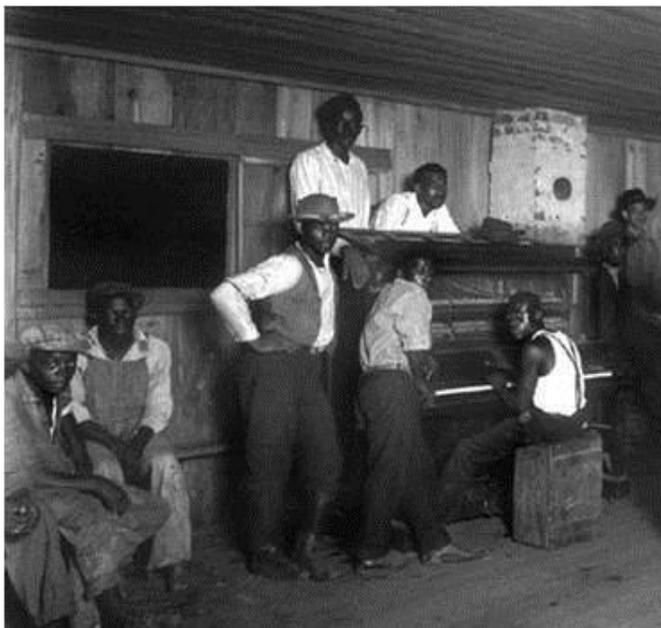


BACKGROUND

Marshall, Texas The Birthplace of Boogie Woogie

NOTE: Information in this document is drawn from the historical research of Dr. John Tennison. His sources can be found on his comprehensive website <http://www.bowofa.org/>

Probably, the first boogie woogie ever played was in a logging camp barrelhouse in the Piney Woods near Marshall. Pianos were often placed in these temporary sheds to keep workers entertained and in the camps at night. Steam locomotives were a constant presence and no doubt strongly influenced the recently emancipated African Americans who were developing their own unique styles of playing.



Above, workers lay a spur line for logging operations near Marshall, Texas. Right, logging train in virgin northeast Texas forest.

The proximity of Marshall, Texas to logging activities and the rapidly expanding Texas & Pacific Railroad provided the seed bed in which the new music could flourish and the means by which it could quickly migrate to other parts of the country.



The music and dancing in the barrel houses, at “sukey jumps,” and house parties soon found its way to Marshall, headquarters of the transcontinental Texas & Pacific Railway.



Library of Congress ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax: **"Anonymous black musicians, longing to grab a train and ride away from their troubles, incorporated the rhythms of the steam locomotive and the moan of their whistles into the new dance music they were playing in jukeboxes and dance halls. Boogie-woogie forever changed piano playing, as ham-handed black piano players transformed the instrument into a polyrhythmic railroad train."**

Music historian Paul Oliver, in a BBC production about the origins of Boogie Woogie music: **"The conductors were used to logging camp pianists clamoring aboard, telling them a few stories, jumping off the train, getting to another logging camp, playing again for eight hours, barrelhouse. In this way the music got around -- all through Texas -- and eventually, of course, out of Texas. Now when this new form of piano music came from Texas, it moved out towards Louisiana. It was brought by people like George Thomas, an early pianist who was already living in New Orleans by about 1910 and writing "New Orleans Hop Scop Blues," which really has some of the characteristics of the music that we came to know as Boogie."**



Although they were no doubt preceded by many itinerant piano players who departed the logging camps for the cities, brothers George and Hersal Thomas were the most famous and influential musicians to take the music that arose in northeast Texas to such cities as New Orleans and Chicago. They were the first known to use musical notation of boogie woogie bass lines on sheet music, and were among the very first to publish. Older brother George and the Thomas family, originally from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, passed through Marshall on their way to Houston, where the much younger Hersal was born. When they relocated to New Orleans, they again passed through the Marshall or Shreveport railroad stations. They and their family members acknowledged that the Thomas brothers first heard boogie woogie in Texas.

"The Fives" and another composition of the Thomas Brothers, "The Rocks," became the litmus test for boogie woogie players throughout the country. According to one old time player "if you didn't know 'The Fives' and 'The Rocks' you'd best not even sit on the piano stool."



Boogie Woogie's close ties to the Texas & Pacific Railroad is more than anecdotal. The names used by old time piano players to identify left hand bass lines were based on places served by the original T&P routes. Not surprisingly, the most primitive and probably earliest of these figures was called "The Marshall."



"Marshall" Bass Figure

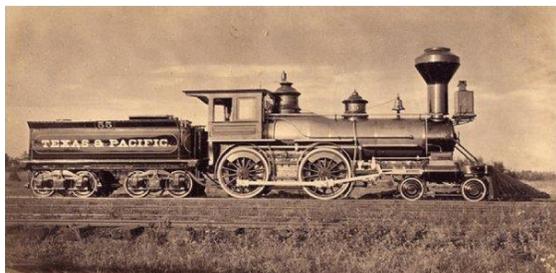


This is a 4-beats-to-the-bar bass figure. It is probably the most primitive of all Boogie Woogie bass figures. If so, it would have been first played in the early 1870s.

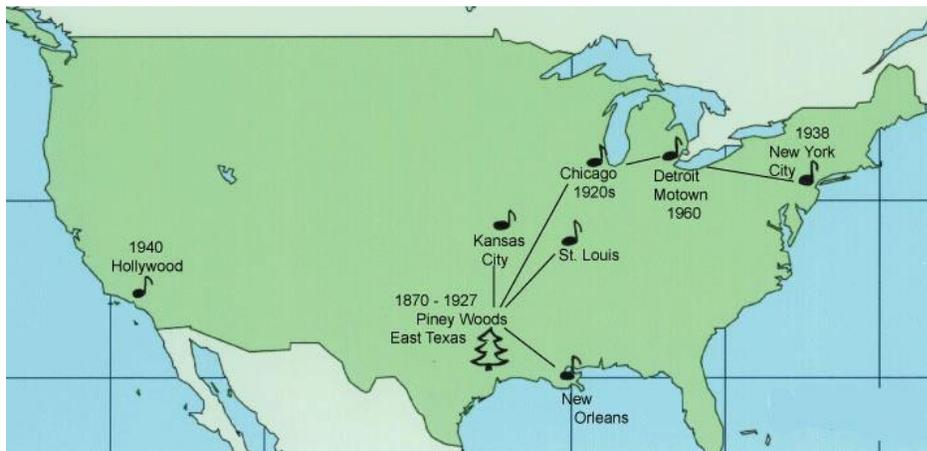
"Jefferson" Bass Figure



This is a 4-beats-to-the-bar bass figure. After the Marshall bass figure, the Jefferson bass figure is probably the 2nd most primitive of all Boogie Woogie bass figures. The fact that the last note in each of the 4-beat cycles goes down in pitch suggests a possible New Orleans influence.



