

A SPECIAL EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT ON THE JOURNEY TO THE GOLD RUSH
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On January 19th 1848 the kick off to the American Gold Rush began. Carpenter James Wilson Marshal discovered a piece of gold in California soil about fifty miles northeast of present day San Francisco. When Marshall made the discovery, he was in the process of building a sawmill for a landowner by the name of John Augustus, who until that point had lived a quiet life taking care of his farm. Within months thousands of Americans as well as immigrants from all over the world arrived in California, which up until that time was a wilderness region with few resources and many dangers due to the Indians occupying the region.¹ As immigrants arrived, the land where gold was first discovered literally turned into a battlefield. The owner of the land, John Augustus, had all his livestock stolen and his crops were ruined by the thousands of settlers arriving in hope of striking it rich.² Travel to the site of the Gold Rush was mostly done by ship, but a few thousand took the challenging and dangerous trip across the US.³

Through the primary source which is a letter from a Danish immigrant Jens Storm Schmidt to his family in Denmark, Jens Storm Schmidt describes the challenges he faced during his journey to California. When writing the letter “[he] ha[d] finally returned to civilization. With that I mean I am once again in an inhabited place where I can send you a letter”.⁴ In 1846 he had left his hometown of Horsens, Denmark due to the growing industrialization. Established in the twelfth century, Horsens quickly became a business and industrial center in western Denmark. With its location in the middle of the western peninsula

¹“American Gold Rush,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*,(Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v29.440; Eric Foner and John A. Garrety, *The reader’s companion to the American history* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1991), 456.

² David Colbert, *Eyewitness to America: 500 years of America in the words of those who saw it happen* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1997), 170-171.

³ “American Gold Rush,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v29.440.

⁴ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

of Jutland it was the ideal connection point between the Danish capital of Copenhagen and the Western part of Denmark. This meant that industrialization came quickly to Horsens with machines taking over most labor work.⁵ Being a son of a Miller, Jens Storm Schmidt became a victim of the growing industrialization in the 1840s when laborers were no longer in high demand. The sudden status of unemployment caused Jens Storm Schmidt to search for new places to make a living. In 1846 he left Denmark and his birth town of Horsens and boarded a ship bound for America. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean to search for his American Dream. Initially, he settled in Texas where he bought a farm and a piece of land. In the three decades leading up to Schmidt's arrival to Texas, the state had undergone a complete change from Mexican ruling. In 1836, Texas defeated the Mexican militia and declared independence from Mexico and after ten years of struggling to stay independent, the state entered the union of the United States as the 28th state in 1845.⁶ Although Texas had become part of the US, an economic crisis hit Texas as the Gold rush began. Few laborers were available since most people were heading to California. The laborers that did stay in Texas were hired by the emerging railroad companies with attractive wages and long term work as the railroads moved west.⁷ Although he had to sell it for one third of the value, with the lack of laborers Jens Storm Schmidt sold his farm, while he was still able, and headed to the California Gold Rush in the hope of striking it rich.⁸ Many books and maps were published in the years following the American Gold Rush which all promised the immigrants an easy journey across the American continent in search of instant wealth. However, the journey for Jens Storm Schmidt and the thousands of other people was to become the hardest challenge they would ever face.

⁵ Horsens, The Great Danish Encyclopedia, 1 February 2009, available from www.denstoredanske.dk; Internet; accessed 25 April 2010.

⁶ "Texas," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v11.663.

⁷ "Railroad," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v9. 903.

⁸ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

Dane Jens Storm Schmidt's letter to his family in Denmark revealed that he had to overcome unfamiliar locations, dangerous and exhausting struggles as well as face severe discrimination in order to reach California.

