

# **TENNESSEE WARS COMMISSION REPORT OF ACTIVITIES**

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Director of Programs

## **DAVIS BRIDGE BATTLEFIELD SURVEYED FOR INTERPRETIVE TRAIL**

Mr. Bill Avant, State Manager of GIS and Land Acquisitions for the Department of Environment and Conservation, recently surveyed the once endangered battlefield grounds at Davis Bridge on the Hatchie River in Hardeman and McNairy Counties. Shiloh National Park Service staff members joined Tennessee State Park officials on site to review locations for placement of trails, parking lots, restroom facilities and the location of a pedestrian bridge across the Hatchie River that will allow park visitors access to the other half of the battlefield. The Tennessee Wars Commission was awarded a \$900,000 Federal Enhancement Grant to create the Davis Bridge Battlefield interpretive trail system. Once opened, the property will become Tennessee's newest Civil War Battlefield Park, containing over 98% of the original National Landmark boundary, and now preserved for future generations.

## **STATE LANDS ACQUISITION COMMISSION APPROVES PROJECTS**

At the June 2011 State Lands Acquisition Commission (SLAC) meeting the Tennessee Wars Commission presented several projects for funding aimed at preservation and interpretation of endangered historic Civil War sites in Tennessee. All of the projects have now been approved for funding and are as follows:

1. The Fort Redmond Civil War field fortifications (Redoubt) 20-acre tract on the Red River near the City of Adams in Robertson County (\$215,000).
2. The Davis Bridge Battlefield 4.5-acre tract with historic farmhouse in Hardeman County (\$65,000).
3. The Battle of Franklin with two properties in the City of Franklin, Williamson County, Loring's Advance 4.89-acre tract (\$210,000) and the 1-acre Fudge tract (\$206,000) near the Carter House Historic site.

The above sites have been saved through matching grants received from our preservation partners at the Civil War Trust (501c-3) of Washington, DC, The American Battlefield Protection Program, The City of Adams, Tennessee and Industrial Board of Robertson County, the Davis Bridge Battlefield Memorial Association and the Tennessee State Acquisition Fund.

## WAR OF 1812 INTERPRETIVE SITE PLAN FOR FAYETTEVILLE

At the request of Executive Director Jerry Mansfield, South Central Tennessee Development District, Wars Commission director Fred Prouty made several visits to Fayetteville, Tennessee to assess possibilities for the creation of an interpretive park at the historic site of Camp Blount, honoring Tennessee troops who encamped and trained for service in the War of 1812 and Creek War of 1813-1814, while under command of General Andrew Jackson. After the on site survey of the Camp Blount, a review is now being created to address the interpretation of an historic greenway trail system, wayside sign locations and text. Site mechanics such as parking, visitor facilities, and the possibility of tying the site to the nearby city park by means of a pedestrian walkway across the Elk River are all being considered.

Nearly twenty state and private organizations have joined to create a statewide initiative to commemorate Tennessee 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the War of 1812. These organizations are partnering to create both short and long-term events and programs commemorating Tennessee's contributions to the war. Tennessee rose to prominence on General Andrew Jackson's military and political success, thus changing and transforming Tennessee from a frontier state to one of national and international prominence. The war has been remembered in Tennessee with nearly 1/3 of our state counties named for people or events associated with the War of 1812.

The War of 1812 Committee who meet at the Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson, are creating plans for symposium conferences, special events with living history participants, creation of a state wide tourism trail brochure and signage, a traveling museum of historic exhibitions, and community development and partnerships, along with possible funding resources. The War of 1812 Bicentennial commemoration plans includes events beginning in 2012 through 2015.

## BURIAL REPORT OF CIVIL WAR DEAD IN NASHVILLE

The Wars Commission has approved a grant to the Tennessee State Library and Archives Friends Group, for the creation of a searchable MS Access database of the National Archives entitled, "Federal Soldier Burial Sheets" that list 15,569 Civil War burials at the Nashville National Cemetery. During the Civil War thousands of Union Soldiers were buried in large trenches near the Nashville City Cemetery. These men had fought in a number of major battles in Middle Tennessee, including the Battle of Franklin, The Battle of Stones River, and the Battle at Spring Hill. From October 1867 to January 1868 these and other soldiers killed in the Middle Tennessee area were exhumed and reburied at the Nashville National Cemetery located in North Nashville. Recently, an archivist was able to locate these official exhumation records on microfilm at the National Archives. These records not only detail where a soldier was exhumed and later reburied, but also other important data, including where the soldier had been killed and

his unit affiliation. Most critically, these government records definitively connect the names of the soldiers interned in the Nashville National Cemetery with the numbered gravesite and the location of the original burial.

