

Joseph Bates (aka Joseph Murphy)

Private

Company M

Born – June 10, 1838 Providence, Rhode Island

Died – September 13 or 14, 1893

**Grave location – Bear Butte Cemetery, Sturgis, SD or St. Aloysius Cemetery,
Sturgis, SD**

He enlisted on July 18, 1870, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, by Lt. Cain. His previous occupation was soldier. He deserted on May 11, 1872, and was apprehended on December 20, 1873. He was transferred from Company F to Company M, 7th Cavalry, on January 7, 1874. He was discharged on February 27, 1877, at Fort Rice, Dakota, upon expiration of service as a private. He was 5 feet tall and had blue eyes, brown hair, and a fair complexion. He committed suicide by drinking Paris Green, an insecticide that is also used as a colorant in fireworks.

NOTE -- When I first decided to photograph the graves of 7th Cavalry troopers in South Dakota I stumbled upon the mystery of Joseph Bates. Sources indicated that he was buried in Bear Butte Cemetery in Sturgis. Other sources also stated that he was interred in Sturgis but at Saint Aloysius Cemetery. The mystery came about when I found graves for him at both cemeteries.

The dates of death on the headstones at the two cemeteries are one day apart. I checked veteran burial records at the State Archives in Pierre, South Dakota, hoping that I could clear up the mystery. It only got worse. I found records for him at both cemeteries.

To date, I am still investigating. If you have ANY information, please email me at scottnelson@gmail.com.