Schmidt's travel account document the multinational nature of the early American Southwest. When he arrived in Texas, Spanish and the different Indian dialects were the main languages heard around him on his journey. Furthermore the American continent was enormous when compared to Denmark and the city names were confusing. Eight hundred miles long and two hundred fifty miles wide, California alone was about six times larger than Denmark.⁹ The United States as a whole had an area of more than 3,100,000 square miles which was more than two hundred times the size of Denmark.¹⁰ Since the majority of the city names were in Spanish and Indian, Jens Storm Schmidt was often baffled with confusion when arriving to a new town. In 2000, San Antonio was one of the biggest cities in Texas with a population of over one million. It was founded on May first in 1718 when the Spanish military built a Garrison to control trade being transported to the French trading post in Louisiana.¹¹ Paso del Norte, or The North Pass was the town reached after climbing the Rocky Mountain. Prior to the arrival of the Forty-niners, which refers to the thousands of people travelling through Paso del Norte to get to the Gold Rush, the area had had a history of being a location for meeting of different races.¹² The first account of interaction dates back to 1528, when Spanish and Indians had restraints on each other and fought several blood shedding wars.¹³ During the next few centuries The North Pass was a rarely travelled route. In 1849 this changed dramatically as it became the main route heading to West.¹⁴

⁹ "California," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v9.903.

¹⁰ "United States," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v12.151.

¹¹ "Texas," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v10.384.

¹² C.L.Sonichsen, *Pass of the North, Four centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: Western Texas Press, 1968), 100.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

Tucson was the next major town on the journey. Today, Tucson is a popular destination for tourists due to the hot and dry climate. The main industries are weapon manufacturing and electronics development. When Jens Storm Schmidt passed through it was still part of Mexico. It was not until 1854 when the US bought the territory in which Tucson is located from Mexico in the “Gadsden Purchase” that Tucson became part of the US. Although being part of the US, the close distance to the Mexican border means that Tucson is still bilingual with Spanish as the second language. Continuing his travel, Jens Storm Schmidt arrived at an Indian village called Da Pimos. He was shocked when he saw the Indians living in the village since “a large number of them were almost naked and had pearl rings in their noses and ears.”¹⁵ He had never before seen people with holes in their nose and ears. Another Indian city Jens Storm Schmidt encountered on his journey was Mariposa. “A day later we came to another Indian village called Mariposa.”¹⁶ It was the location for the Mariposa Indian war, which occurred in 1850-1851. Due to the growing number of immigrants heading to the Gold Rush the Indian tribes began to fear that they would lose their territory to the thousands of settlers.¹⁷ After passing through Mariposa, San Diego was the next stop on the way to Sacramento and the Gold Rush. San Diego was “...a coastal town on the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁸ Like Tucson, San Diego was originally founded as a Mexican military fort in 1769, but in 1848 the US took over California as the gold rush began. The US government had seen economic possibilities in the lightly populated state. Compared to the present population of more than one million people and being the main location for the American Navy, in 1850 San Diego was barely a village. It was a town of just 731 people.¹⁹ The population increased very slowly in the mid eighteenth hundreds, because few people wished to settle in San Diego.

¹⁵ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

¹⁶ Ibid, 59.

¹⁷ Mariposa Indian War, California State War Museum, available from <http://www.militarymuseum.org/Mariposa.html>; Internet; accessed 28 April 2010.

¹⁸ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 60.

¹⁹ San Diego, The Great Danish Encyclopedia, 1 February 2009, available from www.denstoredanske.dk; Internet; accessed 25 April 2010.

The town was merely a stopover on the way to the Gold Rush.²⁰ The Last stop on the journey to the Gold Rush was Sacramento. Founded by a Swiss John Sutter in 1839 as the colony of New Helvetia, Sacramento was located about 80 miles Northeast of San Francisco. Today the city has a population of about four hundred fifty thousand people and with river access to the Pacific Ocean it is the business and administration center of California as well as being capital of California since 1854. In Jens Storm Schmidt's letter to his family, he refers to San Francisco as the closest large town about one hundred kilometers from the Gold Rush site. "The town is situated on the river of the same name, about one hundred kilometers from San Francisco."²¹ He writes that in eighteen hundred fifty San Francisco had a population of four thousands. There is no official census for San Francisco from 1850 since the census ballots were destroyed in a fire on the way to being counted.²² Based on the population described by Jens Storm Schmidt in 1850 and the unofficial state census records of 1852 and US census of 1860, San Francisco's population grew very quickly during the following decade. The State census of 1852 stated a San Francisco population of 34,776 and the official census result from 1860 showed that during the 1850's the San Francisco population had grown more than a thousand percent to 56,802. When analyzing the age diversity of the San Francisco population, it is easy to see that the rapid increase in population is solely due to the Gold Rush, since the vast majority of the population living in California in 1850 was between the age of fifteen and fifty with more than half of the people being in their twenties and mostly single.²³

²⁰ Donald B. Dodd, *Historical statistics of the States of the United States: Two centuries of the census 1790-1990* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 457-463.

