Chapter 17

Historical Foundation of California's Political Development

In This Chapter

Chapter Objectives

This chapter identifies major events, groups of people, and conditions that have contributed to California's political development. California, and the nation as a whole, would receive many long-term benefits from the Gold Rush, foremost among them being the tremendous increase in population that brought a wide-range of skills and resources.

The transcontinental railroad ended California's geographic isolation and opened up the state for tremendous commercial expansion, but who would control this transportation link and would it be used in the best interest of Californians? Why would there be three major changes to the California Constitution? What major historical event of global proportions would produce radical change in the state?

17.1 Historical Foundation of California's Political Development

Political scientists are typically suspicious of historical analysis, fearing that the portrayal of historically significant events will ultimately suffer from some critical omission or overly laudatory interpretation. Yet, most would agree that it is very difficult to understand the present and anticipate future developments without some appreciation for the past. The failure to think retrospectively frequently leads to the repetition of mistakes and bungled efforts. Rather than function as a historical tract, this outline identifies major events, groups of people, and conditions that have contributed to California's political development. As the state's political process has matured, governmental policies and structure, as well as popular political movements and reforms, continue to be influenced and even precipitated by past events and conditions. The Gold Rush is the best example of this influence, hastening the formation of California state government and the state's admission into the Union. Above all, this outline should cause more questions than answers. These historical accounts ought to encourage the anticipation of future developments and contemplation of resolutions to contemporary issues.

However, before venturing too far into the historical realm, a review of California geography is an important step in understanding what successive waves of settlers found when they came to the great Golden State. California geography has indeed been one of the state's principle attractions, world renowned for unique physical attributes, which were initially responsible for drawing people to this region, despite physical barriers, over the centuries. Many of the physical characteristics that drove economic, social, and political development, such as the state's mineral wealth, fertile coastal valleys, and Redwood forests, are now in danger of being drastically altered. Californians are regularly forced to choose between preserving the natural environment and razing the landscape for economic and social "progress." Making such decisions is never easy, but they should be made with some understanding and appreciation of California geography. How much do we really know of California physical characteristics?

17.2 The Geography of California

Early explorers of California found the coastal areas, inland waterways, and rivers deltas well stocked with huge schools of salmon and other edible forms of aquatic life. Settlers along the coast had all the conditions necessary for survival and establishing communities including ample water, fertile soil, and plentiful stands of timber. In fact, a large amount of the trees that they found were redwoods, the world's largest tree, supplying settlers with some of the toughest and most durable wood on the continent.

Almost any type of agricultural production could be supported along the coastal valleys. A temperate climate permeated the California coast, much like Mediterranean weather with really only two distinct seasons: a cool, wet winter and a mild, dry summer. Starting with gold, the ultimate attraction to the state, California continues

Figure 17.1 | Timeline of California History

SOURCE: ClassBrain.com, Timeline of California History, *www.classbrain.com,* Historical Timeline, *Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, accessed at www.berkeley.edu; SHG Resources, California Timeline of State History, www.sghresources.com; Kevin Starr,* California: A History *(New York: Modern Library Edition, 2005); www.justdisney.com*

6,000 years ago	Chumash tribe settles along the Southern California coast.
1542	Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo discovers San Diego; he is the first European to land in California, only 50 years after Columbus landed in the Americas.
1577	Sir Francis Drake explores the California coast and claims the region for Great Britain
1769	Father Junipero Serra founds in Sandiego the first of 21 California missions.
1812	Russian traders establish Fort Ross near Bodega Bay; according to legend, the Russians acquired the area for 3 blankets, 3 pairs of breeches, 2 axes, 3 hoes, and some beads
1821	Mexico gains its independence from Spain.
1827	Jedediah Smith crosses the Mojave Desert, making him the first American to enter California.
1848	James Marshall finds gold at Sutter's Mill.
1848	The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ends the Mexican- American War, resulting in the transfer of Mexican territories, including California, to U.S. control.
1850	Califoria is admitted to the Union as the 31st State.
1851	The Mariposa Indian War ends, with huge numbers of Native Americans killed in gold country.
1869	Transcontinental railroad is completed.
1871	Anti-Chinese riots occur in San Francisco.
1906	Earthquake and fire destroy much of San Francisco, causing over 3,000 deaths and rendering approximately 300,000 people homeless.
1911	First motion picture is made in Hollywood.
1937	Golden Gate Bridge is completed.
1938	Ten thousand people are arriving each month via U.S. Highway 66, mostly from the Dust Bowl states.
1942	Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants are relocated inland.
1955	Disneyland opens in Anaheim, to be visited by 50 million people during its first 10 years.
1962	California becomes the most popular state
1965	Major riots take place in African American setions of Los Angeles.
1968	Robert Kennedy wins the California presidential primary but is mortally wounded within minutes of his victory speech.
1971	American Indian protesters occupy Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay.
1977	Apple personal computers, developed in "Silicon Valley," are introduced.
1989	The Loma Prieta earthquake, magnitude 7.1, strikes the San Francisco Bay Area, causing almost $3 bilion in damage to the city.
2000	The high-tech industry, primarily located in California, suffers major decline, and over 128,000 workers lose their job
2007	Stockton, California, leads the nation in the number of foreclosures due to the faulty morgage lending practices, depressed real estate prices, and the global financial crisis.

to contain large reserves of mineral wealth not limited to oil, chromium, mercury, platinum, and tungsten.

California is also surrounded by natural barriers that would prove to be formidable for early pioneers. The jagged granite peaks of the inland **Sierra Nevada** mountain range, which covers almost half of the state's total land mass, were especially daunting to settlers. The trials of the Donner Party revealed the difficulty of crossing this mountain range. Further south, Jedediah Smith, the famous explorer and fur trapper who was considered by many to be the first American to enter California, suffered severe hardship while traversing the **Mojave Desert**. He is rumored to have said that he found the Mojave Desert to be one of the most desolate places he had ever seen.

Although the California coastline extends more than 800 miles, it has only three natural harbors. Sailing the Pacific Ocean along this coastline is known to be risky, made markedly hazardous by violent storms and a strong westward current.

California is a state of diverse sub-regions that vary dramatically in temperature, ecology, and topography. Without the complex system of irrigation that exists today,

Mount Whitney, the highest summit in the contiguous United States, can be found on the south-eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. (Thinkstock)

large sections of Southern California would still be uninhabited. Desert or semi-desert conditions envelope almost all of the Southern California lowlands and the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. Mount Whitney, at 14, 405 feet, is the highest summit in the contiguous United States, can be found on the south-eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. Average yearly rainfall in California varies from 100 inches on the north coast to 10 inches along the Mexican border. Virtually no rain falls in the state during the growing season between May and September.

17.3 The Demographic Development of California

Since its earliest settlements, California has exemplified ethnic and cultural diversity and yet there has been fierce resistance to forming a true melting pot of diverse groups. The persistence of inequality, bigotry, oppression, and racial exclusivity has overshadowed the richness of California's multicultural experience. Gradually, however, through conflict, assimilation, hardship, and most importantly, the necessity of cooperation in overcoming the challenges posed by this great Golden State, Californians have come together to create a truly remarkable society. Understanding the successive waves of immigrants and settlers will answer many questions and correct misconceptions that exist about California today.

