

Forgotten Union General Rests in Lonely W.Va. Grave

By Steve French



Brig. Gen. Simon F. Barstow

Last summer, former longtime Bath (Berkeley Springs) W.Va. mayor Susan Webster informed me that she and town council member Beth Skinner were working on a project to restore and reset on its base the 1500 lb. tombstone that previously stood above the grave of Bvt. Brig. Gen. Simon F. Barstow.

Knowing absolutely nothing about this Civil War officer, I volunteered to research his career and also try to discover why the Mass. native rests today in the town's Greenway Cemetery.

His Death and Burial

On the afternoon of July 24, 1882, retired Bvt. Brig. Gen. Simon Forrester Barstow, his wife Maria and two servants arrived at the Oakland, Md. train station. Not long afterward, the party checked into the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's luxurious Oakland Hotel.

For the last three weeks, the general had been suffering from a number of serious complaints. Thinking that western Maryland's cool mountain breezes would

improve his health and boost his flagging spirits, he departed from the family's Bath summer residence, boarded the train at Sir John's Run, and began the three-hour ride west.

For a few days, the change of altitude and cooler temperatures helped, but then the general suffered a sudden relapse. On July 31, the 64-year-old Barstow finally "crossed over the river" with Maria and close friend Philip Pendleton at his bedside.

Most likely, Pendleton, who lived in Bath, convinced the grieving widow to take the body back to town for burial in Greenway. In a show of respect for the old soldier, the hotel's manager called off that evening's scheduled ball.

Never exhumed for reburial in his hometown, today Simon's remains occupy a space in a large plot with only one other unrelated person buried nearby. Maria died on April 4, 1888 and lies in Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Early Years

On Dec. 16, 1817, Simon was born into a prominent six-generation Salem, Mass. family that over the years had produced a number of accomplished individuals including his father Gideon, a former U.S. congressman. His mother Nancy, a cousin of eminent American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, named the infant after her father Capt. Simon Forrester. Like his many siblings, Barstow received an excellent education. In 1841, he graduated from Harvard Law School and before long established a successful legal practice.

Aide to Lander

Frederick West Lander, also a Salem native, had been a renowned western North American explorer, who at the

beginning of the Civil War had offered his services to Union Gen. George B. McClellan as a private citizen.

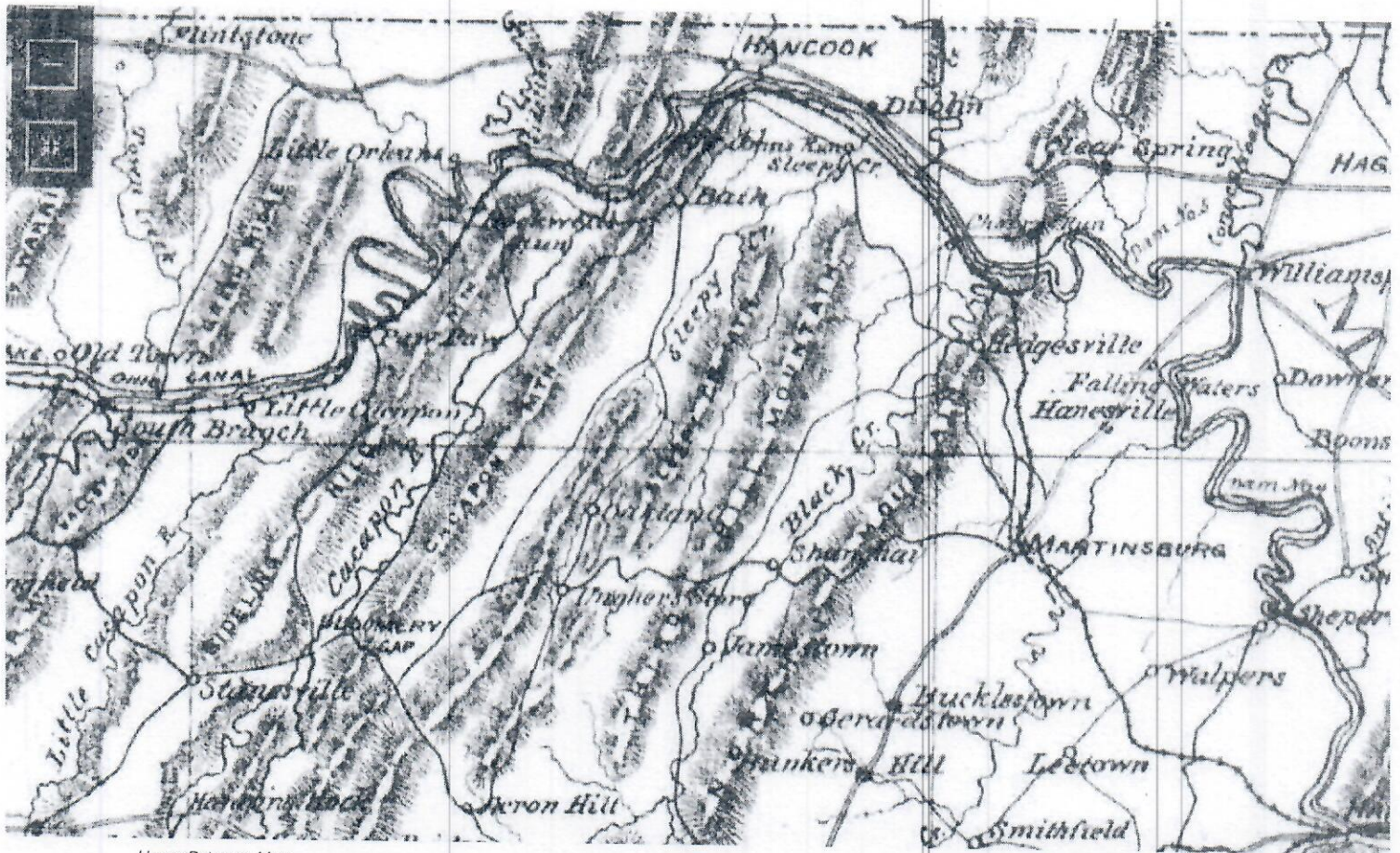
Soon, Lander added to his considerable reputation for courageous exploits at the June 3, 1861 Battle of Philippi and the July 11, Battle of Rich Mountain, both Federal victories in northwestern Va. When Pres. Lincoln called McClellan east to command the Army of the Potomac, the War Dept. also promoted Lander, now in the army, to the rank of Brig. Gen. Lander soon tapped Barstow, a long-time, hometown friend, to be his liaison with Mass. Gov. John A. Andrew.

