

Benjamin Cluff Jr. Family

NEWSLETTER

March 2012

benjamincluffjrfamily.org



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CELEBRATING 10 YEARS!

IT HAS BEEN 10 YEARS SINCE BENJAMIN CLUFF JR. WAS HONORED AT BYU FOUNDER'S DAY!

Come join us at the annual Benjamin Cluff Jr. Lecture and Awards, hosted by the David O. McKay School of Education at BYU and endowed by the Benjamin Cluff Jr. family. Every March this special event is held in honor of our ancestor and his commitment to education. Speakers chosen by the McKay School of Education present topics relevant to current educational trends and three award recipients are chosen for their outstanding contributions to education.

Our family reunion luncheon directly follows the lecture and is an enjoyable time to meet together as three branches of an extended family. We also learn about Benjamin Cluff Jr. through speakers and presentations and discuss projects and issues (such as the demise of the Cluff Building).

This year our luncheon will have a Hawaiian theme. Besides a Hawaiian menu, the luncheon topic will be on Benjamin Cluff Jr.'s mission to the Sandwich Islands.

We welcome more family, especially the younger generations! We hope to see you there!

We need to know how many people will be attending this year's luncheon so we can order the food (\$15 each). **Please RSVP to ransomfam@juno.com by March 15.**

BENJAMIN CLUFF JR. ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARDS & FAMILY REUNION LUNCHEON THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 2012

Hinckley Alumni Center, BYU Campus

Lecture 11:00 A.M.

Luncheon 12:30–2:00

Lunch \$15 per person

Please RSVP to ransomfam@juno.com by March 15

Send check to:

Laurie Ransom, 421 E. 1730 N. Orem, UT 84097

Parking is available in the Museum of Art or the Law

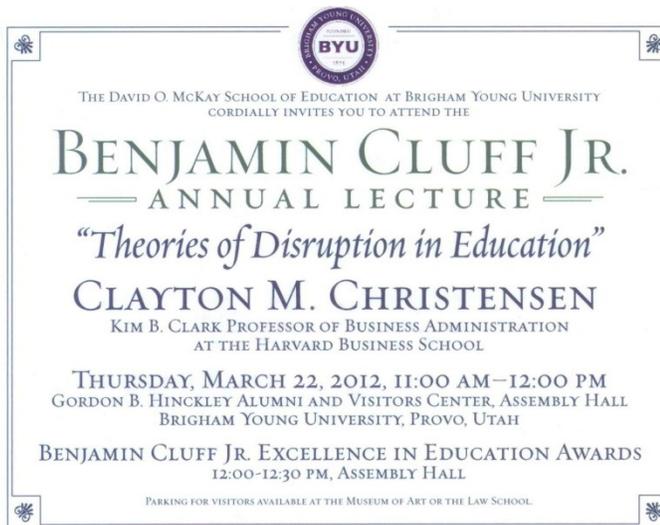
School parking lots. For a campus map see

map.byu.edu.





CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN



The lecture speaker will be Professor Clayton M. Christensen of the Harvard School of Business, (Harvard '79, BYU '75). A well-known and widely sought-after speaker, he is consistently acknowledged in rankings and surveys as one of the world's leading thinkers on innovation. This will be a well-attended lecture because of Professor Christensen's connection with BYU. As always, seats on the first two rows will be reserved for the Cluff family.

HISTORY

TEN YEARS AGO THIS YEAR!

It is hard to believe that Benjamin Cluff Jr. was honored 10 years ago at the BYU Founder's Day and Homecoming Extravaganza! This began the gathering of our large family: children, grandchildren and great grandchildren from his three wives, Mary John, Harriet Cullimore and Florence Reynolds. So many of us had never met but we had a common goal: to honor Benjamin Cluff Jr. and find a way for BYU to publicly recognize Cluff's great vision, contributions and hard work that helped transform Brigham Young Academy into Brigham Young University. Long the "forgotten president," the family's aim was to garner name recognition for Benjamin Cluff Jr. and to "give back" to the university in his honor.

