual experience of the Boone Home, his music, and the considerable memorabilia about his life and times still available to us—at times even on e-Bay?

John William Boone: A Brief Biography

The year was 1864. Rachel Boone, owned by a descendant of Daniel Boone, had fled to freedom and was working in Miami, Missouri as a cook in the camp of the Seventh Missouri Militia. President Lincoln had decreed that enslaved Africans who escaped from Southern plantations could be considered as contraband of war and that their labor could be used by the Union Army. Her pregnancy, a result of her liaison with the 7th Militia's white bugler, was at full term and Rachel delivered a healthy male child she named John William Boone (Christensen et al., 1999). Unable to remain at the soldiers' camp after John William's birth, Rachel moved to nearby Warrensburg, Missouri. Less than one year after the child's birth, “brain fever” obliged surgery that resulted in his total blindness. At a very young age, John William's talents marked him as a musical prodigy. Such recognition brought Francis Marion Cockrell--a former Confederate general and future US Senator residing in Warrensburg and in whose household Rachel was employed as a domestic--to accede to the mother's petitions to facilitate her boy's education by sending him to the Missouri School for the Blind in St. Louis. In 1873, at age 9, John William was enrolled at the St. Louis school.

Well-received in the first year, John William attended the School for the Blind for only two and one-half years. He quickly demonstrated his ability to reproduce on the piano any musical piece he heard. Despite his musical giftedness, the school began teaching him how to make brooms. Driven to find expression for his talents, John William would repeatedly steal away to the 'adult' area of town to hear the good local piano playing. A ragtime underground was underway in St. Louis that allowed the child prodigy to experience—and subsequently contribute to—that very first truly American music. School officials finally penalized John's truancy by expelling him from school without the means to return home to Warrensburg. A conductor eventually befriended the boy by allowing him to ride the train home in exchange for entertaining passengers by playing his harmonica.

In Warrensburg again, John lived in the Black community for the first time in his life. Rachel had married widower Harrison Hendrix, the father of five, when John was eight years old. Wanderlust gripped him, however, and he strayed from home repeatedly—at times, with regrettable consequences. For example,

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Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO

John William was taken into bondage by a gambler, Mark Cromwell, who exploited him and treated him poorly. It was necessary for his stepfather—and later, ministers from the Missouri towns of Fayette and Glasgow—to rescue the young man.

The Christmas holidays of 1879 were to bring dramatic positive change to John's life that would endure for all of his remaining years. The gifted young musician was invited to participate in a festival at the Second Baptist Church in Columbia.² The event was an annual gift to the community by a very successful builder and contractor, John Lange, Jr. John William was a hit. He was invited back for a concert in March, 1880—one in which he was featured with a second sightless Black pianist, Tom Bethune—known as 'Blind Tom'. John William Boone's professional career was launched with his grand success in that event. John Lange, Jr. took on the role of Boone's manager. It proved to be a superbly successful, profitable relationship.

The relationship between artist and manager grew close. Lange was equally interested in Boone's well-being as he was in his performing successes. An example of the closeness of their relationship emerges from the manner in which Boone's signature composition was created. The 1880 Marshfield Tornado, a frightening event in a small town close to Springfield in southwest Missouri, killed 105 people. As Lange read aloud the newspaper accounts of the raging storm for him, Boone composed the programmatic piece—that was never to be notated because he wished it to be his very own concert showpiece. When Boone attempted to record the composition in later years, the piano roll machine broke down; it could not track so many notes. This piece became one of Boone's most requested compositions. Audiences loved to hear it because it replicated a natural disaster through music. His career peaked from 1885-1916. By 1885, his troupe, now called Blind Boone Concert Company, earned \$150 to \$200 per night--\$600 on the best nights. His company was training ground for young singers, the best known of whom was Melissa Fuell who would eventually write a biography of the company from its beginning to 1915.²

By 1916, Boone was so popular he could not keep up with all of the requests for his performances. He toured the US, Canada, and Mexico and, reportedly, England, Scotland and Wales. No documentation, however, has yet been found for the overseas events. John Lange wrote about the period from 1880 – 1915 as a continuous period of 39-years where they traveled for 10 months each year. Boone played mainly in churches and concert halls—to segregated audiences. After he became popular, piano companies provided the pianos. Until that time, he had to haul the pianos to his concerts by horse and wagon. He wore out 16 pianos by 1915 (Fuell, 1915).