17.3a American Indian Presence: 2000 BCE–Eighteenth Century

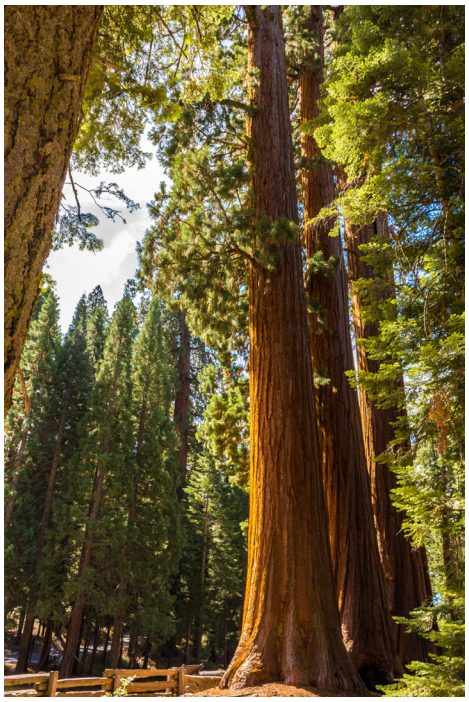
It is estimated that between one hundred thousand and three hundred thousand native peoples lived in California prior to the arrival of European settlers, accounting for approximately one-third of the native populations across the United States. This population was extremely diverse and was represented by hundreds of different tribal and sub-groups that typically coalesced in small bands, villages, and extended families.

Although Native Californians led relatively primitive lives, it is difficult to make general assumptions as to the geographic diversity of the California region that supported varying qualities of life and cultural development. With the exception of the Yuma and Mojave Indians who cultivated a variety of basic staple crops, Native Californians typically adapted their lifestyles to the bounty of the region—salmon, acorns or wild game.

Tribal groups to the south, specifically the Shoshone, Cahuilla, Mojave, and Yuma, are especially noteworthy due to their knack for establishing settlements and communities amidst the harsh desert terrain of Southern California. Communities of Native Californians in the northern half of the region were represented by the Shasta and Yurok, Maidu, and Pomo. Central California was occupied by such groups as the Miwok, Modoc, Costanoan, Ohlone, and Yokuts.

Despite the prehistoric characteristics of Native Californians, they certainly demonstrated the capacity to persevere over thousands of years and overcome the challenging aspects of the different California regions such as water scarcity, harsh climate, and earthquakes; conditions that continue to challenge Californians today.[1] As the authors of *California Indians and Their Environment: An Introduction*, point out:

> But what really sets Native California apart from the remainder of North America is its creation from plant and animal resources of a remarkable perishable material culture that served almost every need of local Indian communities. California Indians skillfully employed wood, plant fibers, animal bones, skins, feathers, and furs to create clothing, houses, house furnishings, food processing tools, storage containers, burden carriers, harvesting implements, and ceremonial regalia.[2]



Giant Sequoia Tree—Giant Forest, CA *The Sequoia is one variety of the Redwood tree, considered the world's largest tree. (Thinkstock)*

Various cultural traits of Native Californians, notwithstanding the use of currency, complex rituals, and artistry in pottery and basket weaving, tend to contradict the purely primitive or prehistoric characterization of these groups. In *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*, the author implies a bit of gratitude may be due the original Californians:

> … the indigenous people of California had a profound influence on many diverse landscapes—in particular, the coastal prairies, valley grasslands, and oak savannas, three of the most biologically rich plant communities in California. Without an Indian presence, the early European explorers would have encountered a land with less spectacular wildflower displays, fewer large trees, and fewer parklike forests, and the grassland habitats that today are disappearing in such places as Mount Tamalpais and Salt Point State Park might not have existed in the first place.[3]

For the most part, Native Californians were relatively peaceful, however, when conflict did inevitably occur, it rarely threatened the existence of any one group. Unfortunately, this trait would not be advantageous in relations with European settlers.

17.3b Spanish Colonization: 1769–1821

In 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, explored some 800 miles of coastline, claiming this vast territory for Spain.[4] A number of years later, Sir Francis Drake, the infamous naval commander and explorer, surveyed northern coastal areas on behalf of the British crown. Spanish interests in California focused on the insatiable quest to extend the Spanish empire, fear of encroaching foreign powers, most notably from England and France, and to spread Catholicism.

The only early foreign presence in California besides the Spanish were the Russians, who founded Fort Ross on the north coast, which would prove to be unproductive as a trading post.

Spanish missionaries and soldiers zigzagged north, charting trails and surveying terrain along the California coastal and inland valleys. In 1769, the Spanish colonizers made their first successful major overland expedition to California led by the

"The Mission of St. Carlos near Monterrey." Volume II, plate I from: "A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World" by Captain George Vancouver. (Wikimedia Commons)

Franciscan missionary, **Father Junípero Serra** and the Spanish governor of Baja California, Don Gaspar de Portolà. Portolà would eventually lead the expedition to the San Francisco Bay later that year.

During this expedition, the first **Franciscan mission**—San Diego de Alcala was founded, serving as the springboard for the 21 other missions that would eventually be established along the coast. Extending as far north as Sonoma, the mission system was the most important Spanish institution in California. Usually separated by about thirty miles or one day's horseback ride, the missions were relatively well planned and managed by Franciscan friars, who usually selected locations with adequate natural resources and a Native Californian population who would serve as laborers and potential religious converts. Each mission became a self-sufficient Franciscan outpost, the most successful establishment of Spanish control in California.

The military component of the colonial administration was stationed in Spanish forts or presidios, located in San Diego, Monterey, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara. Initially well-fortified and a deterrent to foreign incursions, these presidios were thinly manned and of minimal importance to colonial administrators faced with managing Spain's vast empire throughout the Americas.

The Spanish established three main towns or pueblos in San Jose, Los Angeles, and Villa de Branciforte (in the vicinity of present-day Santa Cruz). Suffering from the lack of resources, the pueblos were never very productive as centers of commerce, often experiencing thorny relations with the missions.[5]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Spanish empire extended across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. This empire would eventually become the target of Napoleonic conquest as Spain quickly succumbed to a French military invasion. Such circumstances made the administration of colonies and territories very

difficult, providing dissatisfied colonial subjects in "New Spain" with the opportunity to revolt against the Spanish monarchy. In the region that would become Mexico, the revolt against Spanish colonialism lasted more than ten years and involved a complicated and convoluted mix of competing factions, consisting of the Gachupine (Native Spaniards), Criollos (Mexican-born Spaniards), Mestizos (Spanish-indigenous decent), and indigenous peoples. Mexican Independence would eventually be achieved in 1821.[6]

17.3c Mexican Territory: 1821–1848

As heirs to Spanish colonial territory to the south and northwest of North America, leaders of the recently independent Mexican state struggled to contain a highly unstable social and political situation in post-independent Mexico. Mexico's succession of leaders were unable to allocate adequate resources or recruit competent personnel to instill governmental authority within California territory. Mexican soldiers regularly went unpaid and supply ships became increasing infrequent. Even during the Spanish colonial period, the ***Californios***—offspring of Mexican settlers born in California—began to emerge as a distinct group, forging the region's political and commercial leaders.

