

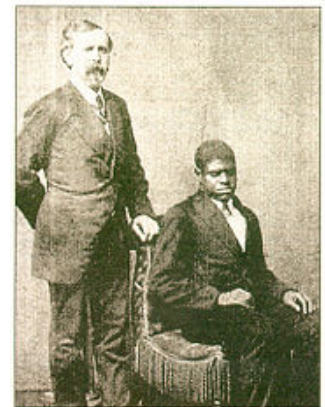
Blind Tom Greene

Tom Greene, also known as Tom Greene Bethune or Tom Wiggins, was born in Harris County, GA. Tom arrived in Fauquier in 1869 when his owner, General James N. Bethune bought Elway Farm (now Elway Hall) on Springs Road from Isham Keith.

An Autistic Savant, Tom was the son of Bethune's slaves, Domingo Wiggins and Charity Greene. Charity brought Tom into the mansion while working, and he heard the piano lessons given to the Bethune children, who befriended him. Tom could play back their melodies, and began improvising sophisticated compositions at the age of six.

Since blindness rendered him incapable of manual labor, the General realized his talent might earn the family income and began hiring him out to a concert promoter in 1858. Blind Tom traveled the country after the Civil War and earned great fame for writing and performing his "Battle of Manassas." In 1860, Tom played in the White House before President James Buchanan.

While at Elway, Tom listened to farm machinery, and road along in a buggy in the fields, inspiring "The Reaper." Tom died in 1908 in New Jersey, and is buried in Brooklyn, New York.



General Bethune and Blind Tom