At the 2002 Founder's Day assembly in the Marriott Center, Don Cluff spoke to the student body and administration about his grandfather, Benjamin Cluff Jr. Afterwards there was a luncheon for the Benjamin Cluff Jr. descendants. The three remaining children were present: Dolores Cluff Fife, Harvey Cluff (both children of Benjamin and Harriet) and

Elda Cluff Rippy (daughter of Benjamin and Florence). Dolores and Harvey both passed away in 2003, but Elda is still living today.

Meetings were held among the family to establish the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Foundation, and donations were made to create an endowment for the annual Benjamin Cluff Jr. Lecture Series hosted by Brigham Young University's David O. McKay School of Education. Cluff's granddaughter, Loyse Kiser Solomon further contributed to establish the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Awards in Excellence, which annually recognizes three exceptional educators.

Today, more people in the BYU academic community know the name Benjamin Cluff Jr., particularly through the lecture series, but we still have a long way to go. With the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Building gone, it might seem like BYU has taken a step backwards. Benjamin Cluff's name is no longer on maps, and the marker that stood in front of the building on 800 North has disappeared. Who would have thought ten years ago that the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Building would no longer exist?



But, since 2002, a wonderful thing has happened: The Benjamin Cluff Jr. family has come together and is united and organized, thanks to Colleen Caputo! We are making friendships each year as we meet together, work together, and learn together new things about our common ancestor. We all share Benjamin Cluff Jr.'s legacy!

To view and order a copy of the photo of the Cluff family group present at the inaugural celebration October 15, 2002, go to the following locations or contact Laurie Ransom:

- <http://photo2.byu.edu/s/General/Project/2012/Laurie%20Ransom>
- <http://photo.byu.edu/image-order-form>

2011 FAMILY REUNION LUNCHEON

The program for the 2011 Family Luncheon was a speech given by retired BYU religion professor Alan Parrish. He is presently writing a book about the movement in the late 1800s to find *Book of Mormon* sites in the Americas. His chapter on Benjamin Cluff Jr. is tentatively titled, "Benjamin Cluff Jr., The Brigham Young Academy South American Exploring Expedition." In his talk he mentioned that in the journal of a boyhood friend from Logan, Utah, it was recorded that they talked about going to South America to look for evidences of *The Book of Mormon*. This was long before Benjamin Cluff became a student or president of BYA so it was something he had been thinking about for a long time. It was a very interesting discussion.



Cheryl Wood, Kyle Fife, Laurie Ransom, Julie Kiser



Siblings: Colleen Caputo, Betty Jo Hixson, Don Cluff



Doug Mather & John Cluff



Don Cluff, Shar Burke, Jerry Burke speaking to Professor Alan Parrish

SPOTLIGHT: ELDA CLUFF RIPPY



Elda Cluff Rippy is the only living child of Benjamin Cluff Jr. Soon to be 98 years old, Elda lives in Cheney, Washington, near her daughter Clara Traher and not far from her son James Rippy and several grandchildren. She is a delightful woman with a wonderful sense of humor.

The fifth of six children of Benjamin Cluff and Florence Reynolds, Elda was born in Tabasco, Mexico on July 15, 1914. When she was 10 years old, her family moved to Redondo Beach, California, where Benjamin had bought a small grocery store. It was while helping in the store that Elda learned the value of hard work that has served her throughout her life. In her teens she would drive her father's small truck early in the morning to the produce markets of Los Angeles, where she was often the only female. During this time she suffered two great heartaches: losing her older sister Esther (when Elda was 17) and losing her mother a year later.

In 1939, Elda married Bishop Rippy (his name, not his calling). They lived behind the store with her father—even after the store itself was sold—until Bishop built a house in 1947. Benjamin died in 1948. Elda supplemented the family income by taking in ironing, giving haircuts and perms to friends and neighbors, and doing any other odd job she could find.

In 1956, Bishop and Elda and their four children—Robert, James, Clara, and Raymond—moved to Yucaipa. Bishop became an insurance salesman and Elda worked in a nursing home. When Bishop lost his eyesight in 1970, their lives changed a bit and became less active. To fill her time as they listened to the TV or radio, Elda took up with renewed interest a skill she had acquired as a child in Mexico: crocheting. She started on Afghans and now has made well over a hundred of them.

