



CHARLES WILLIAM BERRY

- **14th Missoula County Sheriff.**
 - **1st legal execution conducted by Sheriff Berry.**
 - **Born.** February 25, 1827 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire to William and Olive (Lock) Berry.
 - **Nicknames.** 'Old Bill' or 'Uncle Billy'.
 - **Married.** Married twice. First wife information is unknown. Second wife was Annie Davis. They married in 1862. She died in 1867 when their youngest child was only four months old.
 - **Died.** February 18, 1897. It is believed he died of natural causes but the place of death was not certain.
- Charles' father, William, and grandfather, Isaiah Berry, were soldiers in the war of 1812. Grandfather Isaiah was a Whig in the political circle and served many years in the New Hampshire Legislature. Father William was a farmer all his life.
 - Charles had little education. He attended school only during the winter hours when he was not required to assist on the family farm.
 - **1849.** Charles, 22, traveled by ship through the Isthmus of Panama to San Francisco, California to join the gold rush. He succeeded in placer mining approx. \$2000 from above Coloma in less than a year's work.
 - **1851 – 1861.** Charles continued mining in surrounding areas, mainly in the Siskiyou Mountains. He also carried freight throughout the entire northwest. These pack trips were treacherous in many ways. One night while on watch he was warming by the fire when he was fired upon by an Indian. The Indian shot an arrow that passed through his beard just below his chin! He dropped down in the grass and crawled away from the fire. The Indian did not venture another attempt on his life that night.
 - **1862.** On a trip in Idaho, Charles was robbed of \$1119. He rounded up a posse and chased the robbers into Walla Walla, Washington where they were caught. The local sheriff then attempted to transfer the robbers to Florence, Idaho where they would be tried. Residents of Lewiston, Idaho feared more of the robbers' gang would attempt a rescue, so the citizens seized the robbers from the sheriff and immediately hung them. Fearing for his money, Charles high-tailed it out of the area.
 - **1864.** Charles' adventures took him to Alder Gulch, Montana. He spent time mining and trapping throughout the state. He began a venture whipsawing lumber and making underground drains to bring water into Bear Gulch during the winter. After bringing his wife and child here from Walla Walla, he was offered an interest in the 'Fighting Mining Claim' on the Salmon River. He and five other men built a log fort around the mine for safety and after one year \$16,000 was split between the six owners.
 - **1868.** Appointed Deputy Sheriff in Lewiston, Idaho, by his brother, J. G. Berry.
 - **1869.** Arrived in Cedar Creek, Missoula County. He again engaged in making lumber with a whipsaw. He began farming at the mouth of Cedar Creek. He employed twenty Indians and squaws whom he paid \$1 per day to work his crops. The harvest was sold to area miners.
 - **1882.** Elected as the 14th Missoula County Sheriff. During this time, he served as both Sheriff and Assessor for the county which covered an area 200 x 300 miles wide. Upon his election to Sheriff, he had to resign the other six positions he currently held: postmaster, mail carrier, notary public, road supervisor, and coroner at Superior, Montana.
 - **August 16, 1883 – 1st Legal Execution.** Missoula County's first legal execution was held by Sheriff Berry. A Chinaman by the name of Ah Yung was hung in the Missoula jail yard. The hanging was witnessed by 100 people. Mr. Yung was charged with attempting to blow up the tent of the China paymaster at Horse Plains and attempting to rob the inmates. Mr. Yung also shot

and killed the Chinaman who owned the tent and wounded his own brother who tried to follow him. To the end, Ah Yung maintained his innocence and did not understand the judicial system in this country.

- **1884.** After serving as Sheriff, Charles purchased 160 acres in the Flathead Valley and began raising hay and stock.
- **1887.** Back in Missoula, Charles was elected County Assessor and served three terms.
- Politically, Charles was a lifelong Democrat. Socially, he served as Master Mason in the Masonic fraternity.
- **1896.** Charles Berry was a very special character as noted in the local paper in 1896. A birthday celebration was given at every establishment throughout town with everyone participating in the éclat festivities. Regarding his actual age, the Montana Silverite reported: 'History does not state how old Old Bill is, though several eye witnesses live today who saw him alight from the ark when it landed on Mount Jumbo. It is conceded, however, that he was here in the year 1 B. C. and his many friends are willing to let it go at that.'
- Charles Berry would proudly exhibit a watch he had carried for 25 years as a souvenir of his early official experience. The watch had been purchased with stamps embezzled from the government. So he told it.



Grave 7 – Lot 3 – Block 17

Charles Berry died prior to the City of Missoula's ownership of the Missoula Cemetery. Cemetery records during that time period show only the name of the decedent, burial location, and date of death. In many instances, the information is scarce and incomplete.