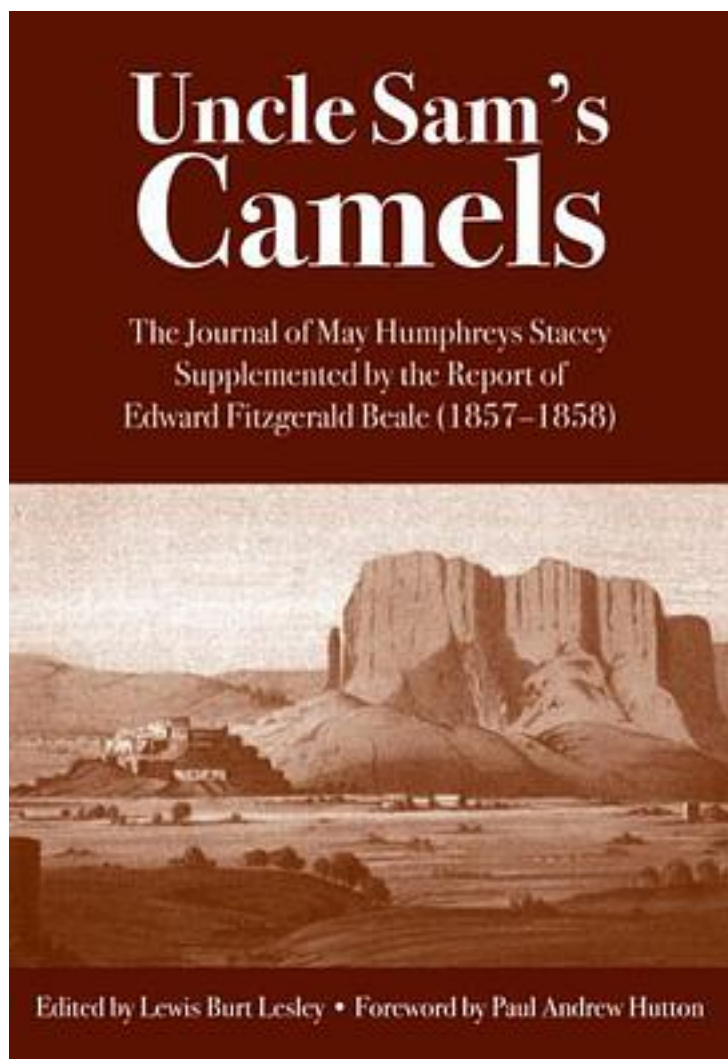


Uncle Sam's Camels



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In 1855, at the urging of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, the U.S. Congress funded an unusual experiment: the importation of camels in order to test their fitness for military purposes in the Southwest. Camels, it was presumed, would fare much better than horses and mules in the desert's punishing climate and terrain, and therefore could be used to transport supplies to frontier forts more quickly. Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale led the nation's first and only "camel corps" expedition from Texas to California in 1857. Joining him was nineteen-year-old May Humphreys Stacey, who kept a detailed journal of their harrowing adventures. In "Uncle Sam's Camels", Lesley reproduces Stacey's account as well as Lt. Beale's glowing report on the expedition, in which he frequently comments on the camels' remarkable endurance. Originally published in 1929, Lesley's study was one of the first to treat this curiosity in U.S. military history, and it remains the definitive text on the subject.

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