

Don Juan School District

Ethel McDonald of Burnt Ranch passed the teacher's examination and began teaching school in Hayfork in 1909. She taught there until her marriage to Zachariah (Mike) Hailstone in 1913. Together, they lived for a while in Hayfork, then Beegum in Shasta County, and later Corral Bottom.¹ In 1919, the Hailstone family moved to a farm at Don Juan Point, a few miles upriver from Burnt Ranch and about a mile past Cedar Flat in Tsnungwe ancestral territory. The mailing address was Del Loma. It was at this location where Ethel McDonald Hailstone (December 1887 - November 1982)² taught her own nine children. A convict camp moved nearby in 1922, so Ethel began teaching their children as well – for no pay. In 1923-24, the Don Juan School was noted in the Annual Reports at the Trinity County Office of Education but was listed as a private school.³ By 1927, Ethel had written to the state authorities in Sacramento to have the school building inspected and made a public school.



Don Juan School c. 1925

In 1928, a petition was received by the County Board of Supervisors to have a new school district formed out of a portion of the district known as Burnt Ranch. The petition indicated that there would be ten children between the ages of 5 and 17, with 7 more under 5 years of age within the proposed boundary of the new district. The petition was approved by Miss Lucy M. Young, County Superintendent of Schools. The county board decided to establish the new district, which was called the Don Juan School District.⁴ At this time, the origin of the name is unknown. The school was officially established on January 2, 1928. Ethel McDonald was then paid \$130 per month by Trinity County as a public school teacher. She had eight students in her class that year.⁵ She taught for many years at Don Juan, in the little one-room school at the lower end of the Hailstone Ranch. She taught a total of 35 years.⁶

... Ethel McDonald Hailstone, being now a qualified teacher with a flock of children, too far from Burnt Ranch to ride or walk it, became her own children's tutor, for a number of years. After she was widowed, she secured a public school, Don Juan School, for her own property. Several families at different times added pupils to those Ethel provided, all of her seven children grew up having attended Don Juan School. All graduated from that school also, except Iris, the last Hailstone child. The last year of the school saw only three pupils, and when a daughter and Jay Hailstone graduated, Iris had to go for her final year to Salyer, to board with relatives.⁷

¹ "Riding a mule to school in New River backcountry", *The Union*, Arcata, CA, February 12, 1981, 2.

² "Mary May Hailstone Carpenter", *The Trinity Journal*, http://www.trinityjournal.com/obituaries/article_b87fffe-fc0f-11e3-a2cd-0017a43b2370.html. Accessed August 30, 2022.

³ "Statistics of Elementary Schools", *Annual Reports*, Historic Documents Collection, Trinity County Office of Education, 38.

⁴ Information obtained from chronological notes, Trinity County Office of Education.

⁵ Berrien, Gay Holland, "A History of Education in Burnt Ranch", *Trinity Historical Society Yearbook*. 2004, 51.

⁶ "Riding a mule to school in New River backcountry" *The Union*, Arcata. February 12, 1981, 2, and *School Superintendents Record of Official Visits, 1918-1933*, Historic Records Collection, Trinity County Office of Education 263.

⁷ McGowan, Katherine R. "Organization of small school districts on lower Trinity", *Trinity Journal*, August 17, 1972, 10.

By 1930, the Trinity Journal reported that Don Juan School opened on September 2 with only five students in attendance and Mrs. Ethel Hailstone still in charge. One of her children, Idell, was absent as she was in hospital, having undergone an operation for a tubercular spot on the bone of her right leg. It was also reported that she was doing nicely.⁸ It was assumed that she would be returning to school, which would result in a total of six students.

The Don Juan School District was suspended during the 1940-41 school year and lapsed into the Burnt Ranch School District in 1942.⁹



Don Juan School 1925 with teacher mis-identified as Vivian Hailstone (should be Ethel Hailstone)



Don Juan School in 1938. Front row Left to right: John Hailstone, Iris Hailstone, Doris Akins, Vivian Tye, Audrey Phelps, James Ridell, sitting. Back row left to right, Barbara Phelps, Teacher Ethel (McDonald) (Hailstone) Chandler, Marjorie Akins, Edith Hailstone, unknown girl.

⁸ "Burnt Ranch Items", The Trinity Journal, September 6, 1930.

⁹ Holland, James. *A History of Education in Trinity County; A Thesis presented to the School of Education*. 1971. Chico State College, 32.