

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### CAMEL PACK TRAINS AT STAMPEDE LAKE

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While he was Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis got a \$30,000 Congressional appropriation to purchase camels for military use in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, and camels reached that area May 14, 1856. From southwestern desert lands, they expanded to northwestern areas including supply routes from Umatilla to Boise Basin. Farther north, they hauled supplies over John Mullan's road as well as along North Idaho's Wildhorse Trail to British Columbia. They also were tried along other British Columbia mining roads. But they encountered two major problems: without skilled Arab drivers, they did not function efficiently; and they frequently frightened horses that they encountered along pack trails. Camels and traditional western packers who knew how to handle horse and mule trains spent too much of their time fighting each other, and many western areas wound up with interesting stories of horses that stampeded when camels came along. Stampede Lake near Naples is one North Idaho Wildhorse Trail site with a traditional encounter in which camels frightened off horses headed for British Columbia.

**(This information has not been edited.)**

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