



John William “Blind” Boone Piano Roll (C4758)

Collection Number: C4758

Collection Title: John William “Blind” Boone Piano Roll

Dates: c. 1912

Creator: Boone, John William, 1864-1927

Abstract: Piano roll transcription for a performance of “Nearer My God to Thee” by John William “Blind” Boone, published by the QRS Company, c. 1912.

Collection Size: 1 piano roll

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research but may be stored offsite. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *John William “Blind” Boone Piano Roll* (C4758); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The roll was donated to the University of Missouri by Peter McCarthy on June 5, 2000 (Accession No. CA5843).

Related Materials: Additional materials related to the John William “Blind” Boone Piano Roll can be found in the following collections:

[*Boone, John William “Blind” and Wesley, Papers*](#), (C2883)

[*Blind Boone Memorial Foundation, Inc. Papers*](#), (C3664)

[*John William Boone Heritage Foundation Collection*](#), (C4487)

[*“Blind Boone’s Piano Music,”*](#) (CA5761)

Processed by: Autumn Cuddy, August 19, 2025

Historical Note:

John William Boone was born on May 17, 1864, in Miami, Saline County, to Rachel Boone. He developed cerebral meningitis at six months old, resulting in the removal of his eyes. In 1872, friends and neighbors supportive of his musical talents raised funds to send Boone to Missouri School for the Blind in St. Louis. There, Boone developed his talent for playing piano, showcasing his skills at church services and gatherings at home and in St. Louis, until a new school superintendent restricted the privileges of Black students and prevented him from practicing on the school’s piano.

In December 1879, Boone attracted the attention of John Lange Jr., a Black contractor and entertainment hall owner in Columbia, Missouri. Lange convinced Rachel Boone (Hendricks) to entrust the care of Boone’s musical career to him, starting the Blind Boone Company and managing Boone’s bookings alone until Boone, himself, became a partner in the company at the age of 21.

Across the next few decades, the Blind Boone Company received regular bookings and “Blind” Boone became a household name. His sets catered in part to wealthy Southern whites and in part to Black audience members, a blended approach that contributed greatly to the success of his career. His popularity was such that, in 1912, he became one of the first Black artists recorded by the QRS piano roll company. The rising popularity of jazz music saw Boone’s fortunes wane, however, and he retired in June 1927 after 47 touring seasons.

John William “Blind” Boone died from complications of a heart attack in 1927.

Scope and Content Note:

This series consists of one player piano roll for Christian hymn, “Nearer My God to Thee,” played in Eb by John William “Blind” Boone, produced by QRS piano roll company, likely recorded in 1912.

Container List:

item 1	Piano roll, “Nearer My God to Thee,” played by Blind Boone,
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Index:

Index Terms	Folder	Medium	Image
Boone, John William “Blind,” 1864-1927		item 1	
Piano music		item 1	
Player piano rolls		item 1	