The T&P Railroad not only fostered an environment in which the music developed and flourished – it was via the railroad that Boogie Woogie music began to penetrate the rest of the country.



Musical notations & map courtesy of John Tension.



Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter was born in 1888 near the south shoreline of Caddo Lake along the Texas and Louisiana state line. The man who grew up within walking distance of Swanson’s Landing, where the first locomotive in northeast Texas arrived by steamboat, spent much of his early years in Marshall and Shreveport before reaching world wide fame with “Goodnight Irene,” “Midnight Special,” “Old Cotton Fields Back Home,” “In the Pines” and other iconic songs he created or rearranged. In several of interviews over his life, Lead Belly reported that he first heard boogie woogie, called “barrelhouse” in those days, “around Caddo” in 1899. He also described how old time boogie woogie piano players along Shreveport’s infamous Fannin Street influenced his unique style of guitar playing. **"He played that Boogie Woogie. That's what I wanted to play on guitar -- that piano bass. I always wanted to play piano tunes. I got it out of the barrelhouses on Fannin Street."**

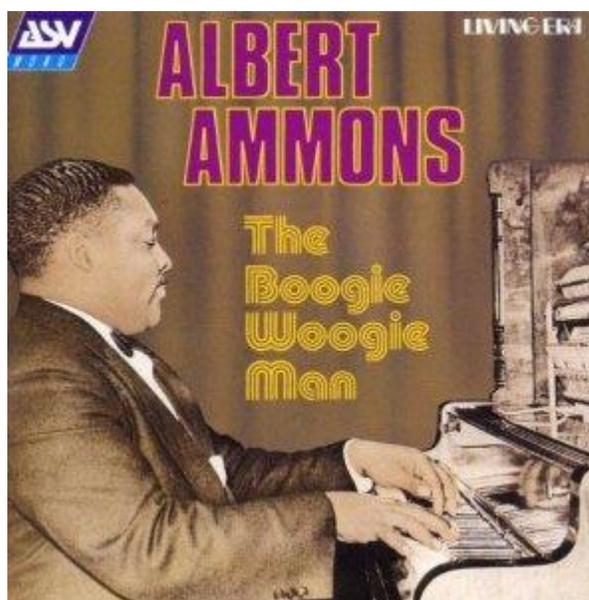
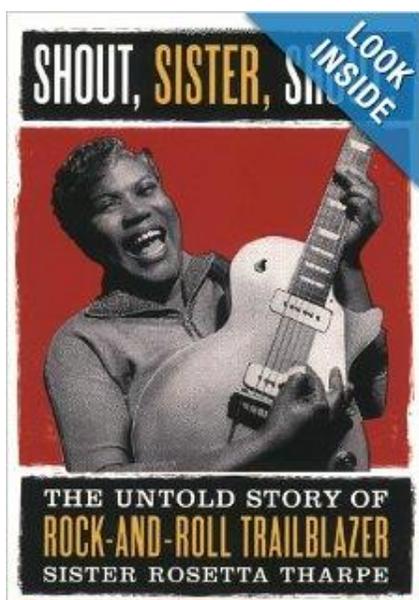


Although by no means the first to play, write, publish or record boogie woogie, Clarence “Pinetop” Smith was the first to write and record a song that used the words “boogie woogie” in the title. “Pine Top’s Boogie Woogie” remains a favorite for performance and recording.



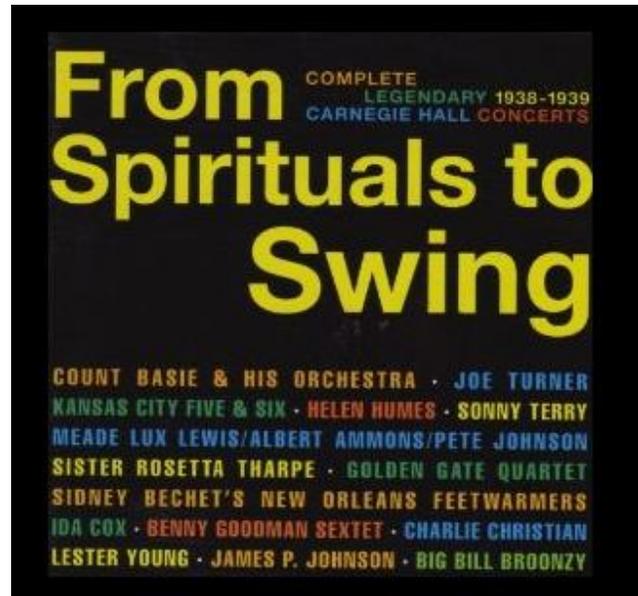


By the late 1930s, Boogie Woogie music made its way out of the red light districts and into the main stream. Outstanding players such as Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Pete Johnson recorded and developed national reputations. In 1936, Albert Ammons Rhythm Kings released the genre's first million seller, "Swanee River Boogie."

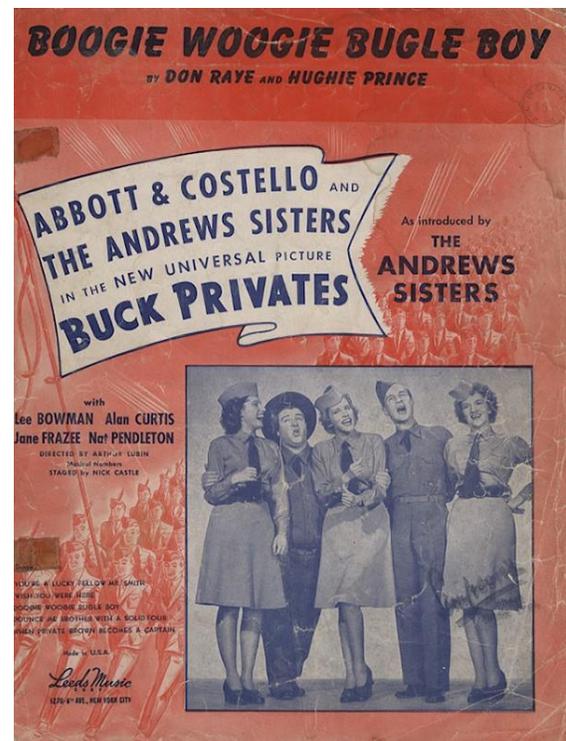


In 1938, Boogie Woogie master Albert Ammons teamed up with the guitar-playing reigning queen of gospel, Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Their performances together at the legendary "From Spirituals to Swing" concerts at Carnegie Hall are believed by many to be the earliest recorded examples of rock and roll. Some critics believe that Ammons' earlier recording of "Boogie Woogie Stomp" deserves the honor.