Warren Swindell, musicologist and recently retired professor of music education and Director of Black Studies at Indiana State University, has made the study of John William Boone a focus of his academic career. In an article published in 1992, Swindell reported the following impressive statistics about Boone's professional activities:

“Between January 18, 1880, the date of his first concert, and 1913, a year after his second known visit to Chicago, Boone had given 7,200 concerts, traveled 144,000 miles (sometimes traveling as much as 20 miles a day [before the advent of the automobile, Boone traveled in a horse drawn wagon on roads that were little more than cow trails]), had slept in approximately 7,000 beds,

² The Second Baptist Church continues in its original location at the corner of Broadway and Fourth Street in downtown Columbia. The Boone Home, at 10 North Fourth Street, is the building next to and immediately north of the Church. Together, the two buildings form an impressive historic link to John William “Blind” Boone.

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**Boone, John W., House
Boone County, MO**

paid almost \$180,000 to charities, churches, halls, and opera houses, and had repeated, after one hearing, the performances of 33,600 pianists who had come on stage to challenge him ("Blind Boone Concert Co." [1913])." (p.113).

Fuell's (1915) book documents the close and personal relationship between Boone and his manager referred to above. Boone married Lange's youngest sister. Boone moved into the house in Columbia when he married Eugenia Lange in 1889. John Lange's life ended in 1916. A tragic accident cut short the partnership of artist and manager. Boone never recovered from Lange's death; subsequent managers were simply not as effective.

Boone gave generously to Black churches and schools—and he used them for performances. He claimed to have put more roofs on churches in Columbia than anyone else. Because of this he had little estate—even though at one time he had had an income of \$17,000 per year. Noted for his philanthropic works throughout his life, he gave many benefit concerts to further Black schools and churches in the Columbia area.

He was just 5 feet tall but, unquestionably, Boone was a very impressive figure. Because he could not walk without guidance, he frequently carried a child upon his shoulders as navigator. He had an astounding memory and was called a walking encyclopedia. He had a great big pocket watch with a chime effect that children loved. The 35-jewel Swiss watch is a proud possession of the Boone County Historical Society. On special occasions such as the annual Boone Ragtime Festival, the Society removes the watch from its secure vault to display it for Festival participants. Boone's only family was his wife and his mother. Rachel Boone lived to experience the great success of her beloved son. She died in 1901.

After the 1919-1920 season, the concert tours declined. The routine \$100 nights during his partnership with Lange, reduced to less than half that income—Boone sometimes played for a flat fee of \$40. But he remained optimistic. His final concert took place on May 31, 1927. He died of a heart attack on October 4, 1927. The funeral was a major event in Columbia's Black community. His grave, however, remained unmarked until 1971. He left little estate; he had already sold his important real estate holdings. And, he had used his house as collateral for loans. One of his proud possessions did survive the ages. It is the "Big U"—the piano designed specially for him by the New England Conservatory of Music and produced by the Chickering Company in 1891. The piano has been restored and remains in Columbia at the Boone County Historical Society Museum—after an unanticipated sojourn in Joplin, Missouri and Iowa; it was taken 'hostage' because of debt incurred from a concert that had been intended as a benefit event for the purchase of a headstone for the Boone grave. In 1961, Blind Boone Memorial Foundation was formed. A concert was arranged to help stimulate interest in Boone among generations too young to have experienced his performances—and to purchase the grave marker. The concert was held at Brewer Field House on the campus of the University of Missouri-Columbia on the 15th of March 1961. The featured artist was Bob Darch. (A recording of that gala event was recently made available to the John William Boone Heritage Foundation.) It was for this concert that Boone's piano was fully restored. Despite the enthusiasm, the concert failed financially; Darch's fee could not be paid. As a 'promissory note' for his professional services, Darch took possession of the Big U piano. Earlier, in September 1960, the Boone County Housing Authority voted to designate the new federal public housing project in the Black community the John William Boone Housing Project. The Project has a community center—the Blind Boone Center established in 1963.

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**Boone, John W., House
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Ten years later, the Boone County Sesquicentennial Commission of 1971 paid tribute to the great man and raised money for the headstone for the graves of Boone and his wife Eugenia. Boone and Lange family members are buried in the Columbia cemetery. Recognition efforts continued. The Boone County Historical Society Museum established the Blind Boone Room when it was given the retrieved piano. Limited space has reduced the exhibit to an occasional rather than a permanent one. Currently, there is a special events room at the University of Missouri that bears Boone's name. Other special events rooms in the same building complex honor Scott Joplin and Mark Twain. In 1980, five homes tied to Boone were put on the National Register of Historic Places—including his home as detailed above.