Relations between the Californios and Mexico's central government were often strained, partly due to inattention, but also because of the dictatorial temperament of the Mexican central government. With little or no input from the Californios, the Mexican government appointed the provincial governors of California who had constitutional authority over the regional and locally elected legislative bodies.

Whatever conflict arose between the Californios and representatives of the Mexican government was largely irrelevant, as most communities across the territory became increasing self-sufficient. That self-sufficiency resulted from the development of the *rancho*, the center of raising cattle and processing cowhides. The export of highly lucrative cowhide and tallow brought the Californios in regular contact with foreign traders, especially Americans, whose numbers gradually grew in California. The ranchos grew in number and size and became even more profitable after 1833, when the Mexican government enacted a general secularization law that began the process of confiscating mission land and redistributing large tracts to wealthy Mexican settlers and affluent Californio families.

The growing prosperity of the Californios would, however, be short-lived as they faced a variety of long-term issues and problems that would make them vulnerable to the dictates of foreign elements. Besides difficult relations with the central government, Californios carried on acrimonious relations among themselves. These acrimonious relationships frequently pitted Northern versus Southern Californios, the religious community against the secularists, and Mexican nationals who opposed the Californios that favored greater independence from Mexico. Americans who regularly traveled to California could not help but notice these vulnerabilities and realize opportunities for future continental expansion.

San Luis Obispo Mission *The fifth California mission founded by Father Junípero Serra, Sept. 1, 1772. Named after Saint Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, France. Present building built 1793–1794. (Thinkstock)*

17.3d American Conquest to Statehood: 1846–1850

Any doubts about the significance of California territory by U.S. government officials faded after the second western expedition of the then Captain John C. Frémont, an officer of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. During this expedition, Frémont followed the eastern side of the Sierra Mountain range south, crossing the Sierras and spending the winter at John Sutter's Fort, then continuing south through the San Joaquin Valley, turning east just below the Tehachapi Pass. Frémont found a land sparsely populated, with limited government authority, and abundant natural resources. When crossing paths with Native Californians, which were often tragically violent affairs, Frémont certainly gained invaluable insight about vegetation, minerals, sources of water, and animal life. Frémont's adventure was popularized by an overly dramatized chronicle written by his wife, Jessie Benton Frémont, the daughter of Thomas Hart Benton, the expansionist senator from Missouri. Her work only fueled the aims of recent Presidential-elect, James K. Polk, an advocate of the **Manifest Destiny** Doctrine.[7] By the 1840s, thousands of miles of vacant fertile land lay west of the relatively new American republic and Manifest Destiny provided the justification to discount the people or communities that might stake some claim to that land and its resources.

Manifest Destiny was forged by a variety of perceptions and conditions, one of the most convincing being religious interpretations that presupposed a divine right of a "blessed" American people to spread the Christian way of life to an untamed country and "heathen" populations. Others considered this doctrine an American version of European imperialism, a bit more benign and egalitarian, but true to a belief in cultural and racial superiority. Not unlike the general reaction to the institution of slavery during the same time period, the ends of Manifest Destiny justified the means, however unjust they may have been.

Nonetheless, California was one sideshow in a grand design for the conquest of the North American Southwest, focusing first on the Texas Republic and later encompassing present-day California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, western and southern portions of Colorado, and small parts of Wyoming, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.[8] As Mexican territory north of the Rio Grande River became the Texas Republic with statehood very probable, the Mexican government could not help but suspect territorial encroachment by the United States government.

John C. Fremont, an officer of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers that would make numerous expeditions to California, finding a sparsely populated region with abundant natural resources. (Thinkstock)

How these two nations specifically arrived at war has various interpretations, but when President Polk sent U.S. Troops to the U.S.-Mexican border in Texas and U.S. forces initiated a naval blockade of the Rio Grande, armed conflict was all but unavoidable. The Mexican-American war had all the ingredients of a western action movie, with quite a heavy dose of the unsavory. The culmination of the war came after the occupation of Mexico City by the U.S. armed forces long after Mexican governmental authority and military presence in California had been neutralized. In *California: A History of the Golden State*, Beck and Williams assert that Thomas O. Larkin, a long-time resident of California and designated U.S. Consul in Monterey, was:

> appointed a Confidential Agent of the President and virtually instructed to foment a revolt among native Californians who were so exasperated with Mexican misrule that they had only recently driven out Governor Micheltorena and his troops.[9]

An armed force of volunteers under the command of John C. Frémont, known historically as the Bear Flag rebels, and a small contingent of recently arrived U.S. naval and army units, made up the military presence in California during 1846. This force and Larkin's diplomatic efforts were just enough to convince the Mexican and Californio units that remained loyal to the Mexican government to surrender. California would be firmly under U.S. control one year before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the Mexican-American War. The consequences of this treaty would be the transfer of about 40 percent of Mexico's territory, including California, to the United States in return for a $15 million payment to Mexico, an offer rejected by the Mexican government years earlier. Mexican control of the region would come to an end, but ensuing events would rapidly and radically change California forever.[10]

Admitting a territory to the Union was usually a lengthy affair that would have proven to be especially difficult for California considering its size and geographic isolation. Nine days after the signing of the **Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo** in February 1848, however, John Wilson Marshall discovered gold in the American River while constructing a sawmill for John Sutter, who ran the fort and trading post in the general vicinity. For a brief interval, the new territory was under martial law, but the Gold Rush unleashed a flood of prospective miners and entrepreneurs into an area desperately in need the government authority. Moreover, Congress and the president were none too eager to impose territorial status, which would have obliged the federal government to accept the difficult task of administering this isolated territory.

Realizing that independence from Washington would bestow certain benefits, most of the newly arrived Californians favored the prompt formation of a state government leading to statehood. The process began with the hasty scheduling of a constitutional convention by the territory's military governor, General Bennett Riley. The majority of the forty-eight delegates to this first constitutional convention consisted of relatively young men under the age of 40 who had recently migrated to California and a small contingent of long-time residents like John Sutter, and eight Californios. These delegates would utilize the state constitutions of New York and Iowa as the basic constitutional blueprint, adding a number of novel ideas for the time, such as property rights for women.[11] The delegates to the constitutional convention did also agree to the recognition of Spanish language rights: "All laws, decrees, regulations, and provisions emanating from any of the three supreme powers of this State, which from their nature require publication, shall be published in English and Spanish."[12] Although the delegates to the convention unanimously banned slavery in California, they did accept the definitively ignoble provision that granted suffrage only to white males. Once the work of the convention was completed, Californians quickly ratified the state's first constitution of 1849 by a margin of twelve thousand to eight hundred votes.[13]

The one major deal-breaker in admitting California to the Union involved the institution of slavery and the political interests of the proslavery and antislavery factions in Congress. Until 1849, the U.S. Senate was evenly split between these two groups. A compromise bill presented by Kentucky Senator Henry Clay supported by Massachusetts' Daniel Webster, and eventually approved by the U.S. Senate, admitted California as a free state, strengthened the fugitive slave law, and prohibited similar

bans on slavery in other territories. President Zachary Taylor signed the bill authorizing the admission of California into the Union on September 9, 1850, although the news of statehood would not reach San Francisco until October 18.[14]