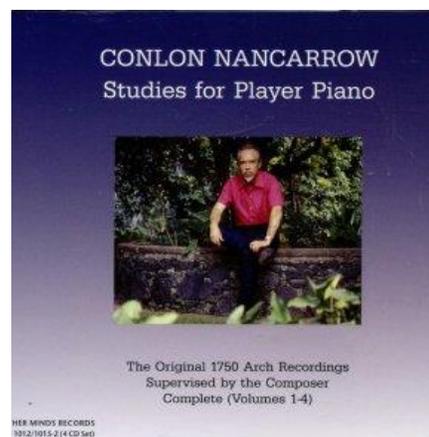
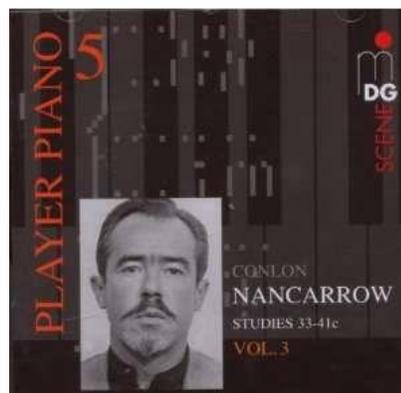
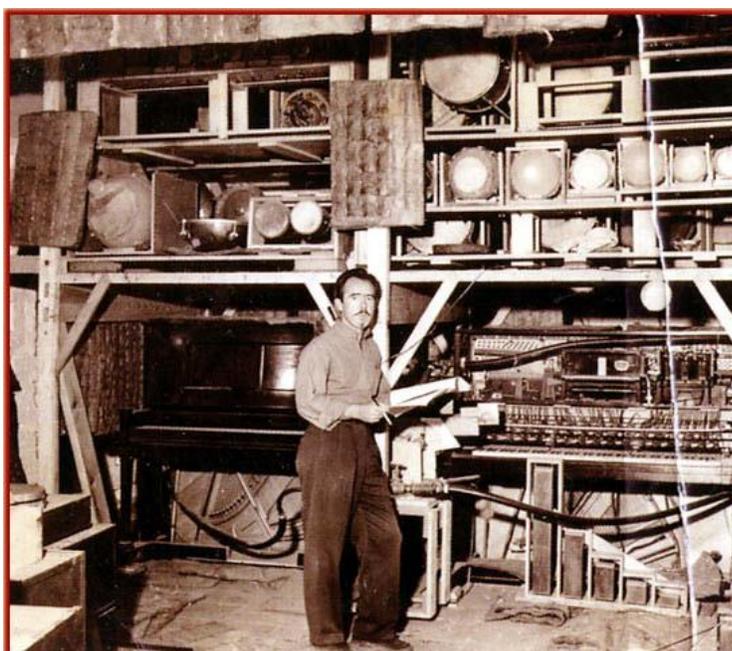
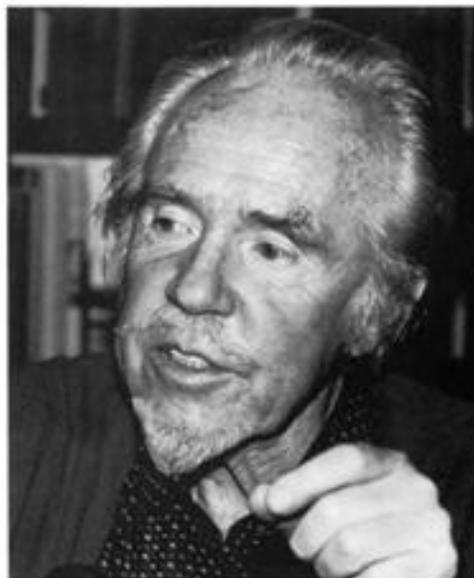
Two songs performed by Tharpe and Ammons at the Carnegie Hall concert, "Rock Me" and "That's All," are believed to be the first recordings that contain all the musical elements of rock and roll.



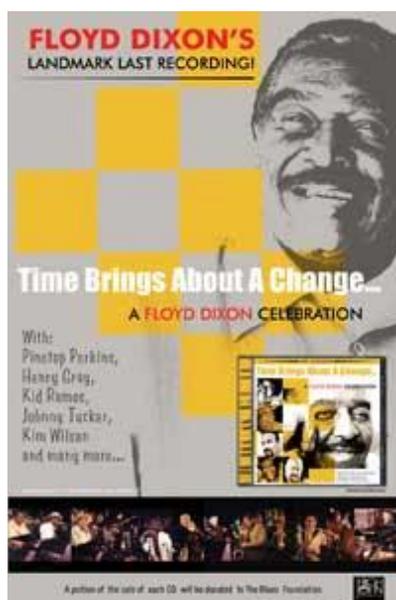
The Big Band era of the 1940's brought Boogie Woogie further into the national spotlight. And when American soldiers deployed for World War II, the music that was born in the Marshall, Texas area found its way around the world.



