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“Rebel” Camel

The following information, obtained from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, came from excerpts of the *Confederate Veteran* 1893 and the *Daily Corinthian*, August 1977.

Did you know that a camel once left footprints in this area of Mississippi? Old Douglas, as he was called, was an African camel that belonged to the 43rd Mississippi Infantry Regiment. The camel's long swinging gait became familiar to the entire regiment and caused the 43rd to be known as the “Camel Regiment.” Old Douglas was given to Col. William M. Moore by a Lieutenant Hargrove of Company B.

Col. Moore assigned Old Douglas to the regimental band and the animal carried instruments and knapsacks. The camel's first active service was with General Sterling Price at Iuka. Pompey, the bay stallion belonging to Colonel Moore, was the only horse that would face Old Douglas at first. Nothing had prepared the animals for the sight of a beast of burden such as a camel.

Old Douglas' keeper put the camel on a chain to keep him from wandering off, but the beast would soon snap any chain and would then graze at will. When the regiment was ready to move, Old Douglas would be led to the mound of baggage that he was supposed to carry, and his leader would say, “Pushay, Douglas.” At that command, the camel kneeled so he could be loaded.

Since the horses were afraid of the camel, the driver was instructed to stop just outside the camp when it halted. However, in a forced march to Iuka, Mississippi, the command halted just after dark, and the camel and driver got in the line of march before it was known. The result was that a horse made a break with a fence rail attached to its halter,

and running through the camp, the horse stampeded men and animals in every direction. Panic quickly spread throughout the brigade. Some men climbed trees for safety, but many men and animals were badly hurt. One or two horses were possibly killed. None of the 43rd ever forgot the stampede near Iuka, Mississippi, just before the Battle of Corinth.

The camel's owner fell during the second day of the Battle of Corinth which occurred about two weeks after the Battle of Iuka in 1862. Old Douglas was later killed by the enemy during the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi.