

Josephine Eleanor Anderson Berry (1849-1881)

*Deaf Educator and Founding-Era Figure of the
Dakota Territorial School for the Deaf and Mute*

Josephine Eleanor Anderson Berry (August 14, 1849 – June 19, 1881) was a deaf educator and the wife of Rev. Thomas B. Berry, founder and first superintendent of the Dakota Territorial School for the Deaf, now known as the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD).

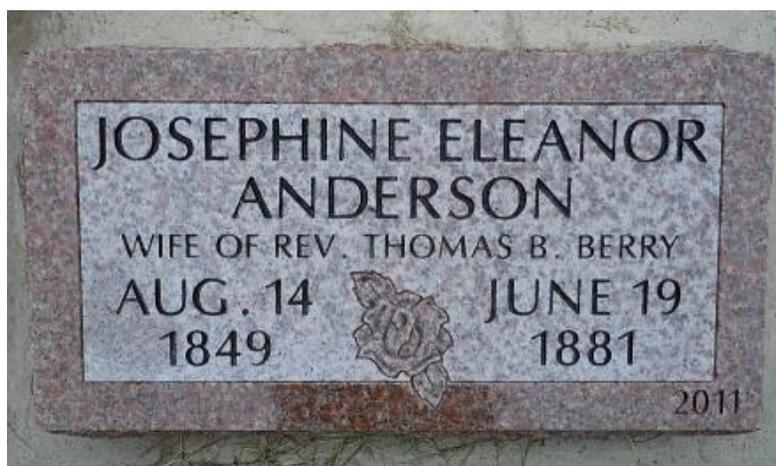
Josephine was born deaf on August 14, 1849, in Chazy, Clinton County, New York, to Theodore Anderson and Amelia Anderson. She had an older deaf sister, Adelphine Amelia Anderson, who was also part of the early deaf community in New York.

During the founding year of the school (1880–1881), Josephine supported Rev. Berry while raising their three children: Frank T., Amelia E., and an infant daughter born in Dakota Territory.

Josephine died on June 19, 1881, at approximately 32 years of age, in Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory. She was buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Sioux Falls.

In 1907, former pupil Harry Holly Garrison undertook persistent efforts to locate and verify her burial site amid conflicting reports. Newspaper accounts credit Garrison with confirming that her grave was within Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Following this discovery, approximately thirty-five members of the Deaf community contributed funds to place a proper tombstone at her grave, honoring her memory and her connection to the founding of deaf education in Dakota Territory.



Tombstone of Josephine Eleanor Anderson Berry (1849–1881), Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Sioux Falls.

After former pupil Harry Holly Garrison located her grave in 1907, approximately thirty-five members of the Deaf community contributed funds to place a proper marker.