Innovation in Boogie Woogie continued, and never more so than in the brilliant work of East Texan Conlon Nancarrow. A native of Texarkana, Nancarrow lived in Mexico most of his adult life. His compositions were often so complex that few performers had the technical ability to master them. Nancarrow discovered he could present his original keyboard works best on the player piano. He obtained a custom made manual punching machine to prepare his rolls and modified pianos to produce complex rhythmic patterns at a speed far faster than human hands. *In 1982, Nancarrow was one of the first recipients of a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award. His fame and reputation rapidly spread until his death in 1997.*

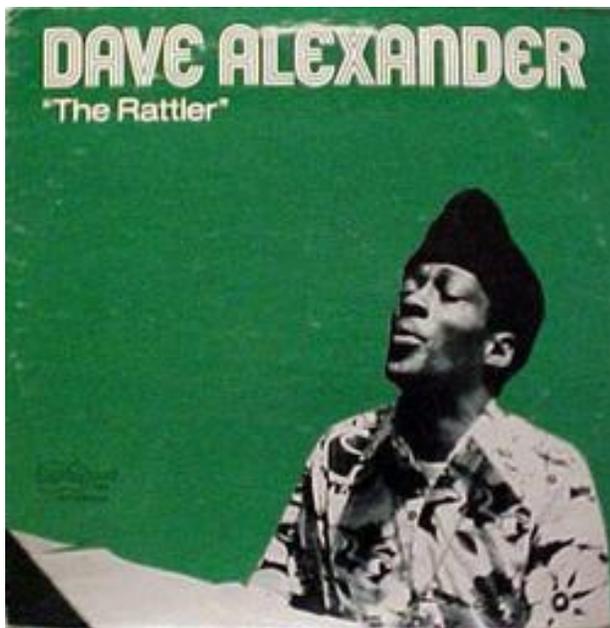


In the 1950s and 1960s, two other musicians born and raised in the Birthplace of Boogie Woogie area made substantial marks on boogie and blues. Floyd Dixon, whose classic hits “Wine, Wine, Wine” and “Hey, Bartender” were jukebox favorites for decades, was born and raised in Marshall and remained close to family and friends here all his life. Dixon even wrote and recorded songs about his hometown with his “Doing the Town Blues” and “Marshall, Texas is My Home.”



Dixon often returned to Marshall with his old pal Amos Milburn to play free Boogie Woogie shows for students at Pemberton High. At one of these concerts, David Alexander Elam decided to become a professional musician.

David Alexander Elam was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, but while he was still an infant his family returned to Marshall. His father, Tom Elam, worked as a mule skinner in logging camps and played boogie woogie guitar and piano. David was named after Tom Elam's good friend, a well-known Shreveport Boogie Woogie piano man, David Alexander, who performed as "Black Ivory King" and was cited by Lead Belly as an early influence on his playing. Named after a major boogie player, and learning from his father who worked in the logging camps, young David Elam seemed destined to play Boogie Woogie. Upon graduating from Marshall's Pemberton High in 1955, David moved to the Bay Area and was soon performing as Dave Alexander. In his later years, he was widely regarded as the last living direct link to the generation that originated Boogie Woogie music.



A natural entertainer, David quickly established himself as both a drummer and a keyboard player with well-known west coast touring bands such as the Mel Williams Quartet. But developing his skills to play the boogie and blues music he grew up with remained his passion. With only one formal piano lesson while a teenager, David was a largely self-taught pianist with a fierce determination to master the instrument that he prized above all others.



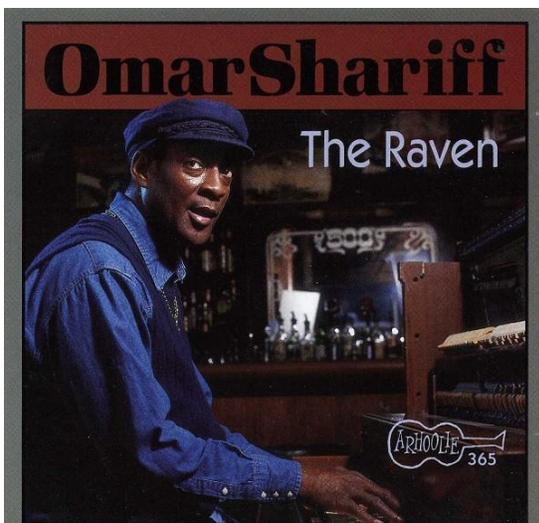
In 1969, Dave Alexander became a popular fixture at the legendary Minnie's Can-Do Club on Fillmore Street in San Francisco. His electrifying performances are still blogged about and he was interviewed in Marshall by a San Francisco producer at work on a documentary about the club. It was at Minnie's Can-Do Club during the early 1970s that he was discovered and signed by the preeminent rock and roll promoter Bill Graham. Under Graham's management, Dave Alexander opened major concerts for such luminaries as Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, Bo Diddley and others.

I'm delighted that Minnie's has been immortalized in the form of these great memories. I share the sentiments—the place was unique. The great blues and boogie pianist Dave Alexander gave us the music most nights I was there. Just him, his piano, a standup bass and a drummer with pretty much one drum. And that was plenty to rock the house like nowhere I've been since. Best thing about it all was that it was a totally mixed crowd that left race, gender, politics and whatever else at the door. Utopian dream with a great boogie soundtrack. After hearing some years later that Dave Alexander had died, he turns up on NPR just a few months ago, back in his Texas hometown and treated with the proper reverence and respect. Will try to get a note to him next. Thanks, Minnie. Blogger, Steve Meltzer.



Dave Alexander & Bo Diddley.

During this period, the first of many hardships ahead struck Dave Alexander. After suffering two nearly fatal abdominal gunshot wounds, then the unsolved murder of his brother, his life and work took on darker, deeper overtones. He changed his name several times, finally settling on Omar Sharriff, a variation on the famous international screen star he admired. When he composed and recorded "The Raven," a masterpiece of interlocking octaves that explores his emotional turmoil, he transcended the path from consummate entertainer to brilliant artist whose style and range was distinctly his own.