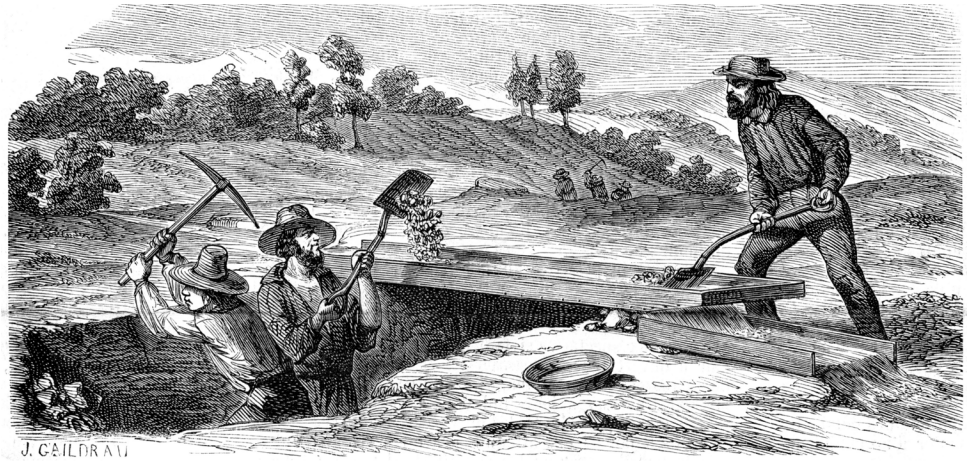
17.3e Long-Term Benefits and Costs of the Gold Rush

California, and the nation as a whole, would receive many long-term benefits from the **Gold Rush**, foremost among them being the tremendous increase in population that brought a wide-range of skills and resources. Without the lure of gold, Californian's population would likely have remained relatively small, lacking the initial wealth from gold mining that supported the future development of commerce. Almost overnight, California became synonymous worldwide with gold, personal wealth and the potential for any man through hard work to realize his fortune. The state's legacy of diversity actually began with the immigration of settlers from around the world, particularly Europe, Asia, and South America, to the goldfields and commercial centers such as San Francisco. Although most of the American prospectors had little or no experience in gold mining, many miners from South and Central America were originally from regions that had been mining for centuries and frequently brought new or unique mining techniques to the gold fields.

Providing supplies and services to the goldminers resulted in the establishment of very profitable and enduring businesses. Wells Fargo Bank combined banking services principally for goldminers with a stagecoach express company that transferred gold to San Francisco and delivered supplies and mail to the goldfields. Conceived by a traveling salesperson who originally immigrated to the United States from Germany, the Levi Strauss Company started out as a dry goods business, supplying small shop owners with clothing and hardware. Struck by the idea of manufacturing clothing, Strauss manufactured durable canvas pants that became popular with miners. Later, he added copper rivets to his pants and proceeded to launch an extremely successful clothing manufacturing business which continues to locate its global headquarters in San Francisco.

The Gold Rush and the concentration of gold mining in the state over a ten-year period led to California's position as the de facto mining industry capital of the West. California mining companies would steadily improve mining techniques and manufacture mining equipment that would be employed throughout the region. Some of these advances included the concept of the "mining claim," variations on the "sluice" box, and mining with hydraulic pressure. The geographic isolation of the state and absence of major commercial centers west of the Rocky Mountains gave California a virtual monopoly over this industry and other industrial spin-offs. These commercial activities would be financed by California investors who acquired their fortunes either directly from the gold mines or from some related business. The Gold Rush was largely the impetus behind the rapid formation of California's state government and admission into the union, two accomplishments that served to accelerate the state's political development.

For the Native Californians and the Californios, the Gold Rush cost them most of their land and way of life. Most California historians agree that Native Californians facing the onslaught of gold miners were subjected to genocide that would continue for decades, reducing the population of these native people by 70–80 percent. Most Californios either lost their property outright or were forced into lengthy and complicated legal disputes over land rights:



Gold Rush miners employed a variety of mining techniques. This gold rush mining operation was a variation on the sluice-box methods. (Thinkstock)

> In effect, the government espoused the interests of banks, moneylenders, lawyers, land entrepreneurs, settlers, and squatters and denied the Californios full protection under the law when with the Land Act of 1851. It deemed their land titles invalid, thereby facilitating their eventual land loss and reduction to second-class citizenship.[15]

Gold wealth was an elusive pipe dream for most miners, whose discoveries rarely covered the usurious cost of supplies and equipment. Life in the mining camps and operations that dotted the Sierra Nevada Mountains were very difficult and tended to elicit the more unsavory aspects of human behavior, certainly not limited to insatiable greed, racism, price gouging, and lawlessness. In fact, within three to four years of the original discovery of gold, major corporations began to replace individual prospectors with the hydraulic mining technique. This technique severely reduced the need for manpower and relegated most goldminers who stayed to paid laborers.

The mining operations in the Sierras, either by individuals or corporations, caused serious ecological problems, many of which are still evident today, particularly the degradation of rivers and foothills. The environmental effects of hydraulic mining were especially destructive to the environment, diverting water to dry land creating a boggy mud that destroyed habitats and flooded the land of farmers.

17.4 Progress and Turmoil on the Western Frontier: 1860–1920

Despite all the dividends that were accrued from the Gold Rush for decades following statehood, California remained the epitome of the "frontier" state. Isolated by distance and natural barriers, such the Rocky and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges and the Mojave Desert, it was obvious to most residents that California's development would continue to be impeded without a rapid and reliable means of transportations linking the state to the nation's commercial centers.

For twenty years following the Gold Rush there were three basic routes to and from California illustrating this transportation enigma: a two-month, perilous overland trip by horse-drawn wagon starting from Missouri; a six-month voyage by ship around the navigationally difficult Drake's Passage at the tip of South America;

THE LAST SPIKE—1881—a painting by Thomas Hill depicts the ceremony held at Promontory Point Utah on May 10 1869 marking the completion of the transcontinental railroad. (Shutterstock)

and a six-week cruise from the Gulf of Mexico via a one-hundred-mile portage across the malaria-infested Isthmus of Panama and up the Pacific Coast. The obvious solution to bridging this divide for Americans on both east and west coasts was the construction of a **transcontinental railroad**.

17.4a The Big Four: Transportation Trailblazers or Dangerous Monopoly

The transcontinental railroad was originally the vision of Theodore Judah, the early California pioneer and railroad-building engineer, who not only solved the major engineering difficulties unique to railroad construction in California and the western region, but also charted the western route through what was considered an impenetrable Sierra Nevada. Judah was joined by four successful Gold Rush merchants and popular Sacramento businessmen—Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker, and Leland Stanford—in launching the Central Pacific Railroad Company. The Civil War unequivocally demonstrated the necessity of a transcontinental railroad to the federal government, from the difficulty of transferring gold back east to shipping Federal troops west as protection against California's Confederate sympathizers. This glaring weakness in federal authority over California, as well as Theodore Judah's lobbying effort, led to the passage of The Pacific Railway Act of 1862, which mandated federal loans and land grants. These land grants averaged roughly "12,800 acres (or twenty sections) of land from the public domain for every mile of track laid."[16] The Central Pacific Railroad Company also obtained additional loans, grants, and property rights from county and state governments.

On May 10, 1869, the Central Pacific Railroad Company completed the western half of the transcontinental railroad, linking up with the Union Pacific Railroad Company track from the east at Promontory Point in Utah Territory. Travel time between New York City and San Francisco was cut to one week with almost infinite freight shipping possibilities.