In Oct. Simon joined the general as Lander's chief of staff. His main duties were to coordinate activities at headquarters, copy Lander's orders, and send dispatches. In a skirmish along the Potomac at Edward's Ferry later that month, however, Lander was shot in the leg and put out of action for a time. Although at first, doctors considered the wound minor, a stubborn infection set in and directly contributed to his untimely death five months later.

By late Dec., the War Dept. ordered the still-ailing Lander west to replace Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Kelley, who commanded a large contingent of troops occupying Romney, Va. Along the way, the general arrived in Hancock, Md. just in time to take charge of troops there and help thwart Stonewall Jackson's Jan. 5, 1862 attempt to cross the Potomac and capture the town.

Meanwhile, Barstow remained behind in D.C. waiting on Lander's wife, the celebrated English-actress Jean Davenport, to raise needed funds to help her husband meet his new command's expenses. A few weeks later, Barstow arrived at Lander's camp along the B&O at the mouth of Patterson Creek, near Cumberland, Md., bringing a much-needed \$800.

Over the next month, Lander used his men and track workers to repair burned bridges and wrecked rail line eastward to Hancock. By Feb. 8, the general had established Camp Chase in and around Paw Paw, Va. Now, Lander waited



Upper Potomac Map

anxiously on orders from McClellan to march his 11,000-man Western Division to Winchester and give battle to Jackson.

Upon arrival in the village, Barstow established the general's headquarters in a dwelling close to the B&O station. A nearby schoolhouse served as the division's telegraph office.

Unfortunately, Barstow soon contracted a case of measles and ended up in a Cumberland hospital. It took him a few weeks to recover and return to duty. While he was away, on Feb. 14 Lander scored a lopsided victory over some Virginia militia guarding Bloomery Gap, a narrow mountain pass commanding the road to Winchester.

By the 22nd, Simon was back at headquarters and present for Lander's "Grand Review" of his troops in celebration of George Washington's Birthday, a holiday that in those times rivaled the Fourth of July in American's hearts. The military pageantry and following festivities stretched from before noon to well after dark. It was undoubtedly the most spectacular event in Paw Paw's history.

On Mar. 1, Lander, who had been afflicted the last week with another attack of "congestive chills," ordered his

soldiers eastward to coordinate with Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks in an advance up the Shenandoah Valley. As his lead units marched out the next day, however, the general, sedated heavily by doses of morphine, lay unconscious.

Barstow remained confident that his friend would rally and recover but soon received bad news. Arriving on the scene, Dr. George Suckley took one look at the patient and said his passing was only a question of time. Lander joined "The Great Majority" later that afternoon. Presently, Simon wired McClellan: "Gen. Lander has just died without suffering. This campaign killed him for he held on in spite of failing health and strength, to the last."

Barstow accompanied the body first to Washington and then to its final resting place in Salem. Afterward, Simon decided to return to the army. Gov. John A. Andrew soon appointed him captain of Mass. Volunteers.

At Meade's Headquarters

Ten day later, he joined Maj. Gen. Irwin McDowell's staff. From then on, Barstow served in various administrative roles. By late-June 1863, Simon was on the staff of Maj. Gen. George Meade, now commanding the Army of the Potomac.

The highly competent officer quickly became one of Meade's most trusted aides.

