



THE DRUM & BUGLE
Voice of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table
April 2025, Volume 22, Issue 4

Speaker: Glen Swain
Topic: “Galvanized Confederates”
When: Monday April 14, 2024
Location: Brock’s Riverside Grill
Times: Social Time Begins 6:00 pm, Dinner 6:45 pm, Meeting Begins 7:30 pm
Our Website: www.rappvalleycivilwar.org
Our Facebook: www.facebook.com/rvcwrt

Glen Swain “Galvanized Confederates”

In the Autumn of 1864, thousands of Union prisoners of war suffered unspeakable conditions in Confederate prisons. Suffering from exposure, disease, and near starvation, thousands of these men volunteered to serve in the Rebel army. Many did so just to survive and others in order to escape. *The Forgotten Mutineers* tells the true story of one of these groups of men who discarded their tattered blue uniforms and donned the Rebel gray out of desperation. Despised by their captors and viewed as traitors by

their former comrades, the men would be thrust onto the front lines at Savannah, Georgia to confront Sherman's army. It is a tale of treason, betrayal, and mutiny that not all of them would survive.

Glen Swain is a Managing Consultant with an executive recruitment firm in the life sciences industry. Glen holds a degree in Information Technology from George Mason University and is a veteran of the United States Army. A lifelong student of the Civil War, Glen has authored two books: *The Bloody 7th: A History of the 7th South Carolina Volunteers*, and his most recent work, *The Forgotten Mutineers: The Story of Brooks' Battalion*.

**“Sickles Gets Away with Murder”
by James Hessler**

A Review of the March 2025 Program by Greg Mertz

Daniel Sickles was an only child of a wealthy New York family, who was 19 years old, when he first met Teresa Bagioli, the 2-year-old adopted daughter of a family friend. When Dan was 33 and Teresa 16, she became pregnant and to prevent further embarrassment, the two married. But marriage did put an end to the couple's mortifying behavior and particularly did not tame the philandering of Sickles.

When Sickles was elected to congress in 1856, Teresa was just 22 and Hessler pointed out that she was too young to cope with the high degree of pressure to host and participate in the Washington, DC social life. The Sickles home bordered Lafayette Square on the north side of the White House. Since the Democratic President James Buchanan was a mentor of Sickles, the president was a frequent guest of the Sickles household, and the young couple were likewise often invited to the White House. Interestingly, the Sickles home was formerly the home of Dr. Thomas Ewell, the father of future Confederate General Richard S. Ewell.

Whenever congressmen returned to their district, it was considered to be acceptable for a good friend of the congressman to be the escort of the congressman's wife to social events. Philip Barton Key and Daniel Sickles met at a card game, quickly became friends and Key frequently accompanied Teresa to parties. Key was from a prominent Maryland family and was the son of Francis Scott Key, author of the Star-Spangled Banner. Key was also

the U.S. district attorney for Washington, DC, an appointed position, and Dan intervened with the president on his behalf, enabling Key to maintain his position during the Buchanan administration. Key also proclaimed himself to be a lady's man who only needed to know a woman for 36 hours before he could make her "do whatever he pleased."

Key and Teresa aroused suspicion over perhaps 1 ½ years of frequently being seen together in public, and the people of Washington began to talk. When they were spotted going into a hotel together, someone informed Sickles, who confronted Key. Key denied it and feigning that his honor had been besmirched, and demanding that Sickles reveal the name of the person who tainted his reputation that he might challenge him to a duel. Dan apparently accepted Key's declaration, but told Teresa to stay away from him nonetheless.

The two lovers were not dissuaded. When Sickles next went out of town, he asked friends to stop by at his house while he was away to check up on Teresa. The friends found Key in the Sickles home drinking champagne and eating salad with Teresa. Someone who signed a letter to Sickles as "RPG" identified Key as the man who rented a house for no other purpose than to carry out an affair with his wife, assuring Sickles that "he has as much use of your wife as you have." Dan challenged Teresa on the evening of February 26, 1859 and after an argument, she wrote a confession that she claimed was not coerced.

On the next day, Sunday, February 27, 1859, Sickles and a friend Sam Butterworth were supposedly going to go across Lafayette Square to the clubhouse where Key had a room, to investigate the affair by interviewing some of the other residents. When looking out the window of the Sickles home, they saw Key waving a white handkerchief – a not-so-subtle signal to Teresa for a rendezvous. Sickles was humiliated at this public display that all could see. He put on an overcoat with three pistols tucked inside, and went outside with Butterworth.

Butterworth approached Key first and while the two conversed, Sickles approached from the side, crying out "Key, you scoundrel, you have dishonored my home; you must die." Sickles pulled out one of the pistols and shot, but only grazed Key. Key then grabbed Sickles and a struggle ensued. Sickles pulled away from Key's bear-hug, and each man reached inside their

coats. Sickles had drawn another pistol, but Key pulled out an opera glass as his only weapon and flung it at Sickles. Sickles fired a shot that struck Key in the groin, got off another shot that went into Key's chest, and when he tried to fire a fourth shot at Key's head, the gun misfired.

