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Robert W. Small, Interviewer.  
August 28, 1937.

Interview with J. H. Stone,  
Tonkawa, Oklahoma, North 6th St. Place  
Born April 4, 1866 in Ohio  
Father-Samuel A. Stone  
Mother- Katherine O'Kane

In 1890 when Mr. Stone was twenty-four years old he made his first trip into Oklahoma.

Coming down from Kansas he looked over the country and visited the Red Rock and the Ponca Indian Reservation, the land known as the Cherokee Strip and parts of the Osage Nation.

He camped one night on Duck Creek, a few miles northeast of the present site of Tonkawa; at that time the bluestem grass was from six to seven feet high over much of the country; the country had many deer in it at that time, as he saw quite a bunch while in camp on Duck Creek and he also saw many wild turkeys. His chief interest in the Cherokee Strip country was to look over and become familiar with the best looking lands in the "Strip" as everyone thought it would be opened to settlement in a short time.

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When the run was made for homes in this country on September 16th, 1893, Mr. Stone and ten of his friends started in the race from a point about two miles west of the Chilocco Indian School at Chilocco but they had gone only a few miles until they became scattered except for three men who stayed with Mr. Stone, relying upon his knowledge of the country to pilot them to a desirable section on which to stake their claims.

They crossed the Chikaskia River at the old Tonkawa Agency crossing and going on south, soon reached the Salt Fork River at a place where its banks were perpendicular for almost ten feet. The group halted only momentarily to pull and push one of the horses off the bank. The other horses followed with some persuasion, and they crossed the river which had but little water in it, and proceeded on south a mile or so where they all staked their claims on the four sides of a corner stone. Before starting in the race these men had loaded

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two wagons with horse feed and provisions for themselves, <sup>and</sup> <sub>7</sub> their horses and had given instructions to the driver of each wagon to meet at the Box Springs that night. Box Springs is about five miles southwest of the present site of Blackwell. In the race, they carried a canteen of water, about a peck of oats in one end of a sack and a quantity of dry biscuits in the other end. After staking their claims they observed by the watch that it had been one hour and forty-seven minutes since they left the firing line.

They stayed on their claims until about dark and then appointed two of their number to remain there while the other two went to hunt for the wagons which were hauling their feed and provisions. Mr. Stone being more familiar with the country took a man and started out. It was after nightfall and difficult to find their way, but they kept as near as they could to the route they had already  
/come down until they crossed the Salt Fork River and

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were in the vicinity of the Box Springs when they fired a revolver and called out loudly the name of one of the drivers of the wagons; no response was heard; they rode on farther and repeated the signal and to their surprise found that the wagons were within a few steps of them. The drivers of the wagons had gone to bed but the shot had awakened them. Mr. Stone and his companion returned to their claims the same night. The men whom they had left on their claims had built a camp fire that assisted them to locate their claims in the dark of the night.

Mr. Stone's claim proved to be the Northwest Quarter of Section 23, Township 25 north, Range 1 west. One of the other men's claim proved to be the allotment of an Indian woman and thus he lost out.

They had placed a plow in the wagon before starting for the race and when they got to their claims that Saturday night they spent much time trying to find a place where they could get the wagon down the river bank and up on the opposite side. It was not long till morning when they hitched four horses to the plow and plowed a furrow around their claims and also around the allotment for the Indians.

They then erected a tent over the corner stone to the land so that each one could sleep on his claim at night in the tent.

The three who had valid claims were immensely delighted with their lands. Mr. Stone says most of the early settlers were poor men who had never known what it was to own a home of any kind and they were happy to own this wonderful land. Mr. Stone says his father had pioneered in Kansas and had taught him the spirit and that he never faltered at any undertaking or got weak hearted over the first few trying years in the new country.

Mr. Stone built a dugout on his claim eight feet by eleven feet to live in and built sheds for his stock from cottonwood slabs; he later built a small house in which they lived during the summer months and in winter time they moved back to the dugout.

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Mr. Stone's first crop of ten acres was planted to corn, kaffir, and watermelons; the sod was broken and he took an axe and chopped a hole in the sod and planted corn in it and never plowed it but hoed the weeds a little and raised twenty bushels per acre and a good crop of kaffir and fine melons. The following year more land was broken and wheat planted which made only two or three bushels per acre.

The next year more land was broken and more wheat planted and a bumper crop was raised and good prices obtained for the grain; then their troubles were over, crop failures not occurring again for years afterward. People began to build good improvements on their lands and the country in every way felt the effects of the good prices.

Mr. Stone brought with him when he moved to his claim five cows, two dozen hens and five horses; he

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sold one cow on the road as he moved down, for twelve dollars and that was all the money he had. Mrs. Stone worked and planned and bought all their groceries with butter and eggs and had a little money to spare for clothing and other necessities. In addition to this work she knitted and patched and darned and kept her house in order, and on one occasion when her husband had to be away for several days she harnessed up the team and had a big lot of land ready for seed when he returned. Mr. Stone says he <sup>never</sup> could have "made" it had he not had her help and good management.

They sold their first eggs for eight cents per dozen and butter for ten cents per pound.

The first fall after the opening was the hardest time on people here as nothing much was raised on the lands and people had eaten up all the supplies they had brought with them to the country and they were actually in destitute circumstances. For three months at a time Mr. Stone and his family have gone without meal or flour



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in the house and they have ground kaffir in a coffee mill and in this way have made meal for bread. They used a ten gallon copper kettle to cook watermelons down to a syrup and ate that syrup with their kaffir bread and in spite of poverty were the happiest people in the land. Mr. and Mrs. Stone came to their claim in the early part of 1894; Mrs. Stone drove a wagon and team while he walked and drove the stock. In February a child was born to them which was the first birth in the community after settlement; a year or so later they lost the child and had no money to buy a coffin and a neighbor who was a carpenter made a coffin from lumber and his wife trimmed it and the child was buried by the road side where four or five other people were buried - all in a straight row until provisions were made for burial grounds.

The first school house was built by public donation and with a little help from the County; church and Sunday

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School ~~were~~ also held in the school house until later years. Mr. Stone put out an orchard of all kinds of fruit after the first good crop and he and Mrs. Stone went to the river bottom and got young trees of every available kind and set them out around their farm. Ten years later, Mr. Stone put out a thousand apple trees which produced fruit for eighteen years.

Ten years after the opening, Mr. Stone had a neighbor who wanted to sell his land; Mr. Stone bought it for \$5000.00 and mortgaged both his places for money to pay for the farm; the neighbors all thought it was awful to mortgage land and predicted that Mr. Stone would lose all his land; he had given a second mortgage of \$96.00 to pay the loan commission and Mrs. Stone raised turkeys and paid off the \$96.00 mortgage, and Mr. Stone paid the \$5000.00 mortgage in three years from the products of the two farms. Later, he leased each of the farms for \$6500.00 for oil and gas.

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When Mr. Stone first came to the claim he bought posts and wood for fuel from the Indians, trading them a pony at one time for a thousand posts. He says the Indians were very quiet and peaceable and never caused any disturbance of any kind and that he used to join them in their Christmas Tree feast where they had a big dance and that he has danced with them many times.

Mr. Stone has at the present time five hundred acres of good land besides a large brick home with every modern convenience in Tonkawa. This house has beautiful lawns and gardens and a few acres of ground are enclosed with strong wire and in this enclosure are a few deer.