

## Battlefield Preservation IS Economic Development



Prescott is the home of two National Historic Landmark Civil War battlefields and the Prescott-Nevada County Economic Development Office is working with the Nevada County Depot Museum to develop them as heritage tourism sites to draw visitors off of busy Interstate 30.

The Battle at Elkins' Ferry took place on April 3 and 4, 1864, when Confederate cavalry the leading elements of a Union army as it sought to cross the Little Missouri River on its way to invade Louisiana. After sharp combat, the Confederates fell back to Prairie D'Ane. The two armies skirmished there from April 10-12, 1864, before Union troops diverted to Camden – eventually retreating all the way to Little Rock.

The National Park Service says that "Elkins Ferry is among the most pristine Civil War battlefields in Arkansas. This rural area has only seen slight changes since the Civil War. Like other battlefields associated with the Camden Expedition of 1864, it offers a tremendous opportunity for preservation and interpretation of the entire historical landscape" Of Prairie D'Ane, the NPS says "most of the historic landscape retains good integrity. Prairie D'Ane should be viewed as the highest priority for its protection among the Camden Expedition battlefields given its current good condition and the continuing threat of development."

The Nevada County Depot and Museum, in cooperation with the Prescott-Nevada County Economic Development Office, led the effort to acquire 448 acres of the Elkins' Ferry Battlefield from Hancock Land Management after it appraised at \$950,000. The Civil War Trust, the national battlefield preservation organization, brokered the deal and wrote the grant to procure \$496,088 from the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program(ABPP) - half of the purchase price and half of closing costs. Other donors included state and legislative organizations, private foundations and businesses and many, many private citizens. The acquisition process concluded at the end of 2015, and the Museum accepted title to the property on August 5, 2016.

As the Elkins' Ferry Battlefield acquisition drew to a close, Dr. Nathan Patrick Hale announced that he had a portion of the Prairie D'Ane Battlefield that he wanted to sell for preservation and development as a heritage tourism site. The land lies immediately adjacent to I-30 at the Highway 19 exit. The Civil War Trust had the 808-acre tract appraised and the appraisal came in at \$1.4 million. Dr. Hale made the incredibly generous offer to sell it for \$900,000 - a \$500,000

charitable contribution. With the ABPP pledging \$700,000 toward the project, the Prescott-Nevada County Economic Development Office and Nevada County Depot Museum again marshaled their forces to raise the remaining \$200,000 needed to close the deal. The organizations once more drew on federal, state, non-profit and private donors to complete the acquisition in early 2018.

Archeological work has been done to help identify key portions of the battlefield for interpretation and the Prescott-Nevada County Economic Development Office and Nevada County Depot Museum are set to begin sensitive development of the sites to attract heritage tourists to these two remarkable Civil War battlefields – and to area businesses.