²¹ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 60.

²² Donald B. Dodd, *Historical statistics of the States of the United States: Two centuries of the census 1790-1990* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 457-463.

²³ Age groups in California, 1860 US Census, 1 June 1860, available from <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-04.pdf>; Internet; accessed 28 April 2010.

The infamiliarities and confusions were many on Jens Storm Schmidt's journey across the American. Schmidt's letter home revealed dangers and the cultural conflicts faced in the American Southwest.

The first imminent danger he faced was probably the most serious: Cholera. As Jens Storm Schmidt Arrived in San Antonio, he immediately realized that he should not stay very long, since "...nearly half of the population had died of Cholera and more were dying every day."²⁴ Cholera, which was an acute diarrheal disease of the gastrointestinal tract caused by insufficient sanitation and the ingestion of the *vibrio cholera bacteria*, was a dangerous and extremely contagious epidemic. It had a survival rate of only forty percent without treatment. Since San Antonio lacked proper sanitation condition, cholera was easily passed on to residents and travelers passing through the city.²⁵ While in San Antonio, Jens Storm Schmidt suddenly faced a serious dilemma. A Mexican came rushing into the city telling the story about how Indians had killed six of his countrymen on the trail one hundred sixty kilometers west of San Antonio. As Schmidt's travel mates decided to turn around, he was suddenly all alone and faced with a tough choice. "What could I do? Staying in San Antonio and getting Cholera would be worse than going through Indian country."²⁶ He could not go back to Denmark either since he had very little money. If he went back home, he would face unemployment and thus an even more insecure future than what he would face in the US. He had no choice other than to continue his journey to California.

Approaching the site of the killings of the Mexicans, he proceeded with caution and stayed hidden in the forests during the day to prevent being spotted and killed by Indians. The reason behind the killings was the threat the Indian tribes suddenly felt from the thousands of settlers arriving in the US. These settlers began buying land from the American government on which the Native Americans had lived for centuries. When the settlers encountered

²⁴ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

²⁵ "Cholera," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v3.258.

²⁶ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

Indians, they immediately started shooting at the Indians out of fear, since Indians appeared completely different from the settlers. From the Comanche and Sioux Indians in the South to the Delaware and Iroquois tribes in the East, native Indian tribes were facing a sudden threat of extinction as the settlers arrived in the US²⁷. After travelling for some days Schmidt suddenly encountered the most disgusting smell of dead corpses. He soon realized that it was the site of the killed Mexicans. “One night I suddenly came to a place that smelled terribly. In the moonlight I saw small piles of Embers. Can you imagine what it was? The place where the murders had occurred. You can imagine how I felt.”²⁸ The identification of the which Indian tribe that committed the killings of the six Mexicans remain unknown today, but the Cherokee, Biloxi and Apache tribes were all settled in Texas in the middle of the nineteenth century.²⁹ After reaching the site of the killings, Schmidt quickly continued his journey and he continuously got more company from other travelers heading for the Gold Rush.³⁰ After travelling for weeks he encountered the Rocky Mountains. Extending from Alaska in the North through Canada to New Mexico in the South, the mountain range was about three thousand miles long and covered an area of more than 850.000 square miles. Most of the peaks in the Rocky Mountains reached higher than twelve thousand feet with the highest peak, Mount Elbert, topping at 14,433 feet.³¹ Due to the heights of the Rookies few people risked their lives climbing these Mountains. Until the beginning of the Gold rush in eighteen forty eight, trappers and fur traders were the only non-native people to explore and travel across the the Rocky Mountains. As the Gold Rush began prospectors had two choices for passing the Rocky Mountain: The Northern route through Canada or the Southern route through Colorado. Although being a more challenging route Schmidt chose the Southern

²⁷ Jacqueline Jones et al., *Created Equal, A history of the United States* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2009) 142; *Ibid.*, 162.