In 1997, a group of dedicated citizens joined together petition the City of Columbia to acquire the Boone Home to transform it into a cultural heritage center—they succeeded in their petition for the allocation of block grant funds before the Boone County Community Development Commission. The stimulus for the new effort was the fact that its owners, the Harold Warren family, had made it known that the house was to be put up for sale. The group formed the John William Boone Heritage Foundation and was awarded 501.c3 status in July 1998. Soon after the Boone Foundation was successful in securing funding from Missouri's historic preservation office for an architectural reuse plan and, with the City of Columbia as collaborator, in securing funds from the same source to stabilize the Home. In the past five years, Foundation members have also produced the annual John William "Blind" Boone Ragtime and Early Jazz Festival. The event attracts ragtime enthusiasts from all over the United States and Europe. The 2003 Festival, to be held on Boone County Court House Square and in a local historic theater, is scheduled for June 8 and 9. With the Festival bringing to life his music and the impressive details of his life, the Boone Home has acquired a ready population of enthusiastic tourists; they wait for the opportunity to experience the history of life and times of Boone first hand—in his restored home. Justification of the great man's national significance follows below in this document. Achievement of that deserved status for John William "Blind" Boone, is the next step in the advancement toward our goal.

John William "Blind" Boone: Pioneer in the development of the first truly American genre of music

The confluence of many railroads and the gateway to the Midwest, St. Louis was the gathering spot for itinerant pianists—most of whom were talented Black musicians who could eke out a living playing in saloons and the bawdy houses that clustered in "Chestnut Valley"; the latter 'district' was relatively close to the location of the Missouri School for the Blind. The music, largely cakewalks and folk tunes, was lively and contributed to the ambience of pleasure in the Valley. In the hands of Black pianists, the music was beginning to blend the influences of traditional and romantic European strains with the multiple rhythms inherent in the African musical idiom. Eventually, the blend of the two distinct musical traditions made salient the accent of the off-beats in a composition. It is a rhythm that would later be labeled "syncopation"—and would become the hallmark of the very first American music—a genre that could only have emerged in America since its genesis was contingent upon the merger of European and African musical traditions. As a genre, however, this new musical entity was not to be recognized publicly, or even named, until 1893—at the Great Columbian Exhibition, the Chicago World's Fair, where the novel style coalesced as a result of the congress of myriad itinerant pianists, the Ragtime 'underground,' who made the journey to the fair, among them the most impressive practitioner of all, Scott Joplin (Blesh & Janis, 1966). Since John William "Blind" Boone was

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already a very successful classical music concert artist, it is not likely that he was among the pianists at the Fair. Scholars recognized the coalescence that occurred in Chicago in 1893—from which a new music genre, although in gestation for decades, was finally recognized and labeled. Attention turned to discerning the genesis of the new form.

Musicologists now declare that empirical evidence of Ragtime's evolution from two distinct music traditions, along with the fact that it was in gestation in St. Louis in the early 1870s, lies in the rag compositions of John William Boone. Consider, first, statements made by Blesh and Janis (1966) that convey the fact that early ragtime compositions came from an amalgamation of already existing folk strains. Citations that follow below will convey the fact that these tunes were repackaged into the new rhythm, syncopation. In the quote that follows, it is Boone that Blesh and Janis (1966) are referring to:

“In 1874, when in the midst of classical training he quit his St. Louis school, it was into the alley dives of the Franklin Avenue and Morgan Street Tenant belt, ringing with archaic piano and banjo ragtime, that he disappeared. When he was recaptured by his conventional sponsors [at the Missouri School for the Blind], the “evil spirit” of ragtime was exorcised by a renewed application of the sonata treatment [a punitive use of scales and strict musical form disallowing creative improvising is inferred in this statement]. Other safety valve episodes, regarded at the time was “going on the bum,” periodically interrupted his signally successful concert career. During the 1890s, however, Boone published a coon song or two, and in his later years, from his prosperous semiretirement at Columbia, Missouri, two “illegitimate” piano compositions came from his pen. These were Boone's Rag Medleys, No. 1 and No.2, published by the local house of Allen Music. In No.1 the “Strains from the Alley” include the folk tune “Make Me a Pallet on the Floor.” No. 2 is entitled “Strains from the Flat Branch.” The strains in this medley are “Carrie's Gone to Kansas City,” “I'm Alabama Bound,” “So They Say,” and “Oh, Honey, Ain't You Sorry?” (p.108-109)

From the pens of Jasen and Tichenor (1978), their thesis about Boone's use of folk strains and how his compositions relate to the folk construction of early ragtime.