Not long after construction began on the western portion of the transcontinental railroad, Theodore Judah found himself seeking new financiers of the railroad due to relentless conflict with his four partners over financial, construction, and ethical issues. The struggles over who would lead the building of the western segment of the transcontinental railroad would end when Judah contracted yellow fever and died unexpectedly in 1863.[17] With Judah gone, the four businessmen from Sacramento became identified as the "**Big Four**," a brand as representative of rail in California as the "Central Pacific," the actual corporate title of the railroad. Once completed, the transcontinental railroad ended California's geographic isolation and opened up the state for tremendous commercial expansion, bestowing effective control over much of the state's economy on the Big Four. That control would provide the foundation for a variety of ventures, starting with the expansion of rail lines throughout the western region of the country.

By gradually acquiring or controlling other local and regional railroad networks, the Big Four eventually dominated roughly 85 percent of rail transportation in the state. As they expanded control over regional rail lines, the Big Four committed energy and capital to diversifying their transportation network by acquiring international and domestic steamship lines.

Substantial political influence over the state legislature produced an unregulated transportation industry that allowed Central Pacific to vary shipping rates, basing charges more on the actual profits of customers and less on equity. According to George E. Mowry in *The California Progressives*, "Once in operation, railroad agents demanded and obtained the right to inspect the books of private companies. When a concern's rate of profits went up, so did railroad rates upon commodities it shipped."[18] The varying freight rates cut both ways, whereas commercial allies of the Southern Pacific were likely to receive reduced rates. Mowry cites Standard Oil Company as one example, recalling how "In the 'nineties for example, when the Standard Oil Company wanted to make a shipment, the rates along the way were suddenly lowered and then raised again to the original level when Standard Oil had finished its shipment.'"[19] The ability to fluctuate its unregulated charges and monopolize transportation gave the Southern Pacific enormous power over the California commercial sector. The land grants that the Central Pacific received, free of charge from the federal government, amounted to yet another major financial asset. In later years, the Southern Pacific, which had merged with the Central Pacific, would become the largest landowner in the state. For decades, government officials and private citizens were unsuccessful in their attempts to force Southern Pacific, primarily through legal action, to relinquish these lands, often containing valuable lumber, mineral, petroleum, and water reserves.

What the Big Four could not control (or at least manipulate commercially), was subject to the practices of its Southern Pacific Political Bureau. Illustrating such practices, historian Walton Bean writes:

> From his offices in San Francisco, the younger Crocker dispensed the loaves and fishes, which meant success to practical politicians. Not only did the railroad control the party organizations, but it played them against each other and secretly fostered new factions to keep the old ones in check. As Ruef, recalled it, the railroad's money "was the power behind almost every political throne and behind almost every insurgent revolt."[20]

California history and vestiges of that past are littered with instances of the Southern Pacific Railroad's political influence and power.

One common tactic by the Southern Pacific was to threaten to bypass a town or city unless the local government was forthcoming with land grants and subsidies, train depots, and financial support. By subsidizing major newspapers, often just short of buying them outright, the Southern Pacific manipulated public opinion in the state for decades.

During the Central Pacific and later Southern Pacific's ascendency, Leland Stanford, the lone attorney among the Big Four, was elected governor of California in 1861 and later as a U.S. senator. Stanford's term as government became particularly valuable to the Big Four when, according to Howard A. DeWitt in *The California Dream*,

> The financial picture was clouded by the fact that federal money was not available until the first 40 miles of track were completed. Governor Stanford came to the rescue by persuading the California legislature to allow counties to issue bonds, which were used to purchase large amounts of Central Pacific stock.[21]

Tacitly accepted during the boom times, the power and influence of the Central Pacific, as well as other newly made millionaires, became an obvious and to some extent a justifiable target when California began to experience a severe economic depression.

17.4b Anti-Railroad Sentiment Led to the Second California Constitution

As California experienced economic decline during the late 1870s, a large number of state residents believed that the Southern Pacific was the most likely culprit. Stories about the unsavory business practices of the Southern Pacific became legendary, notwithstanding the setting up of dummy companies, stock fraud, misuse of government loans, and outright bribing of government officials.

Frank Norris' now celebrated muckraking novel, *The Octopus: A Story of California*, presents a fictional account of a shootout between squatters on Southern Pacific land and railroad agents at Mussel Slough in the San Joaquin Valley that resulted in a number of deaths. This story, whether told in fictionalized form or not, continues to be especially poignant in portraying impoverished farmers who were up against Southern Pacific, the contemptible corporate gougers.

In response to these conditions, the state experienced the rise of "**Kearneyism**," a label derived from Denis Kearney, the highly vitriolic and politically adroit leader of the discontent. An Irish immigrant, some have said in this country illegally, arrived in California as a seaman. Kearney quickly became known for his "sandlot" speeches, drawing a following that propelled him into the leadership of the **Workingmen's Party of California**. Kearney's inflammatory speeches, which resonated with the preponderance of working class types in California, took a two-pronged attack on the wealthy, starting with the Big Four and then the Chinese workers.

Labor shortages during the building of the transcontinental railroad, partly the result of a silver boom in Nevada that absorbed many prospective rail workers, compelled the Big Four to recruit large numbers of Chinese workers. Initially accepted as a hardworking and often a highly skilled workforce, Chinese railway workers would comprise almost 80 percent of the workforce on the western portion of transcontinental railroad. Upon the completion of the railroad, Chinese workers expanded into other areas of commerce, ostensibly competing with California's white male workers. As so often happens during difficult times, culturally and racially different groups of people become victims of scapegoating. Kearney articulated anti-Chinese sentiment, accusing the Chinese of undermining wages, stealing jobs, and acting as pawns of the Big Four, all in a grand plot to inhibit the collective labor power of white workers.

Denis Kearney successfully tapped into the public's condemnation of the corporate community and Chinese workers to gain mass support for the Workingmen's Party. Although there are numerous instances where the Workingmen's Party engaged in deplorable acts of violence, especially against the Chinese community, it did eventually shed its thuggish impulses long enough to politically organize large groups of Californians and win many local elections. The Workingmen's Party certainly should

be condemned for its racist tendencies. Yet, the party did promote a platform that sought to alleviate poverty, guarantee worker rights, institute compulsory education, and introduce equitable methods of taxation.

One of the central features of the Workingmen's Party political strategy was to advocate for a constitutional convention to reconsider and revise the state Constitution of 1849 as a means of tackling the state's economic and political problems. Democrats and Republicans quickly joined the Workingmen's Party in the effort to reform the Constitution, realizing the popularity of the convention and fearing that it would be solely controlled by the Workingmen's Party in their absence. After voters approved California's second constitutional convention on September 5, 1877, 152 delegates met in Sacramento, of which:

> 78 were Non-partisan, 51 Workingmen, 11 Republicans, 10 Democrats, and 2 Independents…By occupation, 57 delegates were lawyers, mostly conservatives, 39 were farmers; 8 were merchants; and the others scattered over a wide range reflecting the diverse skilled trades of the San Francisco workingmen.[22]

Members of the Grange or Granger Movement, a nonpartisan farmer's organization and not an expressly political organization, were split amongst the various party affiliations, but tended to support the aims of the Workingmen's Party.

