



John Stone was a successful Otago publisher whose provincial directories rivalled those of Henry Wise.

John Stone was born on 14 February 1840 in Gravesend, Kent. His wife, Susannah, a Londoner, was born in 1837. They were married in 1859 when he was 19 and she 23. Susannah's father, William Hutchison, was a stationer, and it is possible that John Stone had been apprenticed to him. His own father had been a soldier.

Stone was associated with Kelly's London directories and with the Navy Gazette before setting up business in the 1860s as a printer, bookseller, bookbinder and stationer at Erith, Kent, about 20 kilometres south-east of London. He also published a modest directory called *Stone's Erith, Belvedere and Abbey Wood Directory, Almanack, Companion and Advertiser*.

John and Susannah Stone had five children all born in London. In 1875 the family sailed for New Zealand on the clipper *Merope*, disembarking at Timaru before heading south to Dunedin.

Between 1875 and 1883, Stone worked as a traveller for several printing firms, such as Reith & Wilkie, before becoming town clerk for Mornington, a position he only relinquished when he set up his directory publishing firm in 1883. His first directory, Stone's Commercial, Municipal and General Directory, was published in Dunedin and only covered that town, but within three years it had met with such success that he began publishing a directory for the whole of Otago and Southland. By 1891 the firm established a Wellington branch and within three years were canvassing not just Wellington but Hawkes Bay and Taranaki. By 1900 the directories covered the remainder of the South Island. The only area that Stone's directories did not cover was the northern half of the North Island, and even here Stone Son and Co had a finger-hold as the firm worked in with Cleave's Auckland directory, to present a united front to their great rival, Henry Wise.

John Stone was a member and sometime vice-president of the Dunedin Shakespeare Club, a rationalist and Freethinker, and a brother in the District Grand Lodge of Otago. He died on 3 August 1897 and his wife Susannah died on 4 March 1903, and both are buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery, along with their son, John, who died in 1923.

Stone's directories were published until 1954 when the directory-publishing side of the business was taken over by H. Wise (NZ) Ltd. Stone's Dunedin office continued with jobbing printing until 1972 when it closed down. The Wellington branch became the firm's head office in mid-1973 and continued trading until the firm's demise in the early 1980s.

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