In his landmark book *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, Prof. Edwin B. Coddington writes of Meade's July 2 arrival at the battlefield, "All questions involving administrative detail or military protocol he (Meade) assigned to General Seth Williams or Major S. F. Barstow, who seemed to possess encyclopedic knowledge of such matters."

Although Barstow never led troops in combat, throughout the war he frequently came under severe artillery and small arms fire, including the terrific bombardment of the Union lines the preceded "Pickett's Charge." In fact, according to Coddington, "Meade's headquarters in the Leister house... seemed to receive more than its share of wild shots."

A soldier in the 37th Mass. Infantry who witnessed the bombardment recalled that, "Gen. Meade's headquarters were within the line of fire- twenty three horses belonging to staff officers, hitched around those headquarters, were killed." Peers remarked on his gentlemanly manners and professional work ethic.

In a Sept. 5, 1863 letter to his wife written from central Va., newly arrived staff aide Theodore Lyman commented on his first meeting with Barstow. "As to Assistant-Adjutant General S. Barstow, he was most hospitable and looked out for me getting a tent, etc. He really has a laborious and difficult position, the duties of which he seems to discharge with the offhand way of an old workman."

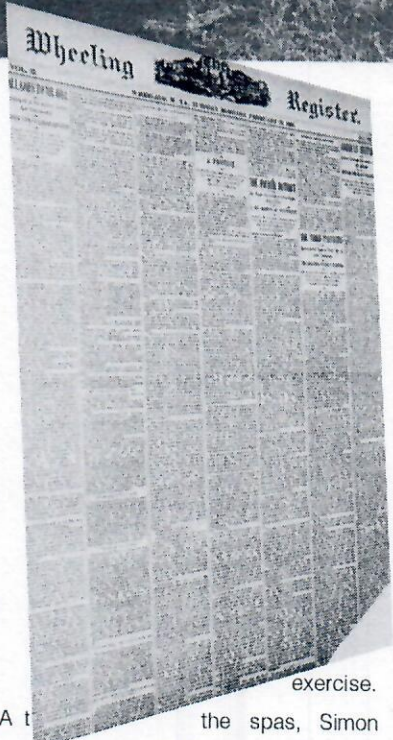
For the remainder of the war, Barstow continued to serve on Meade's staff participating in many hard fought campaigns, including the pursuit of Lee's army to Appomattox.

On Mar 12, 1865, according to his obituary found in The Journal of the Armed Forces 1882-1883, "He received a brevet for gallant and honorable service the brevet of Brigadier General in the Volunteer service." Previously, Barstow had also received a brevet to major for gallantry at Gettysburg and another to colonel for gallantry at the "fall of Petersburg." Although not a permanent rank, civilians and compatriots universally addressed the recipient by his well-deserved honorary title.

Postwar

Following the Confederate surrender, Barstow mustered out of the Volunteer service but chose not to return to civilian life. He then received a captain's commission in the regular army and remained on Meade's staff as his Assistant Adjutant General. After "Old Snapping Turtle's" Nov. 6, 1872 demise, Simon transferred to the Quartermaster's Dept.

Barstow and Maria usually spent their summers at one of the many health resorts found in the mountains of Va. and W. Va. Plagued for many years with delicate health due to the rigors of his war service, the general's overall physical condition usually improved from the "taking of the waters" and outdoor



At the spas, Simon also had plenty of time to socialize with some of his former enemies. Eleven years after the close of the conflict, he and one of the most

infamous ex-Rebels coordinated a special fundraiser, "The Custer Memorial Ball," in tribute to the officers and men of the 7th U.S. Cavalry, who, just a month before, had fallen at The Battle of the Little Bighorn.

In its July 31, 1876 edition, The Wheeling Register reported that on Aug. 10, "The event of the season at the White Sulphur will be a grand fancy dress ball... the proceeds of which are to be contributed to the fund now being raised to erect a monument to the heroic Custer and his devoted band who fell with him."

Ironically, among the managers of the affair with Gen. Barstow was former Confederate Brig. Gen. John McCausland. Just twelve years earlier on July 31, 1864, "Tiger John" on his way back from burning Chambersburg, Pa. the day before, had also threatened to reduce Hancock, Md. to ashes, if its terrified citizens would

not meet his exorbitant demands for food and money. Only the timely arrival of Brig. Gen. W.W. Averill's cavalry brigade prevented him from carrying out his threat.

Retirement

By 1879, illness had caused Barstow's to leave active service, "and on June 7, 1879, he was placed on the retired list for disability in the line of duty." After he left the service, Barstow and his wife continued to spend their vacations at fashionable resorts.

Upon his passing a colleague remarked, "He was a gallant and honorable gentleman, able and efficient as an officer, and held in high esteem by his superiors and comrades."

Note: By the time this article appears in Crossfire, Barstow's toppled stone should be back on its base. Problems getting the necessary equipment to the gravesite have delayed the work.

The author would like to thank Jim Droegemeyer, Beth Skinner and Susan Webster for their help with this article