Although California's first constitutional convention lasted only six weeks, the second Constitution of the state took more than six months to draft. The most important accomplishment of the **California Constitution of 1879** were provisions to regulate railroads and corporate influence through a new state railroad commission, new corporate tax laws, and restrictions on the power of the state legislature.

The state railroad commission would consist of three members elected to four-year terms with the power to set railroad rates and impose fines for violations of commission regulations. Railroads in California were designated as "common carriers," a powerful tool even today in the state government's repertories of regulatory powers, obligating transportation companies and other utilities to apply uniform rates and services.[23]

The Workingmen's Party succeeded in getting a number of the planks from their party platform into the new Constitution, such as an eight-hour workday for government employees, the expansion of public education, and equitable provisions for taxation.

The second California constitution also contained a number of odious provisions that would come to haunt California politics for decades, most noticeably the ban on Chinese employment and land ownership. Without much consideration of past and future demographic changes, the delegates removed the Spanish language from official documents. In the article, *Translating California: Official Spanish Usage in California's Constitutional Conventions and State Legislature, 1848–1894*, Rosina A. Lozano writes:

> The delegates easily passed the amendment providing that "all laws of the State of California, and all official writing, and the executive, legislative, and judicial proceedings, shall be conducted, preserved, and published in no other than the English language.[24]

In fact, Lozano goes on to point out that, "Unlike during the first constitutional convention, the proceedings had no native Spanish-speaking delegates. At one point, Joseph Brown attempted to seat Major José R. Pico 'as a representative native Californian.'

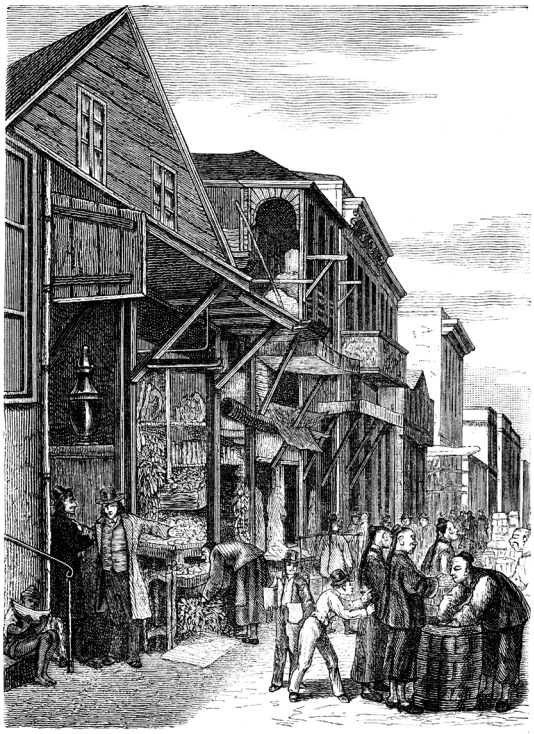
He made his case amidst the jeers of the Workingmen's supporters who applauded the announcement that, "Mr. Pico was repudiated by the delegation."[25]

Although many of the reforms of the second California Constitution still remain and the delegates are due some credit for certain lofty aspirations of this document, the attempts at reforming California's economic and political systems never really had much of a chance from the beginning. Not only was the delegation of the Workingmen's Party deficient in the educational background required of the lawmaking process, with less than a grade school education among most of them, all of the delegates were frequently at odds over divergent interests not limited to urban, agrarian, small businesses, and large corporations. Highly qualified lawyers among the delegations, well versed in the political and legal process, anticipated and in many instances created inherent issues and problems in drafting constitutional reforms.

In 1879, the Workingmen's Party was elected to a variety of offices throughout California, including the mayoral office in Oakland and the majority on the Los Angeles City Council. This electoral success provided the impetus behind the ratification of the new Constitution, but only by a small majority. Many Californians were highly critical of this document either because they felt it had not gone far enough or believed it had gone too far.

Not very long after ratification, most Californians realized that the California Constitution of 1879 was a flawed effort at economic and political reform and that, for the Southern Pacific and other powerful elements, it was business as usual. Constitutional reforms that these powerful interests could not simply ignore or successfully contest in California courts on some legal technicality or by exploiting loopholes were weakened through the bribing of public officials.

Even the railroad commission, the force behind the attempt to reign in the Southern Pacific, never really made any effort to utilize its authority or power. Freight rates remained unchanged and few investigations were launched. Railroad commissioners could not account for large sums of money in their possession or explain why they were able make a profit by selling land to officers of the Southern Pacific.[26] George Mowry, in *The California Progressives*, suggests that it would be a mistake to simply condemn the powerful interests in California for the failing of constitutional reforms, finding that:



Throughout California's history, Chinese workers and their families were forced to live in "Chinatowns" not unlike the depiction shown here. *(Thinkstock)*

> Along with the great corruptionists of the Central Pacific-Southern Pacific, with their easy public morals and open purses, there existed a host of willing and even expectant corruptibles all over the state. Every Huntington, Crocker, Hopkins, and Stanford had hundreds of purchasable smaller counterparts in editors, jurists, legislators, and city councilmen. The point is that the Big Four did not corrupt the state; it corrupted itself. Collis P. Huntington and his aides were but the most skillful and forceful practitioners of a much practiced art. And while many men cried woe alas, many men indulged.[27]

Despite the failure of the constitutional reforms of 1879, Californians proved that they were capable of utilizing the available avenues of democracy. Building on this experiment in constitutional government, future generations

would acquire the necessary education and apply significantly more forethought and professionalism to arrive at more effective and long-lasting political reforms.

17.5 California in the Twentieth Century: 1900–Post-War Period

Not long after ratification, California's attempt at constitutional reform became a faint memory as the state economy recovered largely on the success of agriculture production and the exploitation of other natural resources. Initially, California became a major source for an enormous demand for wheat. The focus on wheat, however, quickly shifted to specialized agricultural production, made possible by the state's mild climate that increased crop variety and extended growing periods. By the beginning of the twentieth century, California was exporting more than 200 different varieties of fruits and vegetables. At about the same time, large reserves of oil were discovered and California soon ranked high among the top oil exporting states across the nation. Steady growth in manufacturing was attributable to the state's geographic isolation, emerging urban areas, and dominant position in the western region. A sizeable portion of Californians benefited from the state's economic progression, which supported a burgeoning middle-class.

Californians have a long tradition of supporting education, and by the 1870s, had established many institutions of higher education that would become prestigious colleges and universities such as the University of the Pacific, Santa Clara University, Mills College, University of San Francisco, Saint Mary's College, and the University of California at Berkeley.[28] These institutions produced a professional class that embraced middle-class aspirations inconsistent with political and economic systems that suffered from corruption and unbridled greed.

With their economic and social advance checked by the power and influence of long-standing monopolies and distorted philosophies of capitalism, a new generation of Californians emerged at the turn of the century to challenge the status quo. This generation certainly learned valuable lessons from previous attempts at reform in California, but they were truly inspired by the **Progressive Movement** sweeping the nation.