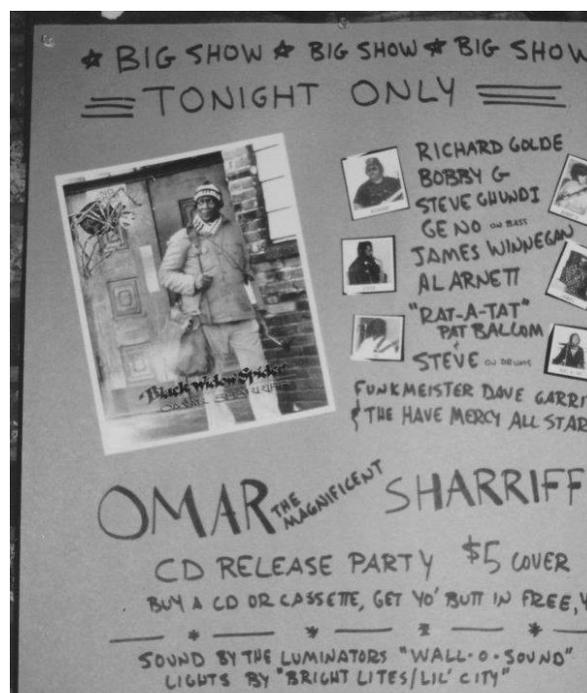
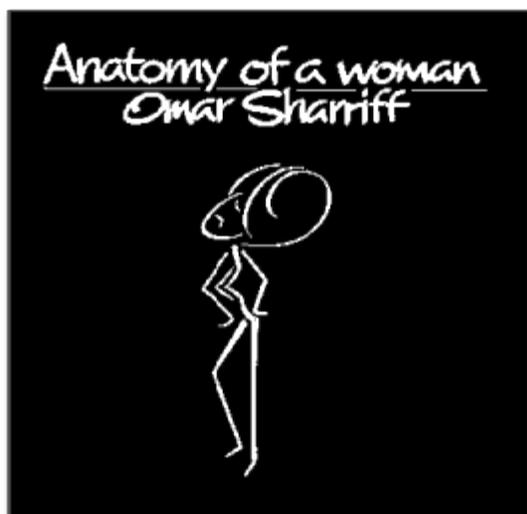
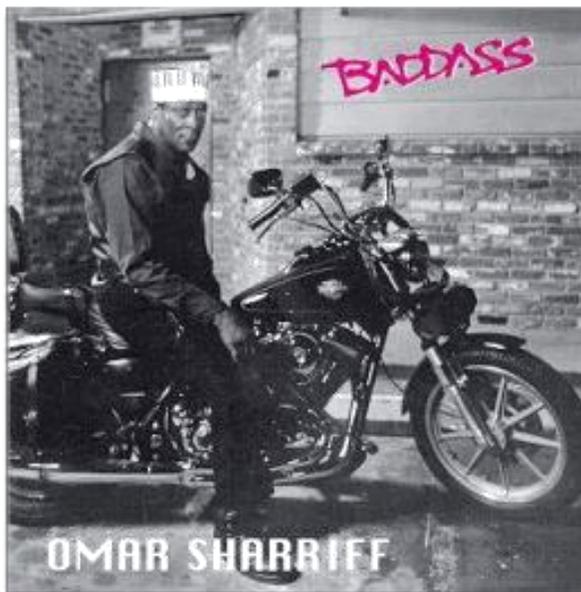


Variations in Omar's name, and its spelling, continued until his final years. Name confusion plagued his career from the beginning. Many people thought he was the son of David "Black Ivory King" Alexander. When he changed his name and left the Bay Area for Fresno and Sacramento, many thought Dave Alexander had died.

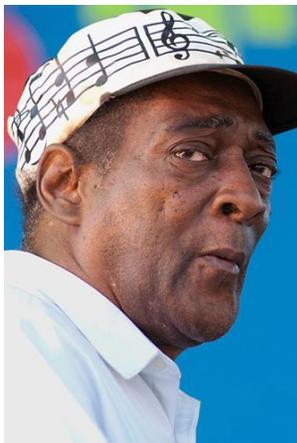
Despite a successful European tour and appearances with blues greats Muddy Waters (*photo on right*), Albert King, Big Mama Thornton, Bukka White, Robert Cray and others, health issues and other problems mounted. When Bill Graham died in a helicopter crash in 1991, Omar's fate worsened.



Omar with Bukka White and L.C. Robinson, left.



Although he continued to record and perform in the Sacramento area, and played major events such as the San Francisco Blues Festival and the Chicago Blues Festival, due to the decline of live music venues in Sacramento and his health problems, Omar's situation grew dire.



After open heart surgery in 2006, Omar developed painful vascular problems in his legs and an already difficult life became even harder. His inability to travel and dependence on pain medication made impossible all but a few opportunities to earn money by performing. Friends and admirers helped. Sacramento State University provided him occasional dates to entertain students. But by 2010, when Dr. John Tennison discovered that “Dave Alexander” was still alive and living in Sacramento as “Omar Sharriff,” Omar had virtually disappeared from the boogie and blues scene. He no longer possessed a working keyboard and was completely without resources.

Omar obtained a new lease on life when the City of Marshall invited him back to headline a Boogie Woogie Homecoming concert to celebrate Marshall’s recent discovery of its music heritage. The concert was a smash success, generating considerable publicity for Marshall’s Birthplace claim. In December, 2010, Omar was brought back to Marshall for a Christmas concert with renowned boogie masters Seeley & Baldori.

SEELEY & BALDORI

OMAR SHARRIFF

A Boogie Woogie Christmas Concert
Friday, Dec. 17th at 7 pm
Marshall Visual Art Center
208 E. Burleson Street, 903.938.9860

Tickets \$10 and \$20 at www.boogiemarshall.ticketleap.com
Also available by cash or check at the Art Center
And by phone at 903.938.8966



BOOGIE WOOGIE HOMECOMING

8 P.M. Friday, June 11, 2010
Marshall Visual Arts Center



Featuring world-renowned Boogie Woogie Master & Blues piano artist, **Omar Sharriff**. Also known as Dave Alexander, Mr. Sharriff was raised in Marshall, Texas and is the last **living link** to the generation of African Americans who created Boogie Woogie music in the T&P railroad logging camps around Marshall.

Boogie Woogie music originated in the piney woods of East Texas, with the rhythm of the T&P Railroad, and Marshall, Texas at the hub.

You're invited to this historic celebration and performance. Admission is free, but you'll need a ticket. Contact 903-935-7868 for more information and to reserve your seat. Don't miss this concert!



In February, 2011, Omar Sharriff accepted the city's invitation to relocate to Marshall and live rent free in a furnished apartment at a city community center. He spent the last year of his life in relative comfort, receiving excellent medical care. Although unable to travel for engagements offered for European tours and U.S. venues, he performed frequently in Marshall and received the affection, respect and admiration for his artistry that he richly deserved.

Boogie Woogie FIREANT Ball
Boogie Legend Omar Sharriff & Guitar Star Wes Jeans Like You've Never Seen Them Before!!

OMAR & WES
oh yes!!

