

The Clerk's Black History Series

Debra DeBerry Clerk of Superior Court DeKalb County



Sarah Marshall Boone

(1832 – October 29, 1904)

“Patent Owner of the Ironing Board Sleeve Extension”

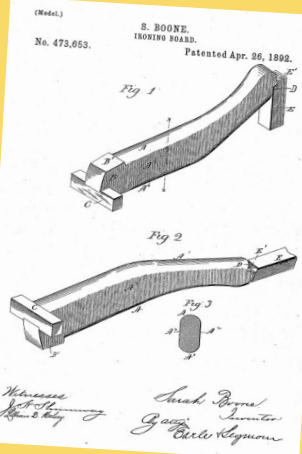


Sarah (Marshall) Boone was born in Craven County, North Carolina in 1832 to Sally and Caleb Marshall, who were both enslaved to James Marshall. James Marshall was reported to be Sarah's biological father. The only education she received was from her grandfather.

According to marriage bond records, on November 25, 1847, when she was 14, Sarah married James Boon (later Boone), a brick mason, and he, a free man, may have bought her freedom. The Boones continued to live in North Carolina, where their children William, James, and Mary Elizabeth were born. It is reported that the Boone's worked within the system of the Underground Railroad to move to New Haven, Connecticut by 1856.

The Moore's settled into a Black neighborhood at 30 Winter Street, near Dixwell Avenue. Many of Dixwell's residents worked for nearby Yale College, and Dixwell Avenue was a vibrant part of town, eventually serving as the main street for the Black community. Sarah began working as one of the many dressmakers in the bustling black community. Her husband worked as a bricklayer until his death in 1876. Before his death, James and Sarah accumulated enough wealth to purchase their own home. Sarah became a valued member of the neighborhood with regular attendance to the Dixwell Congregational Church. Her name is listed in the city directory after 1861 and her location nearby the Yale campus means it's likely that she made dresses for both black and white clients. Through the assistance of others she was able to learn to read and write.

As a dressmaker, Sarah's daily work required her to iron the various garments she was sewing. The method of ironing used by those who could not afford to purchase an ironing table, was to set a plank between two chairs. W. Vandenburg's Ironing Table was patented On April 6, 1853, and later improved by both J. H. Mallory in 1871 and black Inventor Elijah McCoy in 1874. For those in the garment production business like Sarah, the ironing table was limited in the way she could press the slim sleeves of the garments she sewed.



Sarah soon began working on a mock-up of wood that would attach to the end of the ironing board. She designed a narrow, curved board that would extend out, allowing longer sleeves to slide over it, for easier ironing. It would also act as a holder for larger garments, keeping them from touching the floor, without getting wrinkled. The invention also used a support system to flip the garment to its other side, enabling the user to iron both sides of a sleeve. This was necessary so that the ironing of one side would not be undone by the ironing of the other side. Her goal was to produce a cheap, simple effective device that could be used by the many dressmakers in the area. Her addition of a padded surface and a smaller rounded end helped ironing become much more efficient.

List of Patents.
List of patents issued from the United States patent office on Tuesday, April 26, 1892, for the state of Connecticut, furnished us from the office of Earle & Seymour, solicitors of patents, 868 Chapel street, New Haven, Conn.:
Sarah Boone, New Haven, ironing board.
G. H. Dimond, assignor to Wheeler & Wilson Manufacturing company, Bridgeport, tension releasing device for sewing machines.
H. E. Fowler, New Haven, metal bending machine.



On April 26, 1892, Sarah Boone applied for and received U.S. Patent 473,653. It is thought to be the 2nd patent issued to a black woman.

Sarah Marshall Boone died on October 29, 1904 at the age of 65 of Bright's disease, or what today may be classified as acute or chronic nephritis (kidney disease). Her body is interred alongside her husband and her mother in New Haven's Evergreen Cemetery.

OBITUARY NOTES.
Death of Sarah Boone, Aged 65.
Sarah Boone, widow of the late James Boone, died yesterday afternoon at her late residence, 30 Winter street. She was sixty-five years old. The funeral will take place Tuesday afternoon and interment will be in Evergreen cemetery.