“It is sometimes supposed that ragtime itself arose through a ...patchwork process of looping together and instrumentalizing various strains of black folk music. But this idea rests largely on an unsupported folk etymology of the word ragtime, with its prefix being taken as an analogy to bits of tattered cloth. The only black pianist who is known to have created such a composite was John W. (Blind) Boone (1864-1927), a renowned virtuoso from Columbia, Missouri, whose concert career was built on classical music and Boone's amazing ability to imitate other pianists who played for him. In 1912, however, Boone recorded several hand-played piano rolls for the QRS Company in Chicago that not only represent the earliest hand-played rolls, but also afford one of the earliest glimpses of black folk music as interpreted by a black musician. As Boone was nearly fifty at the time of his Q.R.S. recordings, his playing was probably in the style of the nineteenth century. His treatment of folk material is astonishingly different from his romantic works, like *Woodland Murmurs* and *Sparkling Spring*, as well as Victorian parlor pieces like *When You And I Were Young, Maggie*. It is even more startling that two instrumental

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adaptations of such material should be offered as ragtime: *Rag Medley #1* (subtitled “Strains from the Alleys”) and *Blind Boone’s Southern Rag Medley #2* (subtitled “Strains From The Flat Branch,” invoking a Columbia neighborhood).³ Both contained strains that were common to early jazz and blues musicians and remained in the black song tradition well into the 1920s: *I’m Alabama Bound* (which appeared in the “Flat Branch” medley) and *Make Me a Pallet On the Floor* (part of the “Alleys” medley). While Boone did not syncopate this material in the manner of Max Hoffman’s *Rag Medley*, his loose timing and idiosyncratic rhythm techniques give the impression of “ragged time” that some dictionaries see as the semantic source of the word *ragtime*. In one four-measure section of his “Flat Branch” medley, for example, he uses a 5/4 right-hand pattern set against a 4/4 bass. His use of suspension foreshadows a device that was used, though much less often extravagantly, by Harlem Stride pianists like James P. Johnson.

Whether Boone’s instrumental medleys represent the kind of potpourri approach that eventually blossomed into ragtime or are the products of an eccentric folk artist remains a moot point.” (p. 9-10)³

For the sake of thoroughness on the topic of Boone’s role in the genesis of ragtime, the observations of Jasen & Jones (2000) are included. Of Boone’s two rag medley compositions referred to above the authors state:

[*Rag Medley #1: Strains from the Alleys* and *Blind Boone’s Southern Rag Medley #2: Strains From The Flat Branch* are] “...two pieces that stand as the strongest evidence of the link between black folk songs and ragtime.” (p. 9)

Further referring to the multiple simultaneous rhythms that inhere in the African musical tradition, Jasen and Jones (2000) note that “*Southern Rag Medley No. 2*...is downright polyphonic.” (p.10).

The authors, Jasen and Jones (2000), continue:

“Trebor Tichenor, who owns all of the Boone rolls, thinks the two medleys sound “like what ragtime must have been at first”—which is to say, unlike any piano playing that had ever been heard before.” (p.11)

“Boone knew more about ragtime than he published or played in concerts, but the hints that he left us about its origins indicate some tricky piano playing going on in small-town Missouri long before the ragtime era. (p.11)³

Because of their assertions about the developmental processes of the first genre of American music to be derived from both Boone’s compositions and his performances, it is clear that noted musicologists attribute great importance to John William Boone’s musical understanding and knowledge. The interpretations cited here tell the story of scholars attempting to understand from whence came this unique American musical

³ The Flat Branch, a creek that still runs through downtown Columbia, had flowed in the front of the Boone Home on North Fourth Street—which was called River Street at the time. The City has since encased the northern portion of Flat Branch within a concrete conduit buried beneath street level.

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invention that was to sweep first our county and then the whole world. Boone is seen as the quasi missing link in the evolution and development of ragtime.

The writings of the group of scholars cited above convey research that is focused on discovering the genesis of ragtime from preceding musical forms. Boone's compositions and recordings have also been the object of study for other American musical firsts. Ed Berlin (1980) relates two other novel findings—the earliest use of boogie-woogie and blues musical phrases in Boone's ragtime compositions.

“Another possible “first is the “Alabama bound” chorus of *Boone's Rag Medley No. 2*, which may be the earliest publication of “boogie-woogie.” The usual 12-measure structure of blues is here compressed to 8 measures, but such variants are not uncommon. More significant than this deviation are the piece's basic blues harmonic pattern, extensive use of blue notes, parallel melodic pattern between the first two phrases (measures 1-2 and 3-4), and boogie-woogie base. To retain perspective, it must be recognized that these passages are exceptions; generally, the blues influence in ragtime prior to 1912 was slight: about 3 percent of the rags of this period have been found to exhibit blues characteristics.” (p.155)⁴

Eubie Blake's protégé, musicologist, composer, conductor, performer, Terry Waldo (1976), adds to this enumeration of Boone's unique contributions to the development of American music.

