

Renaming field a slight to President Beaver

By Richard Orr

Recent grass-roots efforts to rename Beaver Stadium are strongly opposed by the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. In our zeal to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of contemporaneous individuals, we may diminish the rightful continued recognition of individuals from prior generations. It is for this reason that the Pennsylvania Department and the National Organization of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW) at their respective encampments both unanimously adopted resolutions opposing this endeavor.

Over the past year, a fan movement has prompted discussion on renaming Beaver Stadium to Joe Paterno Field at Beaver Stadium.

It is the position of the SUVCW that such a change would supplant the well-deserved recognition of Civil War General James A. Beaver, for whom the stadium is named.

After college, James Addams Beaver resided in Bellefonte where he studied law under the tutelage of N. N McAllister and was admitted to the Centre County bar in 1859. While studying for the bar, Beaver joined the local militia — the Bellefonte Fencibles — where he quickly was promoted to lieutenant.

Upon President Abraham Lincoln's call to arms to suppress the rebellion of the southern states, the Bellefonte Fencibles marched to Harrisburg and tendered their service to Governor Curtin. The Fencibles became company H of the second Pennsylvania volunteers and James Beaver was elected first Lieutenant.

James Beaver's service during the Civil War eventually lead to his promotion to the rank of Colonel and commanding officer of the 148th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry — the "Centre County Regiment." During the course of his service, Col. Beaver was wounded four times.

For the remainder of his life he relied on crutches. For his gallant, highly meritorious and distinguished service, President Lincoln made Beaver a brigadier general of volunteers by brevet.

Upon returning to Bellefonte and his law practice, General Beaver tried to lead a quite private life without much success. Many of his friends wanted him to seek political office. For a number of years, he resisted and finally acquiesced. Following a several failed attempts at securing an election, he was unanimously nominated for the office of the governor of the Commonwealth. He won election in 1886 and served until January, 1891.

When the State legislature created the Pennsylvania Superior Court, General Beaver was one of the first judges elected to this court in 1895.

While residing in Bellefonte following the war, General Beaver developed a lifelong interest and commitment to the Pennsylvania State College. He worked tirelessly to promote and improve the institution. He was the first governor to include a regular appropriation for Penn State in his proposed budget and increased the allocation each year of his governorship.

In 1873, he became a Trustee of Penn State and was elected to the Presidency of the Board of Trustees in 1897. This was a position he held until his death. He was a friend to all Penn State students and could frequently be found on the campus discussing a wide range of topics with them.

When President George Atherton died, General James Beaver became the interim president of Penn State serving for two years until Edwin Sparks was selected to be president. While serving as president of the college, General Beaver set aside 18 acres of land for the construction of a football field. The student body by acclamation named the new football field "Beaver Field" in recognition of General Beaver's contributions to the college.

When the new Beaver Stadium was constructed in its present location, the University continued this.

On January 31, 1914, General Beaver finally succumbed to the lingering effects of the wounds he endured during the Civil War. Page one of the Penn State Collegian on February 14, 1914 read, "GENERAL BEAVER PASSES AWAY. A Well Beloved Friend of Penn State, After Many years of Faithful Service Dies at His Home in Bellefonte." The ensuing article concludes with "His loyalty to the student body has endeared him to the heart of every State man and the principles for which he stood will always stand forth as ideals worthy of our endeavor. Penn State has indeed lost a true friend."

To remove General James Addams Beaver's name from Beaver Stadium would not only be a dishonor to one of Penn State's most ardent supporters but a disservice to the students who personally knew him and named Beaver Field in his honor. This wounded Civil War hero, governor, judge, Penn State Trustee and President was most importantly a devotee of Penn State College and her students' legacy.

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