Three Generations of Marshall's Music at its BEST

ANTHONY G PARRISH BAND

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2011
7:30 pm MARSHALL VISUAL ART CENTER

Tickets: www.boogiewoogiemarshall.com
marshall, texas: birthplace of boogie woogie

Omar at OS
every THURSDAY from 7 - 9
Boogie Woogie & Blues with Omar Sharriff

The OS Restaurant & Pub
105 E. Houston, Downtown Marshall
no cover charge 903.938.7700

marshall, texas: the birthplace of boogie woogie



Omar's popularity in Marshall knew no boundaries. Overnight, long standing barriers between communities evaporated. Young and old and people of different ethnic backgrounds began having fun together. Happily, this spirit continues and Birthplace of Boogie Woogie branded shows and activities still draw large and diverse audiences.

Wednesday, NOV. 16
ROBIN & STANTON - OS Pub, 7 pm

Thursday, NOV. 17
OMAR SHARRIFF
OS Pub, 7 pm

GOODTIME ROUNDERS
Charlie's, 8:30 pm

Friday, NOV. 18
BOBBIE OLIVER
Cajun Tex, 6:30 pm

BLIND DOG COOK
OS Pub, 9 pm

Saturday, NOV. 19
STIFF NECKED FOOLS
Charlie's, 8:30 pm

BUDDY FLETT
OS Pub, 9 pm

marshall, texas:
the birthplace of
Boogie Woogie

OMAR UPDATE:
Recovering well from his heart stents last week. Leg stents will be scheduled for next week. This means he's had to postpone his two-week concert tour in France.

THE GOOD NEWS:
OMAR SHARRIFF
Home for the Holidays
THURSDAY at OS2 come out and see him; He's missed you.

boogiewoogiemarshall.com

In spite of the excellent medical care, Omar's condition worsened, and by the end of 2011 he was sometimes not able to perform locally. Among his last appearances was a performance for grade school classes at the historical Harrison County Courthouse and his "Lonesome Christmas" show at OS2.



Boogie Woogie Benefit Ball
TRIBUTE TO OMAR
saturday, march 24, 2012
8 pm
doors open 7 pm
special guest: WES JEANS
special guest: JOHN TENNISON
Anthony G. Parrish, Mike Mitchell, Carl Mitchell
Andre Lewis, Barney Canson, Nathan Thomas
Cody Pappas, Jimmy Roberts, Lynwood Johnson
Byron Canida, Johnny Frazier, Bobbie Oliver
LaDonna Gaut, Cassandra Buckhanan:
& from Austin THE TIN ROOF TRIO

VIP PATRON: \$100
GENERAL ADMISSION: \$15
TICKETS at Charlie's & at boogiewoogiemarshall.com
Proceeds will help pay funeral costs. We will pay tribute to the late, magnificent OMAR SHARRIFF. RIP

903-217-7458 marshall, texas: the birthplace of boogie woogie 903-217-7486

Charlie's BACK YARD BAR

Boogie Woogie Benefit Ball
TRIBUTE TO OMAR
Saturday March 24, 2012
8 pm
special guest: Wes Jeans
special guest: John Tennison
Anthony G. Parrish, Mike Mitchell
Carl Mitchell, Andre Lewis, Barney Canson
Byron Canida, Cody Pappas, Jimmy Roberts
Johnny Frazier, Cassandra Buckhanan
Nathan Thomas, LaDonna Gaut
Bobbie Oliver, Lynwood Johnson
and from Austin: THE TIN ROOF TRIO

VIP SEATING: \$100 GENERAL ADMISSION: \$15
TICKETS at Charlie's & at boogie.ticketleap.com

Proceeds will help pay funeral costs. We will pay tribute to the late, magnificent Omar Sharriff. RIP

903-217-7458 marshall, texas: the birthplace of boogie woogie 903-217-7486

Charlie's BACK YARD BAR

Tragically, Omar Sharriff died January 8, 2012. His funeral was held at Marshall Convention Center. A Tribute to Omar concert raised funds to pay funeral expenses. Future Tributes are anticipated to raise funds for an appropriate headstone.

Background: Marshall Texas Birthplace of Boogie Woogie © Jack Canson August 1, 2021

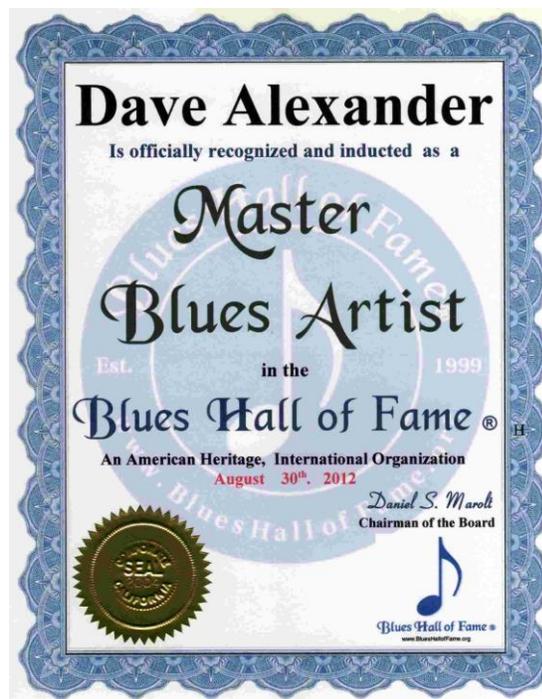
The City of Marshall has been widely praised for reaching out to this great artist and helping him during the most difficult period of a troubled and difficult life.

But Omar Sharriff/Dave Alexander gave more to Marshall than he took. His performances brought Marshall and visitors from other communities together as nothing had ever done before. More than any other thing could have, the return of Omar Sharriff/Dave Alexander to his roots established the true value and great potential of the Birthplace of Boogie Woogie program.

Omar Sharriff/Dave Alexander's legacy as one of the great boogie and blues piano masters of his era will endure through his recordings and the videos produced in Marshall.

He was indeed the last living link to the generation that created Boogie Woogie music in the Marshall, Texas area. That he was welcomed home after a 55 year absence, and returned to widespread attention nationally and internationally as a result, is of great significance to the Marshall, Texas Birthplace of Boogie Woogie program. For as long as this program endures, it will always rest on the native son who returned to bring the Boogie Woogie home.

On August 30, 2012, Dave Alexander was posthumously inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame as a Master Blues Artist.



Texas State Historical Marker State



Harrison County Historical Commission chairman Tom Speir, left, watches John Tennison and Jack Canson unveil a historical marker celebrating Marshall as the birthplace of boogie-woogie.