When fully transcribed, these records will be made available to the public online via the Tennessee State Library and Archive's (TSLA) website. Upon completion of this project, researchers will finally have a complete picture of Civil War burials in Nashville: These government records provide the only true and complete record of soldier's names, unit affiliation, original burial location, and the number of their National Cemetery interment.

### “LOOKING BACK PROJECT”: CIVIL WAR MEMORABILIA TO BE DIGITALLY PRESERVED

“Looking Back: The Civil War in Tennessee”, is a traveling event made possible by the Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA). Their goal is to digitize and preserve Tennessee's unrecorded Civil War memorabilia. In order to accomplish this TSLA is encouraging local communities to bring their treasured artifacts to Looking Back events being scheduled across the state. Photos, documents, uniforms, anything from the era, will be digitized and placed on the TSLA web site preserving the information for generations to come.

A team of archivists, conservators, and military artifact experts (Fred Prouty of the Tennessee Wars Commission and Ron Westfall of the Tennessee State Museum being on hand at the Cookeville History Museum event) are crossing the state with the popular program. Looking back most recently appeared in Cookeville in conjunction with the state's second sesquicentennial signature event, “The First Shots of Tennessee's Civil War,” which took place September 6-7 at Tennessee Tech University.

### THREE NEW CIVIL WAR PROPERTIES APPROVED FOR STATE ACQUISITION

Tennessee Wars Commission director of programs Fred Prouty, recently appeared before the State Land Acquisition Commission board to present a request for state assistance to acquire three endangered battlefield properties. Those battlefield sites are located at Parkers Crossroads Battlefield in Henderson County, Davis Bridge Battlefield in Hardeman and McNairy Counties, and property adjacent to the Fort Donelson National Military Park in Dover Tennessee. These properties were approved for purchase and will be held by the state as conservation easements. With the purchase of these important battlefield sites the Wars Commission has now gone beyond our current 7,000 acre total of preserved and interpreted battlefield properties in Tennessee since the Wars Commissions first year in 1995. We again thank our preservation partners for their efforts, contributions and dedication to saving our countries Hallowed Grounds for future generations to come, as long as there is an America.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF ADDITIONAL WARS PROJECTS

Since the last Tennessee Historical Commission meeting in October of 2011 the Tennessee Wars Commission has been involved with several land acquisition and related preservation and interpretation projects connected with our states most significant Civil War battlefields and related historic sites. Below are bullet point highlights of several important new and ongoing Wars Commission projects.

- Two recent land acquisitions involved battlefield properties located near existing National Battlefields at Shiloh and Fort Donelson National Military Parks with over 366 acres saved. These newest acquisitions will in time be turned over to the National Park System who will act as the primary caretakers of the properties in perpetuity.
- Fallen Timbers Battlefield is our most recent acquisition and is located south of Shiloh National Battlefield. This important new tract of 266 acres was the scene of then Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest's rearguard attack on advancing federal troops pursuing retreating Confederates after the Battle of Shiloh on April 7, 1862. Forrest's aggressive attack caused the federal forces to retreat allowing for Confederates forces to escape.
- Property acquisitions at Tennessee's Davis Bridge Battlefield in McNairy and Hardemen Counties and Parker's Crossroads Battlefield in Henderson County, have been secured with matching funds from the Tennessee Wars Commission, the Civil War Trust (a national non-profit Civil War preservation organization), the National Park Services, American Battlefield Protection Program, and the Tennessee State Lands Acquisition Fund. To date the Tennessee Wars Commission has been awarded over 3 million dollars in Civil War battlefield preservation funding from the above preservation partners and we have secured over \$7,464,061 in non-federal leveraged matching funds for a total battlefield land acquisition cost of over \$10,350,000.
- The Wars Commission has created and published, *An Interpretive Plan for Camp Blount Memorial Park Tennessee's War of 1812 and Creek War Memorial*, in Fayetteville, Tennessee. The planning document is being used in negotiations currently underway to acquire 40 acres of the historic Camp Blount site along the scenic Elk River. The plan calls for interpretive loop trails that chronicle the camp where 3,500 Tennessee militia volunteers trained under Major-General Andrew Jackson in October of 1813, just prior to their involvement in the Creek Indian War. During the War of 1812 Camp Blount was again utilized as a training camp by General John Coffee's 3,100 militia troops in October of 1814.
- City of Parkers Crossroads has been given a matching grant for creation of an interpretive documentary Civil War film, highlighting the Battle of Parkers Crossroads and is to be shown in the new Battlefield Welcome Center.

