

our Southwest; the only problem was—
who would conquer them?



ILLUSTRATION BY PUCCI

another person called Greek George.

To replace the runaway natives, U. S. Army muleskinners were assigned to drive the camels. They did their best, but the techniques which worked on American mules were wholly ineffective when applied to Middle East camels.

In the middle of a march, and for no perceptible reason, the camels would drop to their knees and refuse to get up. The muleskinners were powerless to move them. The camels, which had responded quickly when sworn at in Syrian, paid not the slightest attention when sworn at in English!

Nor was that the extent of the problem. The rolling, undulating gait of the camels made the muleskinners horribly seasick. And whenever they encountered horse- or mule-driven freight trains along the trail, the horses and mules would stampede in pure terror.

The great camel experiment was getting out of hand. And, just about then, the Civil War broke out. Jeff Davis went off to become president of the Confederacy, and the War Department had more important things to worry about than camels.

Bit by bit, the camel herd broke up. A few of the animals were shot, some sold, the rest turned loose on the desert.

Hi Jolly became a prospector, driving not a camel but a mule. In 1902, he died and was buried at Quartzite, Ariz. Greek George went to California, bought a small ranch, and lived there until 1915.

For many years, the camels and their descendants roamed the Southwestern desert. Now and then, one or two would be captured and put to work hauling ore out of the mines, but mostly they ran wild.

Occasionally, they would reappear at the edge of a desert settlement. Then cattle would stampede, and some newcomer or other who had never heard of the camels would take one look and solemnly swear

off hard drink for the rest of his life.

A number of camels showed up in Nevada. They became such a nuisance, frightening people and livestock, that the territorial legislature felt constrained to pass a law against them. The law expressly prohibited camels from "running at large on or about the public highways of the State of Nevada." Punishment for the owners thereof (if any, and if they could be found): \$25 to \$100 fine, 10 to 30 days in the cooler—or both.

LEGENDS GREW UP around the camels. One tale was of a great rust-red beast which haunted the west bank of the Colorado River and, in the full of the moon, could be seen clopping along with a dead man lashed to its hump. Another legend involved a camel which was said to have saved the life of an escaping convict by leading him to a desert spring.

Little by little, the camels died out, the victims of white hunters, hungry Indians, and predatory coyotes. The last time anybody reported seeing a camel was in 1913. An Arizona copper miner said he saw three of them and that he gave chase on horseback, but they got away.

There are, however, two permanent reminders of the great camel experiment. One is Hi Jolly's monument in the western Arizona desert. The other is a rocky eminence east of Phoenix called Camelback Mountain.

An old Indian legend has it that one of the camels of the 1850s defied the gods of thunder and lightning and, here on this spot, was turned to stone. Seen from the southwest, Camelback Mountain appears to be a gigantic camel squatting on its knees, showing not the slightest inclination to get up.

To those who know the curious story of Uncle Sam's intractable camels, this must seem very much in character.

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