

DECLARATION BY THE Marshall, Texas City Commission

Marshall, Texas -- the "Birthplace of Boogie Woogie"

PREAMBLE:

In the history of popular music, no musical style has brought more joy, playfulness, or pleasure to people than the uniquely American musical genre known as Boogie Woogie.

No other form of music has inspired more creative expression, artistic ingenuity, or put more smiles on more faces than Boogie Woogie.

The point of origin of this wonderful art, and the people who invented, nourished, and transported it is a matter of considerable importance to all who recognize the importance of knowing and understanding the true heritage of the music that has influenced and shaped so much and so many.

The historical record has long been clear that Boogie Woogie was originated by African Americans working in the logging camps and helping to build the railroads somewhere in the Piney Woods of northeast Texas. Musicologists have also determined that Boogie Woogie music migrated from its point of origin by way of the Texas & Pacific railroad when piano players who learned this lively new style boarded the trains to spread Boogie Woogie music in all directions.

Recent scholarship has determined that Marshall, Texas is the only community in the world where all the factors that are known to be associated with the origin of Boogie Woogie occurred.

Marshall was the original hub and headquarters for the Texas & Pacific Railroad and was virtually surrounded by logging camps during the early 1870s, when Boogie Woogie music emerged. Marshall also has a rich African American heritage. Marshall has also produced outstanding Boogie Woogie musicians, most of whom never recorded and are known only to generations now past, and some of whom, like Floyd Dixon and Dave Alexander, now known as Omar Sharriff, are admired throughout the world.

Thanks to the scholarship of such outstanding musicologists as Dr. John Tennison, the historical record is clear. Marshall, Texas is the true birthplace of one of the most exciting and influential musical genres of all time.

Our city embraces this with the same sense of wonder and satisfaction as if we had discovered gold in our own back yard. A valuable jewel that has been hidden in our past is now recovered, and we will invite the world to come share it with us. Our coming to understand this important aspect of our heritage helps bridge a longstanding cultural gap in our city.

Boogie Woogie music was the beginning of Rock and Roll. It is the music of America. It is who we are, what we are about, and where we came from. It is the music that resonated with the steam and hammers and wheels of the great American Industrial Revolution that made our country the greatest and most powerful on earth – and it began right here in Marshall, Texas.

DECLARATION:

WHEREAS, the joyful and uniquely American genre of music called "Boogie Woogie" is known by musicologists to have been originated by African-Americans influenced by the percussive, polyrhythmic sounds of the emerging railroad industry in the Piney Woods of northeast Texas, and

WHEREAS, Marshall is the county seat of Harrison County, which had the largest population of African Americans in northeast Texas during the early 1870s, when Boogie Woogie was first played; and

WHEREAS, Marshall was also the headquarters of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, and at the epicenter of railroad construction and the logging industry associated with it, and

WHEREAS, the Marshall railroad hub was the only such location in northeast Texas, and was isolated from other railway centers beyond the Piney Woods during the infancy of Boogie Woogie music, and is therefore the logical and most probable location where this dynamic new musical style could have evolved from its embryonic stage; and

WHEREAS, Boogie Woogie Music has been called the true father of rock and roll and is rightly recognized as one of the most vital and revolutionary developments in the entire history of popular music, and the true story of its emergence is of factual and cultural importance worldwide;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MARSHALL CITY COMMISSION that hereafter and forever more the City of Marshall, Texas shall be known as THE BIRTHPLACE OF BOOGIE WOOGIE.

Enacted by vote of the Marshall City Commission on this day, May 13, 2010.