- National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program grant applications have been completed requesting matching federal funds for purchase of battlefield properties at Shiloh, Fort Donelson, Parkers Crossroads, and Fallen Timbers. The TN Historical Commission has approved a request from the Civil War Trust to act as government sponsor and hold easements on the above properties until and which time the National Park Service will take possession of the sites.
- The Tennessee Wars Commission has completed a re-release of the Wars Commission film, *Hallowed Ground, Preserving Tennessee's Battlefields*. This collaboration between the Wars Commission and the Tennessee Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission will place the Emmy award winning film in the hands of our state schoolteachers during our Sesquicentennial anniversary of the War Between the States.
- Tennessee River and Trails Association is creating a new audio *Trail Guide* that features audio sound bits by several Tennessee preservationists and Wars Commission director of programs was asked to participate in a question and answer session.
- The Wars Commission is funding a survey of Parkers Crossroads Battlefield in an attempt to locate possible Civil War military burial sites presumed to be located on recently obtained 52-acre tract of core battlefield. The project will be headed by the University of Tennessee Archeological Department using their ground penetrating radar (GPR) capabilities.
- Talks continue with landowners of Civil War earthwork fortifications located in the hills above the City of Carthage, Tennessee. Local grass root preservation association and city and county government officials hope to create a park that preserves and interprets the forts and the story of the cities federal occupation during the conflict.
- Tennessee Wars Commission has granted matching funds of \$15,000 to the Civil War Trust to purchase battlefield acreage at Parkers Crossroads Battlefield in Henderson County. This is one of the last significant land parcel acquisitions to be made within the core battlefield now containing over 365 acres.
- The Wars Commission has made a grant of \$25,000 to match National Park Service, American Battlefield Preservation Program funds for the purchase of an endangered and significant tract of property on the Davis Bridge Battlefield in Hardeman County and McNairy Counties. The site now contains over 850 acres of core battlefield and work continues on development of a trail system and pedestrian bridge across the Hatchie River.
- The Tennessee State Library and Archives Friends Association was granted funding for the transcription and entry of material to create a searchable database of Federal Civil War Era Burial Sheets preserved in the National Archives,

Washington, DC. This information will give a complete listing of burials in the Nashville area and will also provide the locations of exhumed burials that were transferred to the Nashville National Cemetery during and after the Civil War. This information also contains the names of former slaves who joined the federal army in Tennessee and gives the location and addresses of their former owners. This information will add significantly to the genealogical base of African American activities in Tennessee during the war years.

- Work is ongoing through the Jackson Foundation and Renaissance Center of Dickson, Tennessee to create a DVD video presentation entitled, *One and Undivided*, a first person account by Tennesseans who lived through the Civil War. The DVD will be sent to all state schools systems for use in Tennessee history classes.
- Research is ongoing to be obtained information from the National Archives military branch to facilitate the site location of Tennessee's Fort Nash that existed in the late 1790s and into the early 1800s. This important historic site has not been located as yet and it archeological integrity unexplored.
- A grant was made to create 13 wayside interpretive signs for the Civil War trail system at Johnsonville Historic Area Civil War Park. These new trail signs will help facilitate the new State Parks interpretive and welcome center scheduled to be opened in 2012.
- The Wars Commission has granted operational funds to the Tennessee Civil War Preservation Association (TCWPA) that includes the ongoing operation of their Civil War battlefield assessment program and the recent launch of their new TCWPA website. The web site may be accessed at: [www.tcwpa.org](http://www.tcwpa.org).

The Tennessee Wars Commission is deeply indebted to our preservation partner's who have helped save over 7,000 acres of endangered Civil War battlefield property in Tennessee and contributed funds exceeding \$2,729,000. Since 1998 the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program has contributed over \$3,000,000 for six endangered Tennessee battlefields (Spring Hill, Davis Bridge, Parkers Crossroads, Shiloh, and Fallen Timbers) allowing the Tennessee Wars Commission to secure over \$7,464,061 in non-federal leveraged matching funds for a total battlefield land acquisition cost of \$10,350,636.

Your thoughts and comments are welcome.

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