²⁸ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.58.

²⁹ Texas Indian Tribes, Access Genealogy, available from <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/texas/index.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 April 2010.

³⁰ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

³¹ “Rocky Mountains,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v10.127.

route. Choosing the Northern and less challenging route would have resulted in a detour more than a thousand miles.³² After hundred days of travel Schmidt reached Paso Del Nort. From this area Jens Storm Schmidt and the thousands of other travelers encountered the imminent dangers of Indian attacks. Along with fellow travelers he chose a military colonel, Colonel Haecs as their leader in case they would encounter any Indian attacks. Colonel Haecs had a standing military order to try to make peace with the Indians. This decision would soon place Jens Storm Schmidt in unnecessary danger.

“To achieve that he sent a man who had been brought up among them up to their camp. He would not say where it was, but he was to befriend them, He told us where we should meet them. When we got there we couldn’t see anything. The next morning we heard shooting and screaming in the mountains.”³³

The Mariposa Indian war was fought in eighteen fifty to eighteen fifty one. Initially, the Indian tribes welcomed the settlers. They were able to trade goods and obtain new products such as weapons and certain kinds of food, all of which would improve their everyday life. As increasing number of settlers arrived the Indians began to fear losing their territories. Being furious over the increasing settlement on their land of people heading for the Gold Rush, Indians and mainly the Mono Piutes tribe started a war against the settlers. The war was devastating for California. The California Governor, John Mcdougal authorized the formation of an organization called the Mariposa Battalion to fight the Indians. Before they could get to fight, a Federal Indian Commission sought a peace treaty with the Indians. A treaty was signed by six tribes.³⁴

Having survived Colonel Haecs gamble in trying the make peace with the Indian tribes in western Arizona, Jens Storm Schmidt and his fellow travelers continued. Being exhausted and relying horses which barely had anything to eat, they soon faced an even larger threat: Crossing a big river followed by hundred miles of severe desert.

³² Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 58.

³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁴ Mariposa Indian War, California State Military Museum, Available from <http://www.militarymuseum.org/Mariposa.html>; Internet; accessed 20 April 2010.

“I thought I could eat anything I saw. My horses, the only things I could rely on, were nearly dead. That was the condition I was in when I stood on the East bank of the Colorado River.... I won’t tell you how difficult it was to cross that river, but on the West Bank we saw what is called the really desolate desert, the world’s largest after the one in Arabia, I believe. Where I had to cross it, it was 150 kilometers wide, and I was in a bad humor when I heard that.”³⁵

The Colorado River flowed from the mountains in Wyoming, Colorado and Utah 1450 miles from the Southwest and ended in the Gulf of California. It ran through seven US states as well as eighty miles in Mexico. The immigrants heading to the Gold Rush had to cross the Colorado River. Alternatively to avoid crossing the river, they had to take a detour of thousands of miles heading north into mountain ranges with colder climates. After they had crossed the river, they faced a hundred miles wide desert. Without food, crossing the desert became the final struggle on the way to the Gold Rush. The travelers and horses were desperate for food and ate anything they could get their hands on, even though it meant eating Indian style. Since the food was sparse there were only beans and nuts available, and thus using their hands was the easiest way to eat. “My horses ate leaves. There was something called muscat beans on the threes. I picked them, and my horses and I ate together. I ate Indian-style.”³⁶ To temporarily relieve hunger Jens Storm Schmidt along with a few other travelers faced danger and hunted down a panther to stock up on supplies of meat before heading into the large desert. They were previously common on the American continent, but the settlement and hunting for their beautiful fur drove them to extinction in the US.

