

Joseph Cluff and Phoebe Elizabeth Bunnell

The town of Central was founded by Joseph Cluff and his family. Joseph Cluff was born 11 January 1834 in Willoughby, New lake County, Ohio, the sixth child of David Cluff (Clough) and Elizabeth (Betsy) Hall. The Cluff family moved to Springfield, Illinois and later to Nauvoo, Illinois. In the spring of 1850 Joseph went with a company to Salt Lake City, Utah and soon after, his family arrived in the Spring of 1856. They settled in Provo and helped lay out the city of Provo.

While in Provo, Joseph was preparing for a journey back across the plains to aid the handcart company. They went to Salt Lake City and stayed with Brother Bacon. Joseph noticed his socks and mittens were not in suitable condition for such an inclement season. Miss Phoebe Bunnell, a young lady of fifteen working for the family, volunteered to wash and mend them, which she did after Joseph retired to bed. Joseph left in the morning with the relief party.

In the following spring, he paid his respects to Miss Phoebe and proposed marriage. They were married in Provo 28 April 1857. Phoebe was born 5 July 1841 in Michigan to David Edwin Bunnell and Sallie Heller Conrad

In 1868 Joseph served a mission in Canada. He served in the Indian Blackhawk War and served against Johnston's Army when it invaded Utah.

In the fall of 1878, Joseph and Phoebe sold their farm and home in Provo and journeyed to Arizona to join his father and brothers, Orson, Alfred, and Moses on the new Cluff's Ranch near Show Low. The place was called Forest Dale. Soon after Joseph and Phoebe arrived, it was made known that the Apache Indians were laying claim to the land and that the white settlers would have to leave.

Not knowing where to move, Joseph and five other men made an exploratory trip to the Upper Gila Valley. Joseph was unimpressed, but William Teeples, a member of the group, took a group of settlers to the valley and selected the townsite of Smithville (Pima).

The Cluffs stayed at Forest Dale where they planted spring crops and harvested them before moving to Smithville in late summer of 1879. Sometime early in 1881, Joseph obtained land about four miles upriver from Smithville. Joseph, his brother, Orson, and Joseph's sons, Joseph Edwin and David, set up camp in what was to later be Central. Phoebe and the younger children stayed in Smithville because of the Indian troubles. The men extended the Central Canal from a point north of Thatcher to their land holdings. Their first wheat was harvested in 1882.

Joseph built an adobe home on the farm, and in the spring of 1883, the family moved to Central. Joseph laid out the town of Central. Joseph Cluff was ordained the first bishop of Central Ward 17 December 1883 by apostles Brigham Young, Jr. and Heber J. Grant. He served as bishop twice, before and after George M. Hows, for a total of 11 years. In 1896 he opened a general merchandise store in Central in a red brick building.

Joseph died 4 June 1914 at the age of 80. Phoebe died 9 August 1914 at the age of 74. They had nine children: Joseph Edwin, David William, Joanna Elizabeth, Alpharetta Rebecca, Emma Irene, Warren Lafayette, Clarissa Viola, Romania Olive, and Benjamin Franklin.