“John William (“Blind”) Boone is another nineteenth-century concert pianist who is important in the same respect as Gottschalk. This black artist from Missouri was the first performer to bring the Negro spiritual to the concert stage. During his forty-year career, which began in the early 1880s, Boone would not only play the standard classics of Liszt, Chopin, and Beethoven, but he would also include raggy Negro music. After the first intermission he would say, “Now I'll put the cookies on the lower shelf where everyone can reach them,” and he would launch into one of his Negro folk medleys. These [Boone's piano] rolls are extremely interesting because of their complicated syncopation. Boone was able to duplicate, note for note, any performance of music that he heard, even down to the mistakes, so there is some likelihood that his medleys are copies of early piano styles as he heard them in the underground byways of the Mississippi Valley.

I have come up with no documentation as to when Boone began to perform this rag material, but it is my guess that it was before the late 1890s when the instrumental rag became an established form. His medleys are not in the sixteen-bar march form of rags but are more loosely connected folk songs—sometimes sixteen bars, but often not. In any case, he did establish a link between Negro folk music and the concert stage, and he was known to have been a friend of Scott Joplin, who was to further cement that connection.” (p. 18-19).

⁴ Conveying the presence of original musical riffs—boogie-woogie and blues phrases that were not to appear in compositions until years later, Dr. Berlin further attests to fact that the developmental history of American music was to be found in Boone's ragtime pieces. As he details the components of the compositions, Berlin also conveys Boone's sophisticated grasp of musical construction as innovative styles were evolving.

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“Joplin could have played concerts, as did “Blind” Boone, whom he knew, but he didn’t. There are numerous documentations of occasions where he played for dances—but I can find no instance of his performing solo piano in concert.” (p. 201).

Available to posterity and music scholars is an impressive biography of Boone written by a member of his touring Concert Company, Melissa Fuell, in 1915. Ms Fuell (1915) meticulously documents the ambitious number of performances—6 per week largely for 10 months per year from the 1880s until at least 1915, the year that his manager/advocate/partner John Lange, Jr. was killed in an accident—and she includes the contents of performance reviews appearing in print. Impressive statistics derived from Boone’s concert tours were reported above (Swindell, 1992).

Another excellent source of the details of the life of John William Boone may be found in the Masters Thesis of the most recent of the great man’s biographers, Jack Batterson (1986). The document is the basis for Batterson’s subsequent biography—a most readable version of the thesis. However, we cite Mr. Batterson’s work for his Masters degree because of the richness of the literary citations concerning Boone’s life and times that it contains.

Ann Sears (1989), a musicologist on the faculty of a Wheaton College in Massachusetts, describes Boone as a virtuoso performer. She also reports on the scope of music in his repertoire and the character of his compositions—light classics, functional dance arrangements, ceremonial music, religious music and ragtime pieces. The article includes details of Boone’s early childhood, his formal musical training, and his relationship with his managers, and critiques selected compositions.

Perhaps of some importance in this documentation of the national significance of John William Boone is the fact that noted American author Willa Cather who had seen Boone perform made him the basis for a character in her 1918 novel *My Antonia*. The similarity of Cather’s character to John William Boone is noted by Cather scholar, Mildred Bennett. Ms. Bennett reports that the novelist had seen Boone perform in Red Cloud, Nebraska. It is her view that the figure of Blind d’Arnault was a composite of Boone and his contemporary, Blind Tom. Cather herself, however, claimed not to have remembered Blind Tom, stating that she relied heavily on her memories of Boone when she created the character (Bennett, 1961).

“Blind d’Arnault makes his fictional appearance in the local hotel, where he and his manager were staying after a concert in the opera house. As he enters the story, he is about to play a private concert in the hotel’s parlor for a few selected guests:

““The door from the office opened, and Johnnie Gardner came in, directing Blind d’Arnault—he would never consent to being led. He was a heavy, bulky mulatto, on short legs, and he came tapping the floor in front of him with his gold-headed cane. His yellow face was lifted in the light, with a show of white teeth, all grinning, and his shrunken, papery eyelids lay motionless over his blind eyes.”

““When he was sitting, or standing still, he swayed back and forth incessantly, like a rocking toy. At the piano, he swayed in time to the music, and when he was not playing,

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his body kept up the motion, like an empty mill grinding on. He found the pedals and tried them, ran his yellow hands up and down the keys a few times, tinkling off scales then turned to the company."