Bishop and Elda followed Clara and her family in a move to Cheney, Washington, in 1981, where less than a year later Bishop died. Elda built an apartment onto Clara's home and went on a mission to Mexico at age 74.

In 2009, Elda moved to the Cheney Care Center (2219 N. 6th, Cheney, WA 99004). As a result of macular degeneration, her eyesight is all but gone, and this has been difficult for a woman who has always sought to be productive and useful. When she was 91, the bishop of her ward (Clara's husband) asked her to crochet 100 dish cloths for the ward mothers on Mother's Day. She did it again the next two years. Most recently she helped with a project to provide blankets for children waiting to go into foster care so that they could have something of their own to take with them. A group of women crocheted countless 12" by 12" squares that were then stitched together to form the blankets. Elda, nearly blind and counting her stitches by touch, was the most productive of the group.



FAMILY MOMENTS



Shar Cluff Burke

Great-Granddaughter

Presented at the Cluff Lecture in March 2011

I'd like to address the years Benjamin Cluff Jr. spent at the University of Michigan obtaining his degree and advanced degree. To adequately do this I need to present a clear understanding of his vision of education and its importance to him.

In 1886 at the age of 24 Benjamin Cluff Jr. was:

- Serving as a salaried Brigham Young Academy Instructor.
- Serving as Stake President of the YMMIA (began serving in 1883).
- Ordained a High Priest in 1883, so he was incredibly busy in the community, presiding over meetings, instructing, and traveling.
- A returned missionary, having served three years in the Hawaiian Mission.
- Married.

So why wouldn't he be satisfied with his busy life—married, employed, and serving his God, church and community? Yet, in the spring of 1886 he indicated he was “restlessly eager to gain additional education.” He wanted to go east to gain advanced education so that he could help improve his beloved Brigham Young Academy. He believed one must be exposed to thinking outside one's area in order to gain new information, insights, and wisdom. He was constantly seeking new knowledge and understanding. He applied to the University of Michigan, was accepted, and was granted a two-year furlough from Brigham Young Academy, with the understanding that he would rejoin the faculty upon his return. He was already instrumental in several innovations at the academy (including starting

evening classes, which he helped teach) and was head of the academic department when he left. He was released from YMMIA in November 1886.

When Cluff traveled to Ann Arbor in December, he mentioned “flying along at 35–40 MPH.” He arrived in Ann Arbor on December 28, 1886, and was delighted to be there and looked forward to studying. His first purchase was a coal oil lamp to burn the midnight oil while studying. His room cost him \$1.00 and board was \$2.25 per week.

Cluff entered the University of Michigan in January 1887 along with 1,530 other students. He majored in mathematics and surveying and minored in education administration and pedagogy (the art and science of teaching). His first math class, calculus, was hard at first because he had not been prepared enough, but within 12 days he was completely caught up. Because of his excellent work and accomplishments, the university scholarship committee was convinced that he could carry 18 credits rather than the 16 allowed. He completed 4 years of study in six semesters and one summer session and graduated in 1890 with his bachelor's degree. He graduated in the top half of the top 10% of his class. By graduation he was fluent in several languages, including French and German. He was so good at elocution that Dr. Trublood tried to get him to change his major and to stay and teach at the University of Michigan. He received his master's degree in 1894 through a program that allowed him to do research while he was working and then to present and defend it to the university. The university wanted him to stay for one more year and complete his doctorate, but because of his commitment to Brigham Young Academy he declined. He fully intended to return to complete it but never had the time off.

While at the University of Michigan Cluff was highly involved in leadership:

- He organized a math club with 28 students and faculty sponsor.
- He frequently spoke on Mormons and Mormonism at various organizations.
- He wrote numerous articles for newspapers. A response to a lecture given by Angie Newman (which had contained many misrepresentations about the LDS faith) helped win the annual debate between the law and literary societies.