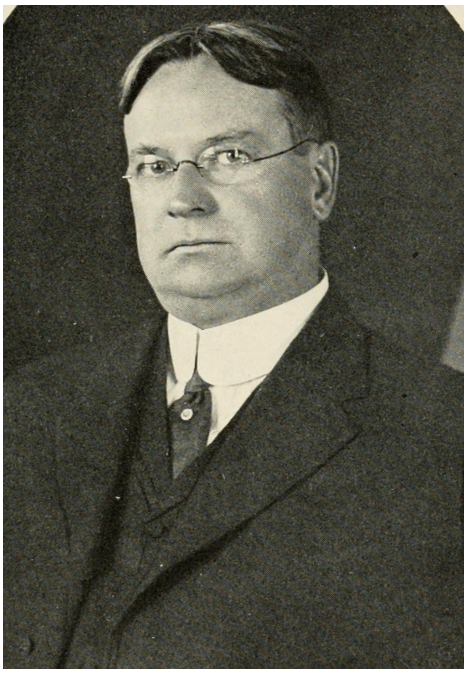
17.5a California Progressive Movement and Major Constitutional Change

Progressivism, at the turn of the century, sought a slightly larger role for government in preserving capitalist principles of a "competitive" free market. The Progressives felt that the competitiveness of capitalism could only be preserved if governmental institutions adopted a democratic approach to governance that emphasized professionalism and equity. The Lincoln-Roosevelt League, organized in Southern California by reformist-minded members of the Republican Party, was the forerunner to the California Progressive Movement. Eventually achieving statewide popularity, the California Progressive Party sought a competitive candidate for the 1909 gubernatorial election. Enter **Hiram W. Johnson**, a San Francisco attorney who was the complete package. Despite his conservative family background and moderately conservative views, he picked up some populist credentials from having provided legal representation for the San Francisco teamsters' union for eight years.

It was when he replaced an assistant prosecutor shot under suspicious circumstances while prosecuting San Francisco's political boss, Abraham Ruef, for corruption, that Johnson achieved real political prominence. His successful conviction of Boss Ruef, one of the most powerful and corrupt political players in the state, amid threats of violence, cast Johnson as "unquestionably incorruptible and courageous," and as an attractive gubernatorial candidate for the reform-minded state Republicans.[29]

Hiram Johnson would lead the California Progressives into government as the newly elected governor of California in 1911, becoming the personification of the movement to rid government of corruption and restore democratic principles.

Between 1911 until 1916, Governor Johnson was the force behind a wide-range of significant reforms that would finally break the near-total control of corporate monopolies. Johnson was fanatical about stamping out corruption and insisted on a professional approach to state government. The force of his stature and personality were instrumental in winning the passage of state statutes and constitutional amendments that would have a long-term effect on the state's political and economic systems. In fact, Johnson's statewide popularity caught the attention of Theodore Roosevelt, who was running for president as an independent under his Bull Moose Party and drafted Johnson as his vice-presidential candidate.



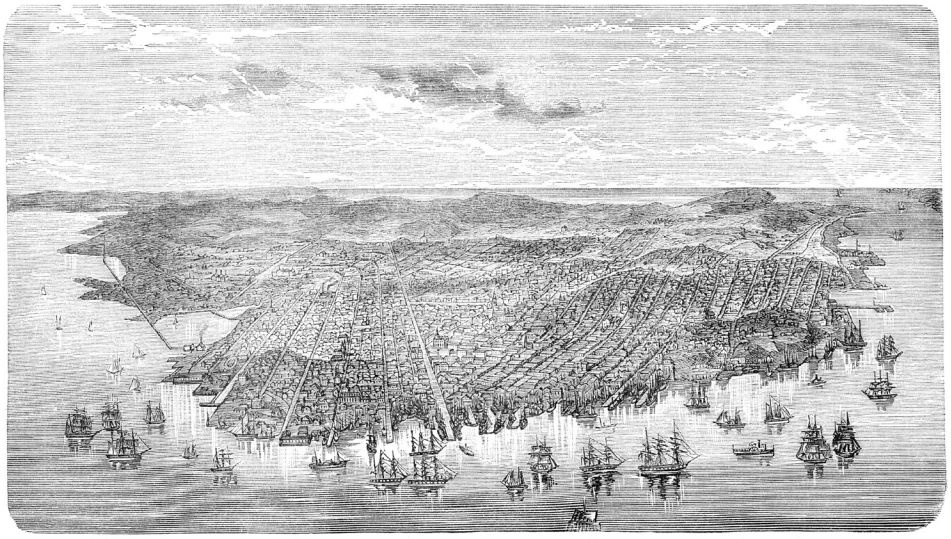
Photograph of Hiram Johnson, Governor, U.S. Senator, and leader of the Progressive movement in California. *(Wikimedia Commons)*

One of the most important reforms of the Johnson administration was the strengthening of the **California Railroad Commission**. Introduced first as legislation and later approved as a constitutional amendment, the Stetson-Eshelman Act gave the commission the authority to regulate all utilities, increase its own size and budget, and require that the commissioners be appointed rather than elected. The railroad commission was renamed as the California Public Utility Commission in 1946.

Governor Johnson also persuaded California voters to approve another constitutional amendment that provided Californians with avenues for **direct democracy** through provisions for recall, referendum, and initiative processes. The Johnson administration piloted the state legislature, dominated by fellow Progressives, in adopting laws regulating child labor and workmen's compensation, mandating an employment bureau, setting a minimum wage for government employees, and reforming banking laws.

Dedicated to establishing a professional state civil service system, Governor Johnson insisted on the creation of commissions and boards with membership subject to gubernatorial appointment. These commissions and boards, overseeing such issues as conservation, corporations, housing, irrigation, civil service, and industrial welfare, acted as a check on the state legislature's power.[30] The State Board of Control was one state board created during the Johnson administrations that acquired a reputation for ensuring that state government was run professionally and prudently.[31]

Despite the "progressive" label, most California Progressives, notwithstanding Governor Johnson, held at their core a deep respect for free-market capitalism and other middle-class values that were often at odds with the interests of the working class in California. Yes, the Progressives had championed a clean and responsive government and supported such ideals as women's suffrage and worker rights. Yet, their political orientation was anything but radical or even liberal in the contemporary sense and it hastily parted company with issues and policies that were contrary to these values. These values included a certain degree of hostility toward racial



This aerial view of San Francisco in the 1880s portrays a bustling city of commerce. (Thinkstock)

minorities, which by the turn of the century, was specifically directed at Japanese immigrants.

Labor shortages in key industries, particularly agricultural production, were partly filled by a slow but steady stream of Japanese immigrants. Initially, these workers won praise for their excellent work ethic and skilled labor, but an inclination to purchase land and start their own farms and other businesses caused alarm. In supporting to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, the Progressives, who were not typically immune to nineteenth century notions of White supremacy, led the effort to enact the **Alien Land Bill**. Originally written to totally exclude the Japanese, potential treaty violations with Japan and constitutional discrepancies forced the Progressives to limit the Alien Land Bill to preventing aliens who were ineligible for citizenship from owning land.

The California Progressive's eugenics policies reflect values most Californians probably would not be too proud of today. Picking up where previous administrations had left off, the Progressives truly felt that they could "cull the herd" for sake to future generations. Certainly influenced by pseudo-science of the period, disregarding ethical considerations as well as civil liberties outlined in the United States Constitution, the Progressives amended California's eugenics laws to broaden the categories of people who could be committed to mental hospitals and sterilized because of some physical or mental deficiency.