" 'She seems alright gentleman. Nothing happened to her since the last time I was here. Mrs. Gardner, she always has this piano tuned up before I come. Now gentlemen, I expect you've all got grand voices. Seems like we might have some good old plantation songs to-night.'"

"In the passages that follow, Cather writes details of d' Arnault's life that differ significantly from Boone's. Yet Cather's vivid character bears an uncanny resemblance to the persona of Boone we've come to know from photos and legends."

While citing this fact about a Willa Cather character may not advance our evidence of the importance of Boone in the comprehension and development of American music, it does contribute to the fact that he had stature that far exceeded that of a local favorite son.

In addition to the published citations cited in the text above and in the bibliography that follows, we were in touch with some of the Ragtime cognoscenti in our contemporary lives. All of the personal correspondence with which they responded to our request for assistance with the documentation of the national importance of John William Boone is attached to this application. To assist in sorting through the statements of these experts, there follows below critical quotes from their correspondence. Some of the respondents will be recognized for their published articles cited above.

- From Terry Waldo—musicologist, composer, arranger, conductor, performer—(personal communication dated 10/28/02) – “From what we know, Boone was a great influence on Scott Joplin as well as other ragtime composers and could be said to be one of the founding fathers of this music that is the basis of all of our popular music today.”
- Trebor J. Tichenor—musicologist on the faculty of Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, composer, performer, leader of the St. Louis Ragtimers—(personal communication dated 12/6/02)—“Boone gave concerts throughout the country for decades. He was one of the first black artists to bring the African-American music heritage to the concert stage, including spirituals and other Black folk song material.” ...[And relating to the thousands of concerts Boone played in Black communities] “This was an early introduction of the European classics to the Black community.”
- Warren C. Swindell—professor emeritus of music education and Black studies—(personal communication dated 12/13/02)— “...[Boone’s] mastery of [the classic piano repertoire] placed him in the category of being a major American pianist around the turn of the century. This was at a time when it was believed that African Americans lacked the intelligence and talent to perform the European music classics. Boone, then, was one of the first African American

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concert artists. Ironically, his success as a concert artist psychologically placed him above jazz and blues performers at the time when jazz was becoming internationally important. Boone's attitude regarding jazz was similar to that of most middle class Americans around the turn of the century. Namely that it was an inferior music performed in brothels, houses of ill-repute, and alleys. Paradoxically, if he had so desired, Boone could have played jazz and would have established himself as a giant of the art form."

- Kjell Waltman—artist, writer, composer, performer, music critic residing in his native country in Goteborg, Sweden—(personal communication dated 11/01/02)—"...[Boone was] the first important African-American composer to create art music that is firmly grounded in the African-American musical idiom. In his imaginative caprices for piano—in contemporary concert programs often referred to as "African Caprices"—he utilizes, for example, pure ragtime rhythms, thus antedating by several years those compositions that are currently heralded as the first published ragtime compositions, and in his *Rag Medleys*, we find, as Peter Lundberg pointed out in 1975 in an entry for the foremost Swedish musical encyclopedia, *Sohlmans Musiklexikon*, the earliest documented example of boogie-woogie lines, as well as other astonishing examples of blues technique—and these are but isolated instances in an amazingly inventive body of work! (It is, indeed, incomprehensible that while Scott Joplin and James Scott—both of whom Mr. Boone influenced and in the latter case, by all accounts, actively helped—have been honored with editions of their complete works—published by *The New York Public Library* and *The Smithsonian Institution Press*, respectively—Mr. Boone himself has yet to be honored in this way.) Thus, on merit of his compositions alone, Mr. Boone, in my opinion, qualifies as a leading figure in American music of the late 19th and early 20th century.
- Richard Egan—performer, composer—(personal communication dated 12/09/02)—"Blind Boone is to music what Mark Twain is to literature and George Caleb Bingham is to painting—a window that opens one's expanses into the life of Missouri when Missouri was the focal point of our nation's vibrant growth.[In our national development] there came a time when crude frontier folk art collided with European classicism and gave birth to a unique genre. Boone presented both the frontier and the classical realms, then capably assumed the role of bridge between two antithetical worlds and the new amalgamation. For this reason alone, any relic of his past is worthy of preservation."
- John Dawson—musicologist, performer, music collector—(personal communication dated 11/18/02)—[final point] "and one that I believe is deserving of the utmost recognition and celebration of this remarkable American. I wonder how many young black children heard and saw "Blind" Boone during his years of performing and traveling. I wonder how many of those children turned to their mothers and said "Mama, I want to play the piano too." I wonder how many people saw this uneducated, blind black man and said to themselves: "If he can make something out of his life, so can I." I wonder how many blind people have read about Mr.