Entering the desert, which is now known as the Mojave Desert, Jens Storm Schmidt and his fellow travelers headed through what is now known as the hottest and driest place on Earth, Death Valley. Mojave Desert is about 140 miles long and bordering the Mojave Desert is Death valley. Prior to the Gold Rush only Native Americans ventured into Death Valley, but as the Gold Rush increased the population

³⁵ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 59-60.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

due to immigration, thousands of people risked their lives when crossing the Mojave Desert and Death Valley. Covering the Southeastern part of present day California, parts of Nevada, Arizona and Utah, the Mojave Desert occupy twenty-five thousand square miles.³⁷ When crossing the desert the travelers fought for their lives and the lives of their horses, mules and oxen. It was an extreme part of the journey where there was no help to gain from fellow travelers. Luckily the American Government had foreseen the troubles that the travelers had to overcome. They had set up a base in the middle of the desert to supply travelers with enough food to continue their journey to the West Coast.

“I cannot explain all the misery, and I, Jens Storm Schmidt, would not be alive today to write this letter to my parents, brothers and sisters, and friends to let them know what had become of me, had not this kind-hearted, noble-minded, and concerned government sent into the middle of the desert large amount of food and shared it freely with these many starving people.”³⁸

Why the American government would do such a “noble-minded” thing, as Jens Storm Schmidt describes it, is easy to conclude.³⁹ Unfortunately the conclusion is not in line with Jens Storm Schmidt description. According to the American constitution all men are free to live as they wish and follow their dream. This mentality leads to a individualism where one would rarely and practically never get anything for free. With the American mentality of individualism, based on the rights in the Constitution, it is very unlikely that the American Government would do anything to help without expecting anything in return. Thus, it is more likely that the American Government set up the large camp in the middle of the desert to feed the starving immigrants on the grounds of retrieving an economical gain from the travelers. If the immigrants made it through the desert, they most likely settled in the Western US. With the people settling, the American Government would within a short time retrieve enormous revenues in

³⁷ “Mojave Desert,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010): v 8.226-227.

³⁸ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 60.

³⁹ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 60.

taxes from the settlers. Furthermore, with the increased settlement in California, the government would easily be able to increase trade with Asia, which soon should turn out to result in large profits.

After the travelers had received enough food to reach San Diego, the severe struggles were over and they followed the coast to reach the site of the Gold Rush. Upon arriving at the Gold Rush they faced yet another struggle: Discrimination. Schmidt's letter document that a strong mental and physical condition was needed to participate in the American dream.

Jens Storm Schmidt began discriminating against parts of the population he met in California. He describes that there were few women and even fewer Spanish ladies at the Gold Rush site. He described most women as yellow Mexicans, referring to them as lower class women. If he had seen upper class women, he would have referred to them as Spanish ladies, as he did when he described seeing a few upper class ladies at the Gold Rush site."When I refer to the population I mean men, since I don't think there were more than one hundred ladies in the whole town, and it is the same all over the country- No women except for some yellow Mexicans and red Indians."⁴⁰ Jens Storm Schmidt personally experienced the discrimination of being an immigrant at the gold rush. In 1850, the Foreign Miners' License Tax law was implemented. This law stated that every immigrant had to pay part of their earnings from the gold mines to the government.⁴¹ Chinese immigrants arriving at the Gold Rush experienced an even more severe discrimination. In 1850 only a few hundred Chinese resided in California. However, two years later one in every ten residents was Chinese. Due to the sudden increase in population of Chinese immigrants at the Gold Rush site, the California Supreme Court issued an anti-Chinese legislation in 1854: The Chinese settlers were compared to Blacks and Indians and thus had very few rights. This meant that

⁴⁰ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 60.

⁴¹The Chinese in California, Anti-Chinese movement and Chinese exclusion, available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/cubhtml/theme9.html>; Internet; Accessed 28 April 2010.

they had to live far from the gold mines giving them access to only the less attractive mines.⁴²

The worst discrimination Jens Storm Schmidt experienced came from an American, who believed that his land was not for foreigners and according to US laws, Americans were entitled to do as they liked. “He replied that he would dig wherever he wanted without asking, since I had no right to dig at all...I decided to show him that I had some rights, and he decided to press the issue. We clashed.”⁴³ Schmidt learned from this incident to stand up for himself because “if a man is a coward and can’t protect his right he does not have any.”⁴⁴

