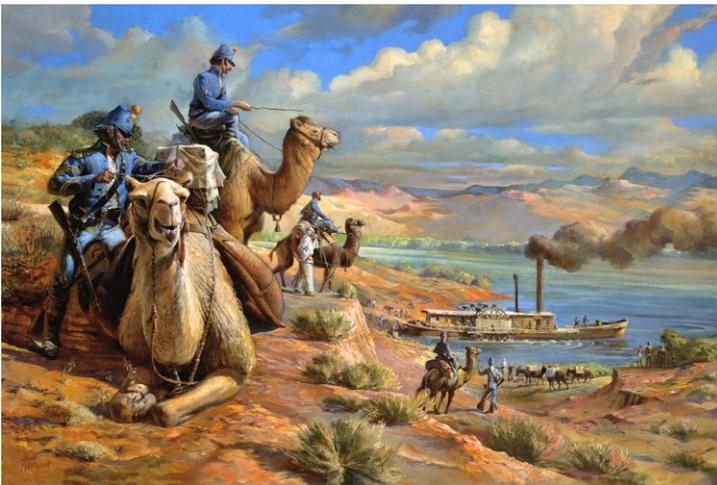




# COLORADO RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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## Beale's Camels Crossing the Colorado River

It took over 25 years, but on March 3, 1855 Congress passed an amendment to an appropriations bill, resolving: "And be it further enacted, that the sum of \$30,000 be, and the same is hereby appropriated under the direction of the War Department in the purchase and importation of camels and dromedaries to be employed for military purposes."

In 1857, and in response to a petition made by some 60,000 citizens for a permanent roadway which would help link the eastern territories with those of the far west, Congress authorized a contract to survey and build a wagon road along the thirty-fifth parallel from Fort Defiance, New Mexico Territory, to the Colorado River on the California/Arizona border. The contract was won by Mr. Edward Fitzgerald Beale, a former Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California and Nevada who held the rank of brigadier general in the California militia. Beale was a good choice for the

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## WALTER BOOK SIGNING EVENT



Walter the Orphaned Donkey from Oatman, AZ will be appearing during the Farmer's Market in Community Park on Saturday, April 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 p.m. for a book signing of Walter's first book entitled "Walter Finds a Home". Hosted by the Colorado River Historical Society museum, their tables will be set up near the Lil' Red Schoolhouse.

Walter will be joined by his owner's

survey, having traveled parts of this region during the Mexican War and while surveying a route for a transcontinental railway.

It was only after Beale accepted the contract that he learned of Secretary of War's John B. Floyd's special conditions. Floyd ordered Beale to take twenty-five camels with him on the surveying expedition. Beale protested vehemently at being encumbered with the camels, but Floyd was adamant. The government had gone to some time and expense to test the camels in just this kind of situation and Floyd was determined to see if they would justify the money being spent on them. Although strongly opposed to the idea, Beale finally consented.

Beale was concerned about the dangers inherent in such a journey over such treacherous terrain, but these concerns proved unfounded in regard to the camels. *"Sometimes we forget they are with us. Certainly, there never was anything so patient or enduring and so little troublesome as this noble animal. They pack their heavy load of corn, of which they never taste a grain; put up with any food offered them without complaint, and are always up with the wagons, and, withal, so perfectly docile and quiet that they are the admiration of the whole camp. (A)t this time there is not a man in camp who is not delighted with them. They are better today than when we left Camp Verde with them; especially since our men have learned, by experience, the best mode of packing them."*

The camels ate little of the forage, content instead to eat the scrub and prickly plants found along the trail. They could travel thirty to forty miles a day, go for eight to ten days without water and seemed not the slightest bit bothered by the oppressive climate. At one point the expedition became lost and was mistakenly led into an impassable canyon. The ensuing lack of grass and water for over thirty-six hours made the mules frantic. A small scouting party mounted on camels was sent out to find a trail. They found a river some twenty miles distant and led the expedition to it, literally saving the lives of both men and beasts. From then on, the camels were used to find all watering holes.

On October 19, 1857, as the expedition began to cross the Colorado, Beale was concerned about the

Brad and Kelly Blake, and author Cat Smith. Also joining them will be Bill and Carol Blake, Walter's "grandparents" who will be selling Walter merchandise.

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greetings to everyone, and since Easter is rapidly approaching, Happy Easter!

The museum is seeing more and more people as times get better, and we are so happy about that.

We had a great time at the Anderson Event Center on March 11. We had a table, met lots of new people and had a few sign up to be volunteers. It had a very good turnout overall.

Don't forget that you can still order your honey baked ham for Easter and support the museum, by calling Susana at 928-234-4807. Pickup will begin on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

I am very excited we are able to host our first event since the pandemic started over a year ago. It will be so much fun to see Walter the Orphaned Donkey from Oatman, AZ again. See the front page for more details!

We are in the process of ordering our first ever brand-new display cases for the museum. There will be five upright cases that front load, have adjustable shelves, and LED lighting. The Colorado River Women's Club donated \$500 towards the cases and we will be using that towards the overall balance which is significant. If you would like to donate to this cause we would be most appreciative as eventually we would like the museum to have all new display cases.

Until next time...

Karole Finkelstein, President

camels getting across as he had been told they couldn't swim. He was pleasantly surprised when the largest camel was led to the river, plunged right in fully loaded and swam across with no difficulty. The remaining camels also crossed without incident, but two horses and ten mules drowned in the attempt. Their surveying mission completed, Beale led the expedition to Fort Tejon, about 100 miles north of Los Angeles, to rest and re-provision. The expedition had lasted nearly four months and covered over twelve hundred miles.

For further reading of this interesting part of the history of the southwest, pick-up a copy of *The Last Camel Charge*, by author Forrest Bryant Johnson.

*Artwork by William Adrendt*

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Our hours of operation are Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Come in and see our new displays and visit for a while. We are located at 1239 Highway 95 in Bullhead City, AZ.

We are closed on all major holidays. Due to staffing limitations during the pandemic it is a good idea to confirm by phone that we are open. We can be reached at 928-754-3399.

## CHECK US OUT

E-mail: [crhsmuseum@outlook.com](mailto:crhsmuseum@outlook.com)

Facebook: [Colorado River Historical Society Inc](#)

Website: We are excited to announce that our new website is currently under construction and will be launched in the near future. We will be using our domain name of [coloradoriverhistoricalsocietymuseum.org](http://coloradoriverhistoricalsocietymuseum.org), but it is currently offline

## DONATIONS SOUGHT

NOTE: We are currently actively seeking Mohave Valley Daily News newspapers before 2010 in good condition. If you have editions you would like to donate to us please drop them by the museum!

## COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

Cheryl Mangin – Archivist-Curator

Richard Dotson – Asst. Archivist

Carla Lucas – Member

Jim Lucas – Member

Laurie Thompson – Member

## DONATION GUIDELINES

What we are looking for is any artifact that is pertinent to our Tri-state area. This includes but is not limited to photographs, family histories, military activity, Davis Dam, Native Americans, steamboats, ranching, fossils, explorers, highways, historical maps, churches and service clubs, businesses, and mining.

Please keep in mind, these are the guidelines we use if you choose to donate an artifact in your possession:

- Is it of museum quality?
- Is it pertinent to our area of interest?
- Do we already have as good or a better prime example of the artifact?
- Does the provenance of the artifact or material increase its significance?
- Is the donor the legal owner of said materials?
- Do we have enough resources to maintain/store/display it.
- We cannot accept an artifact with stipulations on it such as it must be displayed in a particular way or time period.
- We do not accept loans.

Give us a call at the museum if you have an artifact or historical item you would like us to consider!