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Boone and have told themselves that any disability can be conquered. I'll guarantee you that Mr. Ray Charles and Mr. Stevie Wonder know who Blind Boone was."

- Marty Eggers—composer, arranger, performer—(personal communication dated 01/16/03)—
“The fact that Boone traveled with his own piano also demonstrates that he performed in locations where live music, aside from amateur performances, was likely a rarity. Boone therefore served as a means for his audience to be exposed to musical culture, both American and European . . . , played at a level of accomplishment that would only be found otherwise in large metropolitan centers. Boone must have been responsible for exposing many thousands of Americans to music from both European and American musical traditions, to their cultural benefit—and therefore likely to have inspired folks to study music.”
- Jack Rummel—composer, performer, and music critic, President of the Rocky Mountain Ragtime Festival, Inc. presenters of an annual Ragtime Festival in Boulder, Colorado—(personal communication dated 11/26/02)—“It is generally accepted that this synthesis of Black and White musical styles into ragtime occurred in the American Midwest and that the state of Missouri was at or near the epicenter. Boone’s music, both classical and popular, was an important piece of the emerging body of Black American compositions, having been preserved in the form of nationally and internationally distributed sheet music and piano rolls. His music was extremely popular in its day and as we begin the twenty-first century it still enjoys its measure of popularity and recognition. . . . I can say that unequivocally that Boone’s ragtime compositions are performed today wherever ragtime has an audience. It is therefore my opinion that the home of John W. Boone in Columbia, Missouri should be elevated to national importance in the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of his significant contributions to American music.”
- Joann Neher—President of the International Scott Joplin Foundation, producer of the annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival in Sedalia Missouri— (personal communication dated 01/14/03)—
“While both Joplin and Boone came to fame in Missouri, both were musicians to the world. Ragtime swept this country as its popular music and soon encompassed the whole world for more than two decades. Both ragtime sub genres—classical [Joplin] and folk [Boone]—are critical contributions to the uniqueness of American music—more, both proved critical in the development of our country’s signature music.”
- Virginia Tichenor—performer, President of the West Coast Ragtime Society (WCRS), Sacramento, California—(personal communication (proclamation) dated 12/31/02)—“Whereas, the career of John William “Blind” Boone and his contributions to American culture through his nation wide concert tours, his published compositions and his piano roll recordings are known to festival participants, and Whereas, Boone’s music is frequently performed at the festival, and Whereas Boone’s life and career are frequently discussed at the festival, Resolved, that WCRS recognizes John William “Blind” Boone as a contributor to American’s national musical heritage; Resolved further, that WCRS is in full agreement with any and all efforts by other

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organizations to recognize Boone's status as a contributor to America's national musical heritage."

We have not exhausted the myriad published citations about John William Boone. We did, however, select the materials that demonstrate this gifted Black artist, born during the Civil War to a single mother, blind before age one year managed to transcend all the incredible societal barriers of his day to be recognized by scholars as an impressively creative contributor to the comprehension and development of America's first genre of music. Boone is certainly not less important than his impressive and celebrated contemporaries, Scott Joplin and Tom Turpin—both Ragtime greats who came to fame in Missouri. Both have been honored, posthumously—and deservedly—with buildings that tell the story of the lives and times. The structure that Joplin briefly rented—it simply housed his furnished apartment—in St. Louis at the turn of the last century, has been completely restored. In a sense, it is really a marker for his life. The home that Joplin himself had owned in that city is now a parking lot. Tom Turpin's Rosebud Saloon—a recently built reconstruction of the original—stands on Delmar Avenue right next to the restored Joplin residence. The two-story structure whose second floor housed the Maple Leaf Club on Main Street in Sedalia, Missouri—immortalized by Scott Joplin's rag that was the first sheet music to sell a million copies—was reduced, in 1954, to a parking lot. *Original* structures that figured in the lives of great African Americans are indeed rare. One treasure still exists in Columbia Missouri: The actual home that John William "Blind" Boone inhabited from 1889—before it was actually completed—until his death in 1927. And, it is a gem of Victorian architecture located in Columbia's historic downtown. While the structure should be completely restored for its own sake, at another level it has extraordinary symbolic significance. Few American Blacks born in 1864 could have owned so grand a home. It is, thus, tacit tribute to the greatness of the man. His talents must have been recognized by thousands of his contemporaries—all races and religions and ethnicity—even in those severely segregated eras. Everyone turned out for his performances—paying their 25- and 50-cent admission price. Putting the 1891 grandeur of the Boone home in perspective with the known concert ticket prices, it is clear that rather than thousands, likely millions sought to experience his captivating, virtuoso artistic abilities. We have the chance to honor this incredible man through time with the preservation and restoration of his home. It should stand as a monument to the man's enormous gifts to America and its very own unique music. Besides, Boone's creative musical products—now understood as having encoded the developing American music scene—actually were penned there.

