

**The John Stone Family  
of Coles County, Illinois  
Their Move to the West 1863 – 1870**

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**PREFACE**

John Stone, the paternal grandfather of my mother, Lorena Stone Lamb, was born May 7, 1821, in Indiana to Stephen and Nancy Bowen Stone. He was the fourth of ten children. Sometime between 1832 and 1836 the family moved from Indiana to Hutton Township, Coles County, Illinois.

Stephen, John's father, was a farmer and veterinarian. He was also justice of the peace for several years in Hutton Township. From sometime before the 1849 gold rush until his death in 1853, Stephen and Nancy lived in and operated Five Mile House, a stagecoach stop located at the intersection of two busy stagecoach routes five miles southeast of Charleston, the county seat of Coles County.

John, like his father, farmed for a living; but from the time he was a boy he was more interested in "doctoring" than he was in farming. As a very young man, he and his similarly minded cousin, Billy Goodman, "talked" and "studied" medicine together; but there is no record of John's having had any formal schooling in the profession. Nevertheless, like his older brother, Bill, he became "Dr. Stone" and his principal occupation became that of physician rather than farmer. His interest in medicine probably was heightened by the fact that he had a health problem of his own – specifically, "lung trouble".

On January 12, 1845, at the age of 23, John married Permelia Durham White, age 18. She had been born in Indiana on July 17, 1826, to Asa and Mary Lewis White, who later moved to Mattoon, Illinois, not far from Charleston. We do not know the number of her siblings, but years later she was referred to as the youngest of the family. When she was quite young her mother died and her father remarried; but Permelia and her stepmother did not get along well, and Permelia moved to the home of her brother, Silas White, a Baptist minister living in Charleston.

John and Permelia lived on John's farm across the road from Five Mile House from 1845 until 1863, during which time they produced eight children. Living where they did, they were well aware of the continuing westward covered wagon migration and must have often considered whether opportunities for their family might be greater in the West and whether John's health might be better in California than in the highly seasonal weather of Illinois.

In early 1863 their considerations regarding emigrating undoubtedly were influenced by the recent deaths of two of John's three brothers. His younger brother, Jerry, a farmer and also justice of the peace, had died of tuberculosis the previous July at the age of 39. His older brother, Bill, a medical physician who also operated Five Mile House after the death of their father, had just died in December 1862, at the age of 44 – apparently also from tuberculosis. John was 41 and had lung trouble.

For whatever reasons, they decided to sell out and emigrate. On May 7, 1863, John's 42<sup>nd</sup> birthday, they started the long trek in two covered wagons, each drawn by four oxen, accompanied by several other families from their own area and elsewhere. There were eleven in their family who made the trip:

Name	Called	Born	Age
John	Father	7 May 1821	42
Permelia	Mother	17 Jul 1825	37
Stephen Chancey	Steve/Doc	16 Apr 1847	16
Ezekiel Henderson	Zeke	4 Aug 1849	13
Samantha	Mant	14 Feb 1852	11
Jeremiah	Jerry	12 Jun 1854	8
Alva Curtis	Curt	19 Mar 1857	6
John Newton	Newt	4 Jun 1860	3
Armina Jane	Mindy	25 Nov 1862	4 mos
Nancey Bowen Stone	Grandmother	3 Feb 1793	70
William Gilbert	Cousin Billy	c.1846/1847	c.17

Fifty-nine years later, in 1922, Dr. S. C. Stone (Doc) of Salem Oregon, then aged 75, recounted his recollections of the trip. In 1940 E. H. Stone (Zeke), then of Downey, California, and aged 90, related some of his memories of the family's early years in California and Oregon; and in 1947 J. N. Stone (Newt) of Walla Walla, Washington, then 86, dictated some of his earliest recollections of the family's early life in California and the Pacific Northwest.

A number of copies of S. C. Stone's narrative were distributed in 1922. However, the retrospections of E. H. Stone and J. N. Stone (my grandfather) were dictated to me in the living room of my grandfather's home, seven years apart; and neither of these narratives has been distributed before.

Each of the three brothers' recollections were recounted independently and over a period of twenty-five years, but they all pertain to the life and experiences of the John Stone family during the period from 1863 to 1870. For this reason, and because it has been almost 69 years since the

S. C. Stone narrative was distributed, it seems fitting to include all three of the retrospections in one paper rather than to publish the E. H. Stone and J. N. Stone papers separately.

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*Please contact the Frazier Farmstead Museum if you want any of the narratives of the above gentlemen.*