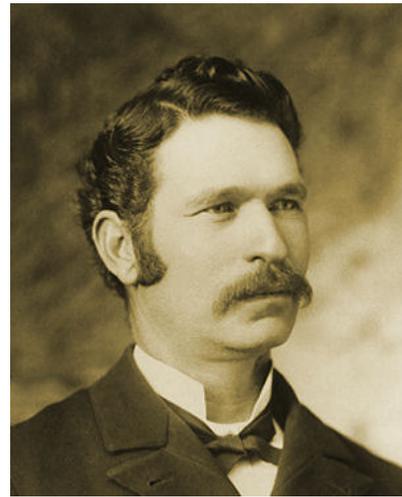
Financially, Cluff went to the University of Michigan on faith, having no idea how he would pay for it, but desiring to further his education.

To earn money at school he:

- Tutored students for 25 cents an hour.
- Did odd jobs after school and during summer vacation.
- Sold his house and property in Provo to raise cash.
- Rented rooms and took in borders.
- Worked as a steward for 8 cents per 26 borders per week = \$2.00.

Religion continued to play a great part in Cluff's life. He maintained involvement in and organized church meetings that were held every Sunday at his home (which became the place for most of the Mormon gatherings). His faith remained firm and unquestioning, with his devotion to religion and to the Church key characteristics of his life. He began every venture with a prayer and closed every activity with expressions of thanks to God.

There were many offers of teaching positions from the University of Michigan, and also from Arizona, Idaho, and schools in the Midwest, but his heart was at Brigham Young Academy. "Though pleased to get a position in the east where I could continue my studies for a few years, my ambition and desire is to benefit the young people at home."



He wanted to help build the kingdom of God. Matters were settled by the Academy Board of Trustees, President Albert O Smoot, Karl G. Maeser, (principal of Brigham Young Academy), and President George Q. Cannon, (president of the LDS Church), and he was appointed to the faculty of Brigham Young Academy and told it would not be long before he would be its principal. Cluff's entire focus was to make Brigham Young Academy a university (which he would do) and to encourage the youth to go back east to study and prepare themselves so that the standard of learning at Brigham Young Academy and other Utah institution could continually be raised.



Kyle J. Fife

Great-Grandson

Presented at the Cluff Lecture in March 2010

Although I never had the chance to meet him—to hear his voice or shake his hand—my connection to him feels real and personal.

Someone always made sure I knew who my great grandpa was—my dad. He is the son of Dolores Cluff Fife, who was the eighth child of Benjamin Cluff with his second wife Harriet. I remember the scene vividly: It's 1997 and I'm packing to leave for college. One of the last things my dad says to me is, "Kyle, remember who your great grandpa is." When most kids were being told, "Remember who you are," I was told, "Remember who you're great grandpa is."

My dad made sure that I understood the caliber of man that Benjamin Cluff was, and with those words fresh in my mind I arrived in Provo to begin my BYU studies. I was ready to take Cougtown by storm. I was especially excited for my high-profile ancestry to bring me free parking, automatic Dean's Listings, a textbook sherpa, V.I.P seating at all the games, cuts in line at the Creamery. It didn't.

Still, I had to smile when I discovered that the house I moved into my freshman year was on the southeast side of campus just two blocks down from the Cluff Building. And every morning I would walk to campus along a most distinguished path—up the long stone staircase winding beside the Cluff Building with its majestic artifacts and lush greenhouses. A tangible link with great grandpa at last.



And my morning walks were only the first of many connections with Benjamin Cluff:

- My years of study at BYU connected me with him.
- Studying his life through articles, documents, and his amazing biography.
- The annual Cluff lectures & luncheons over the past seven years.
- My philosophy degree. (I later learned that this was a subject President Cluff was directly responsible for introducing to Brigham Young Academy. I like to think he shared my love of Plato, Kant, and Hegel.)
- Even my two-year mission in Puebla Mexico was a connection (a city which Benjamin Cluff and his BYA Exploring Expedition traveled through and highlighted in their diaries as being the most beautiful and clean city that they had yet seen on their journey.)

Through it all I feel three personal legacies from my great grandfather:

1) *Love of learning* — In my office up in Salt Lake I keep my favorite picture of Benjamin Cluff, where he's standing in front of a classroom of eager students. At his core was an insatiable desire to know and then to help others know. As I sat in lecture halls at BYU, the voice of President Cluff seemed to whisper to me the urgency and privilege of learning (and it still does).