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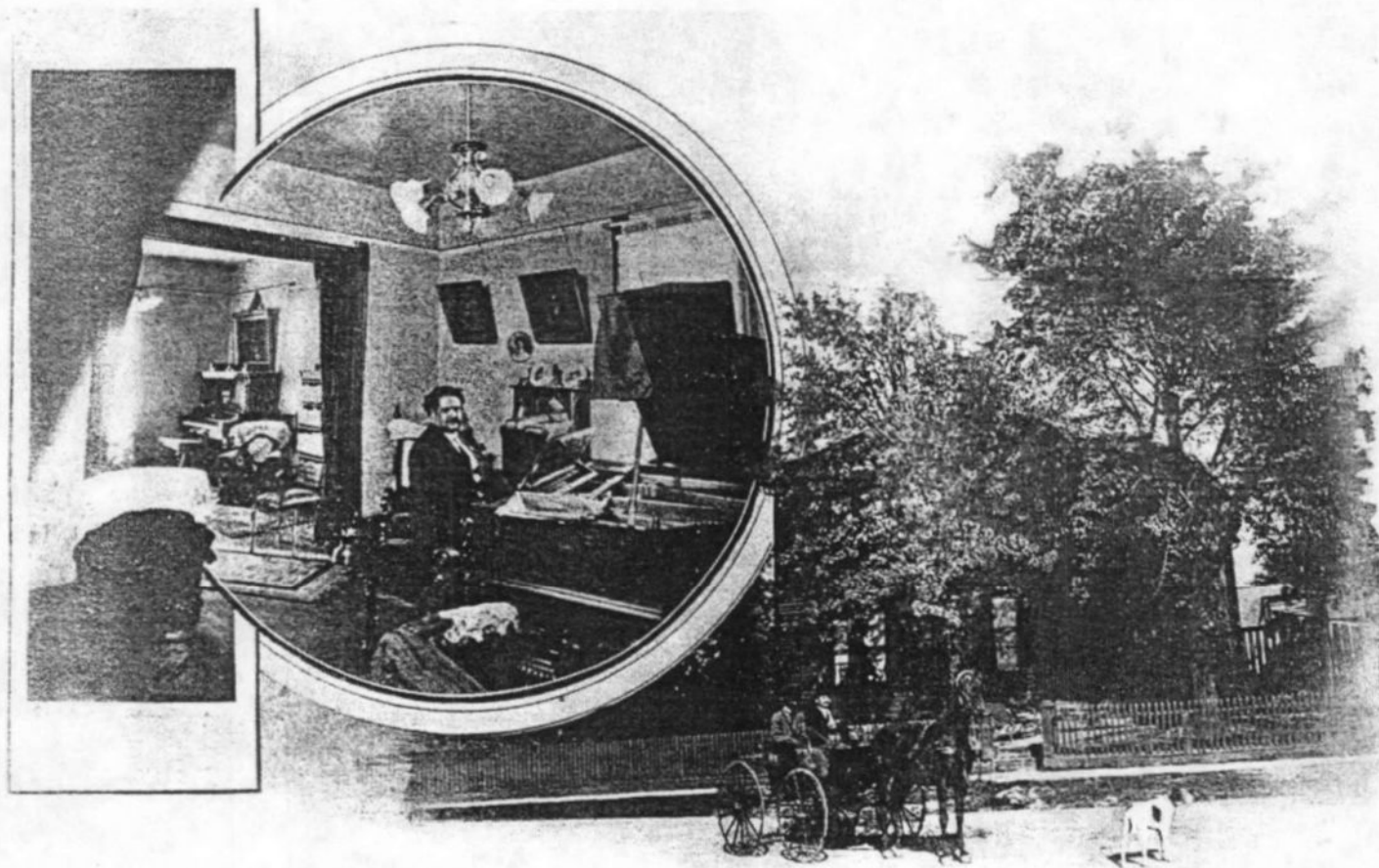
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Verbal Boundary Description

West and south part of lot 245 and south half of lot 246 of the town, now City, of Columbia, Missouri.

Verbal Boundary Justification

This is the parcel historically associated with the house.



"BLIND BOONE" IN HIS COLUMBIA HOME.







