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## JOHN MARSHALL STONE

During the interval between the organization of old Tishomingo County in 1836 and its final dissolution in 1870, a large number of men to afterwards gain distinction and fame, both local and national, made their political debut within the confines of that justly famous county; and among the number no one succeeded in so indelibly impressing his personality upon the people as did John Marshall Stone. His career from steamboat clerk to Governor but exemplifies the truthfulness of the old adage, "Nature creates merit, Fortune brings it into play." He devoted the best years of his life to the public service, and his reward was "well done thou good and faithful servant." Succeeding to the Governorship at a time when the State was engulfed in the throes of reconstruction, his masterly mind and mature judgment greatly aided in bringing order out of chaos and restoring to Mississippi a government of, by and for the white citizenry. Although a Tennessean at birth, Mr. Stone removed to Mississippi when a young man, and for forty-five years labored zealously for the advancement of the interest of the State of his adoption and at the time of his death was loved, honored and respected by every true Mississippian.

John Marshall Stone was born in Gibson County, Tenn., on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1830. The death of his father in 1841 made it necessary for him to assist in the support of

the family, and the next fourteen years was a period of unceasing toil. His spare moments were devoted to study, and when he reached his majority he had acquired a good education and was fitted to begin the remarkable career which followed. He secured a position as clerk on a Tennessee River steamboat plying between Eastport and points on the Ohio River, continuing thus until 1855, when he settled in Eastport and for two years clerked in a mercantile establishment. After the completion of the Memphis & Charleston railroad a large portion of the population of Eastport moved to Iuka, a new town located on the railroad, and in the fall of 1857 Mr. Stone followed, and was shortly thereafter appointed depot and express agent at that place, which position he held until 1878. As railroad agent he came in contact with a large portion of the people of the county, and his accommodating disposition and courteous treatment soon won for him the confidence and esteem of the entire population. At the breaking out of the civil war, Mr. Stone organized a company, of which he was elected captain, and which was mustered into the service of the Confederate States as Company K, Second Mississippi Regiment. Capt. Stone commanded his company in the first Manassas battle, and until the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1862, when he was elected colonel of the regiment, participating in all the engagements of the Army of Virginia. He was wounded several times, but not seriously. As senior colonel he commanded Davis' brigade at various times, notably in the battle of the Wilderness, in which he acquitted himself with distinguishing ability, receiving the most flattering praise from his superior officers. Near the close of the war Col. Stone came to Mississippi on furlough, and while returning to his command in Virginia he was captured at Salisbury, N. C., by Gen. Steadman, and was sent to Johnson's Island, where he was kept a prisoner until July 25, 1865. When finally released Col. Stone returned to Iuka and resumed the duties of railroad agent. He was elected State Senator in 1869 and re-elected in 1873, and his work as a member of that body is a part of the history of the State. On the first Tuesday in January, 1876, he was chosen as speaker pro tem. of the Senate, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of March succeeded Ames as Governor of Mississippi. He was elected to succeed himself in 1877, and was defeated for the gubernatorial nomination in the convention of 1881 by Robert Lowry, by whom he was appointed railroad commissioner in 1884. He was again elected Governor in 1889 and served six years. At the expiration of this term he organized the Merchants'

Bank of Jackson, of which he was elected president, and continued in this position for three years, when he resigned and was chosen president of the A. & M. College at Starkville, which place he held until his death on March 26, 1890. Col. Stone also served the County of Tishomingo as treasurer after the war. He married Miss Mary Coman, of Tishomingo County, in 1872.

To say aught in praise of the public life of Col. Stone is unnecessary. His life was an open book which was closely read by every Mississippian. While leading the brave men of his regiment against the overwhelming forces of an invading army; on the floor of the State Senate contending for the rights of the white people, and for sixteen years at the head of the State government, he ever displayed those qualities of personal courage, advanced statesmanship and executive ability, with which finite man is seldom endowed, and which made his name a synonym for all that was brave, pure and honest in public and private life. Alive, Col. Stone was the idol of the people; dead, his name is held in fond and loving remembrance, and he is referred to as a man who was just to his fellowman, his State and his Creator. Mrs. J. M. Stone is a resident of Iuka, and in her advancing years is surrounded by a host of friends who love her for her many noble traits and womanly virtues, and also because she is the widow of John Marshall Stone.