2) *Perspective of Faith* — Among the Cluff items at Church Archives, there's a transcript of a lecture he gave in 1898 called "Education from the Latter-day Saint Point of View". In one passage he notes, "Education [...] is the harmonious development of all the faculties God has given us, with reference both to this life and the life to come." This inspiring lecture captures perfectly the spiritual perspective from which Benjamin Cluff viewed his studies and his daily life. A perspective that continues to deepen and enrich the learning here at BYU.

3) *Passion for life* — This passion impelled Benjamin Cluff through many exciting endeavors outside the classroom and in. It drove him to raise the sights of the school, to inspire new teaching methods, better facilities, and extra-curricular activities. In fact, he



introduced sports and competitive games to Brigham Young Academy. One small way this legacy lives on in our family is through a trophy that we had made called the Cluff Cup. It is given to the winner of each of a few sports-related competitions our family and friends get into throughout the year, such as the NCAA men's basketball tournament bracket, college football bowl game predictions—things that require intense skill and passion. On the trophy is engraved: "The Cluff Cup — In Recognition of Sporting Excellence / In Memory of Benjamin Cluff Jr. 1858 – 1948".

Well, recently I came back to my college town to check out a BYU basketball game. After the game my friends and I drove south of campus to the Brick Oven, passing by (you guessed it) the long stone staircase, the greenhouses, and the Cluff Building. Let's just say the subject came up. I made sure of it.

Yes, I remember who my great grandpa was. Thank you, Dad. I'm glad I listened to you. I've felt his presence in my life in many ways and feel a unique bond and resonance with him. And now I'm the one reminding others who Benjamin Cluff was and what he did. Even more importantly, who he is and what he is doing today for thousands of students, faculty, and others.

I'm thankful that his influence is still tangible. I feel blessed to be a part of this occasion where we honor him and carry on the bright flame of his legacy. And I'm deeply grateful for the enduring personal legacies passed down to me by my great grandfather, Benjamin Cluff Jr.



Benjamin Cluff Jr. is buried in Inglewood Park Cemetery, Inglewood, California
<http://inglewoodparkcemetery.org>



UPDATE: THE BENJAMIN CLUFF JR. BUILDING

THE CLUFF BUILDING IS GONE!

Sadly, the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Building (or the “Cluff Botany Building”) on BYU Campus has been razed to make way for a new life sciences building on the former site. In September 2010, the Cluff family became aware of the planned demolition that was projected for May 2012. BYU publicly announced the project on November 9, 2011, a couple of weeks before it began:

- <http://universe.byu.edu/index.php/2011/11/09/byu-announces-construction-of-new-life-sciences-building>
- <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/61649/BYU-announces-construction-of-new-Life-Sciences-Building>
- <http://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=18029222>
- <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/61935/Breaking-down-to-build-up-the-Spirit-of-the-Y>

Since raising the topic at the 2011 Cluff Luncheon, Laurie Ransom and Colleen Caputo wrote a letter to President Samuelson and met with Academic Vice-President, Alan Harker, in August. (President Samuelson’s office misplaced the original letter, and it had to be re-sent).

In the letter (and in the meeting) they voiced the Cluff family’s concerns that there would no longer be a building named after Benjamin Cluff Jr., the university’s first president, and that he would then be the only founding president without a building. Brother Harker was very polite and informed them that BYU is no longer naming new buildings. He proposed an idea to honor Benjamin Cluff in a permanent display of all the university presidents in the Harold B Lee Library. An email letter was sent back to Brother Harker in response to the meeting notes and the matter was passed to BYU Academic Vice President Brent Webb. Brother Webb responded as follows:



November 2011

“I have discussed at length with President Samuelson your email message of October 24, and he has asked me to respond. I am pleased with your desire to continue the recognition of Benjamin Cluff, Jr. and his role as President of the University. Your general interest in the educational mission of BYU and your specific support of the Cluff Lecture Series and Awards in the David O. McKay School of Education are deeply appreciated. I acknowledge the kind suggestions offered in your October 24 message for recognizing Benjamin Cluff, Jr. The policy on naming of campus buildings is guided by the university’s governing Board of Trustees, which is presided over by the First Presidency of the Church. Your suggestions will be taken under advisement until the policy is changed.”