Robin Y. Richardson/News-Journal Photo

At 2 pm on Sunday, September 2, 2018, in Marshall, Texas, a formal dedication ceremony was held for a historical marker that has been placed by the Texas State Historical Commission. The marker celebrates Marshall, Texas as The Birthplace of Boogie Woogie. The Texas Historical Commission cast the historical marker as a result of the historical research of John Tennison, who was the first to conclude that the Marshall, Texas area was the Birthplace of Boogie Woogie. The marker has been placed near the historic Texas & Pacific Depot. Of all buildings that currently exist, the Texas & Pacific Depot in Marshall is the most symbolic to the earliest Boogie Woogie performances, as the depot lies at the geographical center of gravity from which Boogie Woogie spread along the Texas & Pacific tracks running North, East, and West from where the depot is located. <http://www.bowofo.org/>

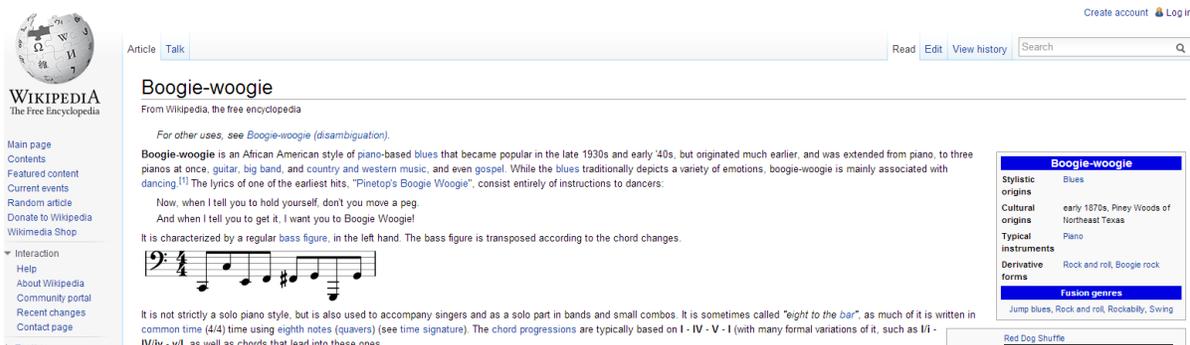
Background: Marshall Texas Birthplace of Boogie Woogie © Jack Canson August 1, 2021



Background: Marshall Texas Birthplace of Boogie Woogie © Jack Canson August 1, 2021

RECOGNITION OF THE BIRTHPLACE OF BOOGIE WOOGIE

1. WIKIPEDIA



The screenshot shows the Wikipedia article for "Boogie-woogie". The article text includes:

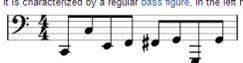
Boogie-woogie
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other uses, see Boogie-woogie (disambiguation).

Boogie-woogie is an African American style of piano-based blues that became popular in the late 1930s and early '40s, but originated much earlier, and was extended from piano, to three pianos at once, guitar, big band, and country and western music, and even gospel. While the blues traditionally depicts a variety of emotions, boogie-woogie is mainly associated with dancing.^[1] The lyrics of one of the earliest hits, "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie", consist entirely of instructions to dancers:

Now, when I tell you to hold yourself, don't you move a peg.
And when I tell you to get it, I want you to Boogie Woogie!

It is characterized by a regular bass figure, in the left hand. The bass figure is transposed according to the chord changes.



It is not strictly a solo piano style, but is also used to accompany singers and as a solo part in bands and small combos. It is sometimes called "eight to the bar", as much of it is written in common time (4/4) time using eighth notes (quavers) (see time signature). The chord progressions are typically based on I - IV - V - I (with many formal variations of it, such as I/I - IV/iv - v/I, as well as chords that lead into these ones.

The right sidebar contains a table with the following information:

Boogie-woogie	
Stylistic origins	Blues
Cultural origins	early 1870s, Piney Woods of Northeast Texas
Typical instruments	Piano
Derivative forms	Rock and roll, Boogie rock
Fusion genres	
Jump blues, Rock and roll, Rockabilly, Swing	
Red Dog Shuffle	

The Wikipedia article identifying Marshall and Harrison County, Texas as the point of origination of Boogie Woogie music was written and posted by Jack Canson, based on the research of Dr. John Tennison, in January, 2011.

2. BROADCAST, "ALL THINGS CONSIDERED," NPR

In January, 2011, National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" broadcast a high profile story about Omar Sharriff's return to his hometown of Marshall as Boogie Woogie Artist in Residence. The Dallas based NPR reporter, Wade Goodwin, had attended the 2010 Christmas Concert starring Omar Sharriff and Seeley & Baldori and returned to interview Omar and others.



[National Public Radio, "All Things Considered" on The Birthplace of Boogie Woogie](#)

3. ARTICLE, "THE MEDALLION."

[Marshall's Mystique – The Medallion Magazine, Texas Historical Commission](#)

[Boogie Woogie & Omar Sharriff, The Medallion Magazine.](#)

PIECE OF HISTORY

The Boogie Woogie Man

Omar Sharriff Brings Musical Legacy Back Home

David Alexander Elam's momma didn't want the devil's music in her house. But when she wasn't there, Elam's father would raise a little hell with his friends, some instruments, and plenty of corn liquor. As a young boy in Marshall, Elam was mesmerized by the music they played, which didn't seem to be the work of the devil at all. It was inspirational. And it stuck with him.

"My dad threw some wild parties, man—he and his friends would create their own fun," says Elam, who now goes by the name Omar Sharriff. "They'd play boogie woogie and old blues music like Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters. I'd go to school the next day and try to play it on the piano."

Decades later, Sharriff would share the stage with Waters himself, among other legendary musicians

like Ray Charles, Albert Collins, and Buddy Guy. He toured in Europe and earned a living as a respected pianist in California before an unexpected invitation in 2010 brought him back home to East Texas, where he now serves as Marshall's cultural ambassador.

"When I first heard about Marshall wanting me to come back, I thought it was a joke," he says. Instead, Sharriff found a welcoming community that has benefitted from a newfound musical legacy and decades of racial tolerance.

Life was considerably different for Sharriff while growing up in Marshall. Born in 1938, he brawled with white kids in the street, attended a segregated school, and entered buildings through a separate doorway. His home life was relatively stable thanks to his father, who worked for a logging company as a mule skinner (the man who handled a mule team), and his church-minded mother, who he describes as Christ-like.