Butterworth watched but others in the park intervened to lead Sickles away and take Key to the clubhouse, where he laid on the floor supported by a chair under his head for two hours before he died. The house where Key expired would become the home of Secretary of State William H. Seward and would be the scene of Lewis Powell's attempted assassination of Seward on the same night that John Wilkes Booth killed Lincoln.

Public opinion was very sympathetic with Sickles. Hessler described the prevailing sentiment as Sickles being seen as the aggrieved husband whose wife fell prey to an adulterer. Jury selection took three days, going through 160 prospective jurors before twelve impartial jurors not already predisposed to support Sickles could be chosen.

Due to his wealth and influence, Sickles was able to assemble a "dream team" of defense lawyers. James Brady was the lead attorney. Edwin Stanton, the future Secretary of War in the Lincoln administration gave the closing argument. Francis Meagher, future Civil War general of the Irish brigade, was a young up and coming lawyer who paid a minor role. John Graham, brother of a future general in Sickles' corps, Charles Graham, rounded out the team.

Contrary to popular belief, the case did not center on the claim that Sickles suffered from temporary insanity. The defense argued that Sickles was defending his household, and cited that in the Bible, adulterers were put to death. Teresa's adultery was determined to be fact of the case and the defense assembled 43 witnesses to the affair. Sickles broke down into tears three times as he listened to details of the tryst.

Robert Ould was the prosecutor, succeeding Key as district attorney, and tasked with avenging the death of his former supervisor. He argued that if Sickles had caught Key in the act of adultery, Sickles would have been guilty of manslaughter, but by turning his overcoat into an arsenal and planning out his revenge, Sickles was guilty of murder.

After a 20-day trial, the jurors were told as part of the final jury instructions,

that if they found that Sickles' mental state was such that he could not understand right from wrong, they must acquit. So, Sickles' sanity may have been part of the jury deliberations, but it was not an argument put forth by his defense lawyers. The jury was out for 70 minutes, finding Sickles to be "not guilty."

Sickles and Teresa remained married as long as they were both alive. Many Washington socialites were shocked that Sickles forgave his wife when he could not forgive Key. Sickles explained that he could not have his daughter and her mother living a destitute life. When Sickles became a general during the Civil War, Teresa never did live the life of a general's wife. Teresa died in 1867 at the age of 31, probably from tuberculosis.

Friends of Central Virginia Battlefield Trust

As you know CVBT is a land trust. We focus on purchasing endangered battlefield properties. We do produce a large three-day annual conference, standalone events and need to interpret and maintain our lands, we need help in all of these. In the past, CVBT has had individuals from organizations assist us, and we are grateful, but now we would like to create an official volunteer group who would enjoy being part of CVBT's volunteer core.

We have created "**The Friends of CVBT.**" The intent is for this all-volunteer group is to be the "On Call" core of CVBT's volunteer group assisting in events and battlefield related needs. Active volunteer members will have the unique opportunity to be involved with events hosted by nationally acclaimed historians, assist in tours, and work on preserved battlefields. Participating volunteers will also be enrolled in the membership ranks of CVBT every year they contribute. CVBT will provide each volunteer with a CVBT volunteer staff shirt and CVBT official hat to wear at events or whenever wanted. We will be limiting this new group to 18 volunteers.

CVBT is now beginning our 27th year of preserving our local battlefields, the very battlefields you study and walk upon. We would be honored to have you join the ranks of CVBT volunteers to help us further our mission of preserving our Nation's history.

If interested please email our Executive Director **Terry Rensel** at executivedirector@cvbt.org .
Office: 540-374-0900

The CVBT Annual Conference

Mark your calendars! The CVBT's Annual Conference will be held on September 12-14. The conference will be held at the Jepson Alumni Executive Center at 1119 Hanover St. in Fredericksburg. The focus will be on the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. Chris Mackowski will lead a tour of the battlefield. The keynote speaker will be Kenneth Noe. He will talk about his work "The Howling Storm." Details and registration can be found at the provided link.

<https://www.cvbt.org/cvbt-annual-conference>

CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE OF FREDERICKSBURG (CWRTF)

CWRTF meets 9 times a year on designated Wednesdays at Mary Washington Jepson Alumni Executive Center, 1119 Hanover Street. They offer a buffet dinner followed by a Civil War-themed presentation. Reservations are required. Speaker/topic schedule can be found on their website at www.cwrftf.org, and will be updated here when the schedule is released for 2025.

April 23, 2025 Kevin Pawlak – Bristoe Station

May 26, 2025 Barton Myers – General Winfield Scott

June 18, 2025 Patrick Schroeder - Forgotten Friday: April 7, 1865
Actions in Cumberland County VA

Who We Are

The Drum and Bugle Newsletter is published monthly by the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, Post Office Box 7632, Fredericksburg VA

22404. The newsletter is available on our website at www.rappvalleycivilwar.org. Yearly membership dues are \$40 for individuals and \$50 for families. Students are free. Membership is open to anyone interested in the military, political and social history of the American Civil War.

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