Clashes between Americans and immigrants most likely lead to the arrest of the immigrants, however the consequences were few. It was easy to bribe the sheriff and head back to the mines and the immigrants quickly made friends that they could fully rely on. Jens Storm Schmidt describes the incident as follows: “The inevitable result is that the accused has to pay the sheriff for his trouble and that is that. The whole procedure isn’t worth two cents.”⁴⁵

Despite the struggles and discrimination at the Gold Rush site, Schmidt initially was able to make a good living at the gold mines: “The next week I worked only four and a half days because it rained, but I made 240 Danish Dollars, not bad for a beginner.”⁴⁶

Schmidt’s travel account describing severe struggles he had to undergo on his travel across the US and settling in California, indicate that struggles in the US in 1850 were not all that different from the struggles many new and recent immigrants face when arriving to the US today. Although there is no reason to fear panthers and Indian attacks, severe discrimination is still a major obstacle for new immigrants. Thousands of immigrants are still travelling to the US annually to pursue their dreams of a better life, but just like during the American Gold Rush, most people soon find themselves among fellow poor immigrants

⁴²The Chinese in California, Anti-Chinese movement and Chinese exclusion, available from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/cubhtml/theme9.html>; Internet; Accessed 28 April 2010.

⁴³ Frederick Hale, *Danes in North America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 61.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

picking strawberries for five dollars per day with workdays from sunrise to sunset.⁴⁷ When comparing Schmidt's situation during the Gold Rush and the present status of immigration to the US, it can easily be concluded that we will need to take better care of immigrants since they are filling less attractive but important job vacancies in which Americans have no interest. The jobs are needed for a well running society.

Thousands of people headed west from Europe during the American Gold Rush in search of riches. Many people never reached California, while others faced serious discrimination. Thousands returned home empty-handed, and even more people settled in California after the Gold Rush to continue to live out their American dream. Despite the unfamiliarity, struggles and discrimination faced by the immigrants going to the Gold rush, US census records show that more than thirteen hundred Danes survived the trip and settled in California by eighteen hundred sixty.⁴⁸ Jens Storm Schmidt was one of the earliest Danish settlers arriving to the US. His trip to the Gold Rush initiated a Danish settlement in the US. Today around thirty Danish towns are found in the US. They are mainly located along the West Coast and in the Northwest since these areas were located on trail leading to the Gold Rush. The most famous of the Danish societies in the US is Solvang, a little town about three hundred miles south of San Francisco. Founded in 1911, it has now lost some of its Danish touch, but the moment you drive into the town, you know that you are no longer in the US⁴⁹. It still has a bit of its Danish atmosphere with the authentic Danish bakeries and restaurants. Furthermore, the town has an annual Danish heritage month where the residents honor the struggling Danes who faced terrible challenges in order to make the trip to the West coast and the Gold Rush. If James Wilson Marshall had not discovered gold in January of 1848, the US would not have had a sudden increase in residents. The Gold Rush not only changed the

⁴⁷ Eric Schlosser, *Reefer Madness* (New York: penguin Books, 2003), 100.

⁴⁸ Danish population in California, 1860 US Census, 1 June 1860, available from <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1860a-04.pdf>; Internet; accessed 28 April 2010.

⁴⁹ History of Solvang, California, available from <http://www.solvangusa.com/static/index.cfm?contentID=23>; Internet; accessed 28 April 2010.

history of the US, but it also changed the demographic of the US faster than the government could have ever hoped for. The extremely hot deserts and tall mountains California would have continued to discourage people from settling in California. Without the Gold Rush the American government would have had considerably higher expenses in the process of establish trade routes to Asia.



Description of struggles met on Jens Storm Schmidt's route to the Gold Rush

- A: Cholera in San Antonio.
- B: The Indian killings of six Mexicans.
- C: The Crossing of the Rocky Mountains.
- D: Tucson, the starting point for 130 miles without grass or water.
- E: The Colorado River, which took great effort to cross, followed by the crossing of the Mojave Desert.
- F: The American Government camp which supplied the travelers with enough supplies to reach San Diego.
- G: The site of the gold mines