Sharriff recalls his elementary school music teacher Ella Mae Willis providing his first piano lesson, which was inspiring yet frustrating, since he was unable to practice without a piano in his home. "When I wanted to play, I'd have to climb

into an open window at the school and play the piano in there," he says.

As a student at Pemberton High School, Sharriff attended a show by nationally renowned piano player Floyd Dixon, a Marshall native. He refers to the concert as a significant turning point in his life. "I decided right then and there—That's it. I want to do that," he says. Dixon helped Sharriff get started in the music business by suggesting influential albums by Art Tatum and Thelonious Monk and introducing him to club owners in nearby Shreveport, Texarkana, and Tyler.

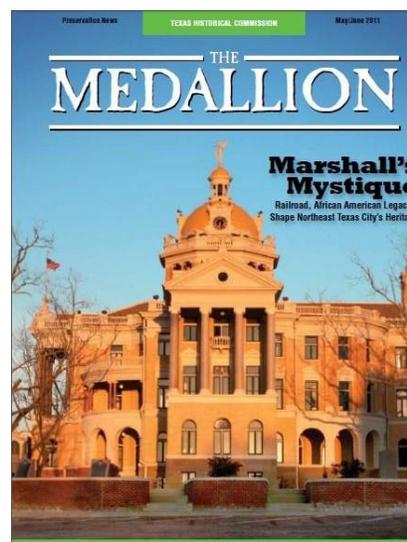
By 1955, however, racism had become an inescapable threat. After witnessing a black man get beaten in downtown Marshall while policemen sat by idly smoking cigarettes, he and his family fled to California. Sharriff served in the Navy for two years and moved to Oakland, where he began his journey as a professional musician.

Sharriff recalls a seminal experience while playing a gig at San Francisco's Minny's Can-Do Club, where a bar patron was observing him with keen interest. After the show, he approached Sharriff, expressed his admiration, and asked him to call if he wanted to play at the city's highest-profile venues. Though suspicious of the man's intentions, Sharriff ultimately made contact and was humbled to discover he was speaking with famous concert promoter Bill Graham.

"He booked me as an opener for Bob Dylan and got me into the Winterland ballroom—that was the greatest thing that ever happened to me," Sharriff says. "San Francisco was great, man. That city was like a beautiful woman—I just loved that whole scene."

Omar Sharriff plays boogie woogie piano music in his hometown of Marshall, where he recently returned to be the city's cultural ambassador.

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4. ARTICLE, DALLAS MORNING NEWS.

The Dallas Morning News

[The Dallas Morning News on The Birthplace of Boogie Woogie](#)

Pianist helps Marshall, Texas, validate claim as boogie's birthplace



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Photos by NATHAN HUNSINGER/DMN

Concertgoers congratulate Omar Sharrif at the Marshall Visual Arts Center. The city spent years trying to develop a tourism plan before hitting upon 'Marshall, Texas: Center Stage.'

By LEE HANCOCK / The Dallas Morning News

lhancock@dallasnews.com

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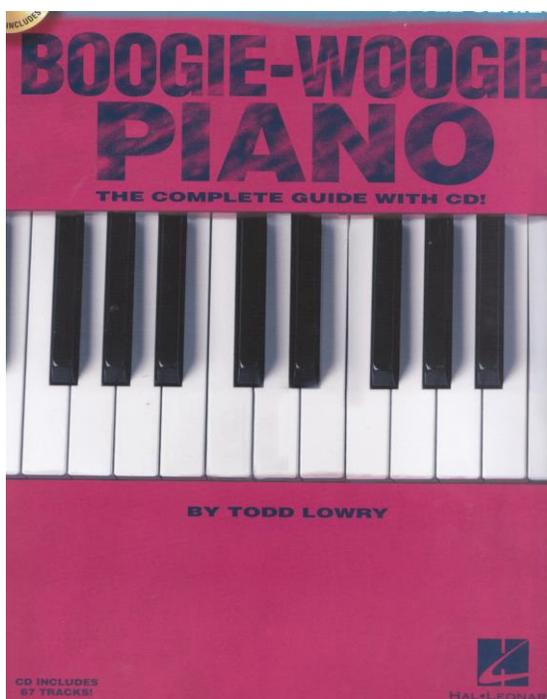
MARSHALL, Texas - Omar Sharriff thought boogie-woogie piano was his one-way ticket out of town. When he left Marshall in 1955, he never looked back, even as his life narrowed from big shows to a dingy Sacramento, Calif., apartment, meals-on-wheels and gigs that barely covered cab fare.

Then came a phone call from a Texas music historian, who said he'd prove that Sharriff's hometown gave birth to boogie-woogie piano. The historian knew that Sharriff's father played boogie in East Texas and might have learned it from the genre's originators. That made 72-year-old Sharriff Marshall's last, best living link.

5. HAL LEONARD MUSIC PUBLISHING.

The Hal Leonard Company is the world's largest music print publisher, distributing products world wide for virtually every instrument and ensemble. In their latest publication in the Blues, Jazz, and Boogie Woogie genre – “How to Play Boogie Woogie” – the instruction book includes a two page section “The History of Boogie Woogie Piano.” In this section, Marshall, Texas is recognized in the following statement.

“In 2010, Dr. Tennison summarized his research into the origins of boogie-woogie with the conclusion that Marshall, Texas is the geographical center of gravity for instances of boogie-woogie performance between 1870 and 1880. The municipality now calls itself “The Birthplace of Boogie Woogie.””



6. THE HANDBOOK OF TEXAS ON-LINE.

For nearly 100 years, the Handbook of Texas, published by the Texas State Historical Association, has been the Gold Standard for factual information about people, places and events of significance to the history of Texas. In 1999, TSHA launched an on-line version of the Handbook. The article on David Alexander Elam/Omar Sharriff and his connection to Marshall was added to the Handbook in May, 2013.

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fel45>

7. LONGVIEW NEWS JOURNAL.

https://www.news-journal.com/news/county/harrison/marker-celebrates-marshall-as-birthplace-of-boogie-woogie-music/article_fbdfbe1e-6507-5954-aea8-3a25ca01c57c.html

8. TEXAS MONTHLY.

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/boogie-woogie-may-be-texas-most-influential-musical-export/>

Prepared by Jack Canson, August 1, 2021
Drawn from the research of Dr. John Tennison
(see *his comprehensive website* <http://www.bowofo.org/>)