(We had suggested naming the new building the Benjamin Cluff Jr. — John A. Widstoe Life Sciences Building or renaming the Faculty Office Building, which has always been the F.O.B., the Benjamin Cluff Jr. Building and relocating the big stone sign. The latter would be especially appropriate because Benjamin was so instrumental in enlarging and improving the academics of the faculty of BYU.)

At our business portion of the luncheon on March 22, 2012, we will be discussing what our next steps should be—whether to pursue the matter or wait to see if, when the life sciences building is finished, BYU changes its mind about naming new buildings. If we want to take action, we should decide if we will appeal to the Board of Trustees directly, create a petition, or employ some other tactic.

We need a consensus as to whether we want a building named after Benjamin Cluff Jr. or if a presidential display is enough. It is possible that the new life sciences building will display a bust of John A. Widstoe in the lobby. If this is the case, should

there also be one of Benjamin Cluff? Should there be some recognition of Benjamin Cluff in the education building? It is possible that Dean Young may be able to find a place in the David O. McKay building for the items that were displayed previously in the Cluff Building. What about naming a wing in the education building for Benjamin Cluff Jr.?

If you have any input please feel free to send it, or if you attend the luncheon this year, please voice your opinion and that would be even better. All letters on the matter will be available at the luncheon.

CLUFF FAMILY ORGANIZATION

The Cluff family organization was led by Colleen Caputo (granddaughter of Benjamin Cluff) for eight years from 2002 to 2010. In March 2010, at the family reunion luncheon, the Cluff Family Organization was formally organized with Laurie Ransom (great granddaughter) elected as president, Kyle Fife (great grandson), vice president over newsletters, and Shar Burke (great granddaughter) as luncheon committee chair. This is a “bare bones” leadership, and we need a lot more help!

Please think about your family members and submit names (or volunteer yourself) for secretary, treasurer, website construction and maintenance, project committee, by-laws committee, luncheon program, and family representative. Email all nominations and/or suggestions to Laurie Ransom at ransomfam@juno.com.

With the technology today, YOU DO NOT NEED TO LIVE IN UTAH TO SERVE.

PURPOSES OF THE CLUFF FAMILY ORGANIZATION

Our main purposes are to work with BYU in honoring Benjamin Cluff Jr. and to provide ways to foster our family relationships.

Some of our goals with BYU include:

- To work with the McKay School of Education on the Annual Benjamin Cluff Jr. Lecture Series and Awards program by providing a family tribute and prayer each year.
- To obtain new & current family addresses for their mailing list.
- To work with BYU administration in establishing a way to honor their first president in a visible way on campus, now that the Cluff building is torn down.

Some of our goals with the family include:

- To plan and execute the Cluff Family Luncheon meal and program.
- To publish an annual Cluff Family Newsletter to be sent electronically.
- To gather email addresses of family members for communication of events, genealogical information and voting.
- To maintain a current list of family members: names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and relationships.
- To maintain a current website.
- To identify and oversee other projects as determined.

HELP NEEDED

WE ARE TRYING TO FIND MORE FAMILY!

Please send us the names of your children and grandchildren with birthdates so that we can add them to the family tree. As we grow we would like to pass down to future generations the legacy of Benjamin Cluff Jr.

HELP US STAY CONNECTED BY EMAIL!

Please give us your family emails so we can put them in the family directory and so they will receive the Cluff Family Newsletter and other communications.

WE NEED MORE HELP!

Please nominate your family members for these duties by emailing Kyle or Laurie (kylefife@hotmail.com or ransomfam@juno.com). These include:

- Family Representatives: We need one for each surname and one for each branch of the family.
- Annual Family Reunion Luncheon Committee.
- Various Projects:
 - ✓ Family Directory
 - ✓ Family Website
 - ✓ Family Tree

CURRENT OFFICERS

President: **Laurie Ransom** (great granddaughter) — ransomfam@juno.com | 801-224-6679

Vice President: **Kyle Fife** (great grandson) — kylefife@hotmail.com | 801-835-8145

Luncheon Committee Chair: **Shar Burke** (great granddaughter) — sharjer@gmail.com

Past president: **Colleen Caputo** (granddaughter) — cccaputo@beyondbb.com | 801-628-7528

