Introduction

Named the Golden State for more than one reason, California has allured, transformed, and eventually enriched or destroyed the lives of millions of people, who in turn have helped to bring the state to its current prosperity. The nickname comes from the Gold Rush, when gold was discovered in the Sierra Nevada, but it also refers to the fields of golden poppies that can be seen across the state in the spring, the golden sunshine we can enjoy here every day, and the Golden Bridge, the symbol of its most beautiful city. Today, the state wins the gold medal as the number 1 economy in the U.S. and one of the ten largest economies in the world. In this essay, we examine seven major industries which have shaped California throughout the 166 years of its history and take a closer look at how they started, what helped them grow, and how they contributed to the wealth of the state.