



MAJOR GENERAL DANIEL E SICKLES



As Portrayed by Tim Ake

Born in New York City on October 20, 1819, Daniel Edgar Sickles was a vain, colorful, and controversial politician, Union Civil War general, and diplomat.

Prior to the Civil War, Sickles studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1846, and elected as a member of the New York State Assembly in 1847. In 1853, Sickles became corporation counsel of New York City, but resigned soon afterward to become secretary of the U.S. legation in London, under James Buchanan. He returned to America in 1855, and was a member of the New York State Senate (3rd District) in 1856 and 1857. He was elected as a Democrat to the 35th and 36th United States Congresses, holding office from March 4, 1857, to March 3, 1861.

As an antebellum New York Tammany Hall politician, Sickles was involved in a number of public scandals. In 1859, in Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House, Sickles shot and killed the district attorney of the District of Columbia Philip Barton Key II, son of Francis Scott Key, who Sickles had discovered was having an affair with his young wife. He secured several leading politicians as his defense attorneys, among them Edwin M. Stanton, later to become Secretary of War. He was acquitted with the first use of temporary insanity as a legal defense in U.S. history.

Sickles became one of the most prominent political generals of the Civil War. At the Battle of Gettysburg, the bombastic and irascible Sickles insubordinately moved his III Corps to a position in which it was virtually destroyed, an action that continues to generate controversy; despite this, he would eventually be awarded the Medal of Honor in 1897. His combat career ended at Gettysburg when his leg was struck by cannon fire. Sickles' leg, along with a cannonball similar to the one that shattered it, is on

display at the National Museum of Health and Medicine. Sickles was not court-martialed for insubordination after Gettysburg because he had been wounded, and it was assumed he would stay out of trouble. Furthermore, he was a powerful, politically connected man who would not accept being disciplined without protest and retribution.

Sickles ran a vicious campaign against General Meade's character in anonymous newspaper articles and in testimony before a congressional committee. Sickles felt that Meade had wronged him at Gettysburg and that credit for winning the battle belonged to him.

After the Civil War, Sickles served as president of the New York State Board of Civil Service Commissioners from 1888 to 1889, sheriff of New York in 1890, and again a representative in the 53rd Congress from 1893 to 1895. For most of his postwar life, Sickles was the chairman of the New York Monuments Commission, but he was forced out when money was found to have been embezzled. He had an important part in efforts to preserve the Gettysburg Battlefield, sponsoring legislation to form the Gettysburg National Military Park, buy up private lands, and erect monuments.

Of the principal senior generals who fought at Gettysburg, virtually all, with the conspicuous exception of Sickles, have been memorialized with statues at Gettysburg. When asked why there was no memorial to him, Sickles supposedly said, "The entire battlefield is a memorial to Dan Sickles." Sickles lived out the remainder of his life in New York City, dying on May 3, 1914 at the age of 94. His funeral was held at St. Patrick's



Cathedral in Manhattan on May 8, 1914. Sickles was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.