Reminiscent of the Workingmen's Party, the California Progressive Party, for a relatively brief moment in the state's political development— roughly 1909 until 1916—captured the attention of most Californians and then swiftly departed from the political scene. Beneath their truly progressive policies were also efforts to regulate morality, proposing for example, bans on prizefighting, horse-race betting, and alcohol consumption that were very unpopular with large groups of state residents. Too progressive for mainstream Republicans, but frequently at odds with working-class urban dwellers, the California Progressives suffered from an erosion of their political base. Governor Johnson's election as U.S. senator, winning the Republican Party nomination no less, only served to hasten this erosion, leaving his California Progressives without a strong leader who indeed personified the movement.

17.5b Economic Expansion and Decline

In 1900, the population of California was barely 1.5 million people, but it grew to 3,426,861 in 1920 and further increased to 5,677,251 in 1930.[32] During the first two decades of the twentieth century, large numbers of Americans were attracted to the state's enduring foundations of economic development, which included agriculture, mineral extraction, and light industry. They saw promising opportunities in nascent industries such as finance, large-scale manufacturing, and the motion picture industry. The state's rapid economic growth was fueled in part by discoveries of sizeable oil reserves in Southern California during the 1920s that coincided with the growth of the automobile industry. Soon, large automotive assembly plants were springing up, followed by the inauguration of aircraft manufacturing, the core of Southern California's future industrial base. Legendary aviation companies like Lockheed Corporation and Douglas Aircraft Company began in California. Headquartered in Hollywood, the motion picture industry became a highly lucrative form of popular entertainment that supplied an ever expanding global market while contributing to the state's aura of glamour. In addition, there was still plenty of money to be made and jobs to fill in fishing along the California coast, canning fruit and vegetables, lumber mills to the north, and service industries within the burgeoning urban centers.

Whether the early twentieth century economic prosperity of California reached most Californians is debatable. This period experienced a rising conservative impulse that was not particularly tolerant of worker rights and working conditions. California does have a long history of collective bargaining, especially in the urban areas, where employers saw unions as a necessary feature of the commercial sector. San Francisco, in particular, was the envy of the national labor movement, with workers in practically every major industry in the city organized by a union or federation of unions. Until the 1920s, the California labor market never seemed to have enough workers. As Cary McWilliams observed in *California: The Great Exception*, "The geographic isolation of California also strengthened labor's position…Distance threw a protective tariff, so to speak, about the local labor market."[33] The gradual influx of foreign workers mixed with migrants from the East Coast, provided a growing surplus labor force that gave employers significantly more leverage with established workers. Very often realizing their precarious position in the labor market, foreign-born workers did engage in collective bargaining, "From 1926 until 1930 there was much concern over the newly organized Mexican and Filipino labor unions. Ethnic labor organizations were a new factor in California, and the exploitation of casual labor could not continue if they were unionized."[34]

To combat unions, industries began to place a greater importance on trade associations, contributing large sums to such organizations as Merchants and Manufacturers Association in Southern California or the California Fruit Growers Exchange in the Central Valley region. Not exempt from the use of violence to break strikes, these associations appealed to the public with public relations campaigns that portrayed unions as unpatriotic and dominated by subversives, "Throughout the 1920s membership in labor unions steadily declined. In a period of prosperity and high employment, this was remarkable. The prestige of organized labor was low, and the prestige of employer organizations was correspondingly high."[35]

State government generally remained on the sidelines, even in the face of the overwhelming power and frequently brutal anti-labor organizing tactics of the corporate community. The state legislature actually buttressed the state's move to the right with laws that stymied union organizing, such as the Criminal Syndicalism Law, which was used to jail and silence anyone perceived to be advocating unlawful acts of

force or violence. Such laws eventually failed constitutional tests, but only years after hundreds of Californians had been denied basic civil liberties.

The onslaught of the Great Depression, precipitated by the stock market crash in 1929, spread unevenly across the state. The diverse nature of the California economy permitted some Californians to weather the economic crisis virtually unscathed while others became truly destitute. Somewhere in the world there would always be a market for motion pictures, and Hollywood's immense profits allowed many to live out the depression in style. Agricultural production and the myriad industries that supported it were not so lucky, as illustrated by Rawls and Bean in their interpretive history of California,

> California farm income sank in 1932 to scarcely more than half of what it had been in 1929, and there were thousands of mortgage foreclosures. The number of building permits in 1933 was less than one-ninth the peak figure of 1925. With the spread of mass unemployment in both city and country, the number of Californians dependent on public relief in 1934 was more than 1,250,000—about one-fifth of the whole population of the state.[36]

Within years of the crash of 1929, the state was also faced with the migration, or as some might have said at the time, "invasion" of roughly three hundred thousand people escaping drought or "**dust bowl**" conditions and the near economic and social collapse of their communities in Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas.[37] Californians, especially in the farmlands, were not very welcoming of these migrants, pejoratively characterized as "Okies." California law enforcement agencies regularly set up roadblocks or "bum blockades" to prevent "Okies" from entering the state or crossing county boundaries. The "Okies" that ended up in California did not usually resemble the noble progressive-minded Americans that were exemplified by John Steinbeck's Joad family. Although prone to be racist, ethnocentric, and uneducated, the "Okies" did attract attention to the plight of the poor more than any other race or ethnic group has been able to do since.

The government's initial response to the effects of the Great Depression in California was extremely limited, following to some extent the strategy of letting the marketplace correct itself advocated by President Herbert Hoover. The two Republican governors during the depression—James "Sunny Jim" Rolph and Frank Merriam—along with the Republican-controlled state senate resisted implementing Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs in California. Later, Governor Merriam relented somewhat when faced with an overwhelmed government bureaucracy and for sake of political expediency.

Federal expenditures for New Deal projects in California added up to about 10 percent of the state's personal income and few states had more of these projects.[38] The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) tended to be one of more popular New Deal measures, totaling as many as 150 camps concentrated in wilderness areas of the state. Dispersed across the wilderness and recreational areas of California, members of the CCC fought wildfires, built dams, planted thousands of trees, conducted soil and wildlife conservation projects, and restored historical sites. It is indeed rare to find a federal and state recreational area in California today that did not benefit from the work of CCC work crews or companies.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was another New Deal program that sponsored many public works projects in literately every county and most cities in California. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum website lists

352 WPA projects that were completed within the state. These public works projects varied widely from murals and sculptures to libraries, courthouses, sewage treatment plants and city halls.[39] Although the construction of the original **San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge** is considered a major engineering marvel, essentially a three-bridge construction project, the grandest of all New Deal endeavors was the commencement of the **Central Valley Project**. On a scale that dwarfed Hoover Dam and Lake Mead, the Central Valley Project was a complex undertaking that, after decades of construction, would greatly increase the water and energy resources of the state and transform the Central Valley.

One of the more controversial New Deal programs—the Agricultural Adjustment Act—mandated the regulation of agricultural production in states such as California with large agricultural sectors in order to increase the prices farmers received for their crops. The Agricultural Adjustment Act also supplied the funding for initiatives such as farm labor camps, which were extremely beneficial to "Okies" arriving in California.

The New Deal did not end the depression, but many people found work among California's New Deal projects and programs, and the state is certainly a much more enjoyable and attractive place because of it.

Despite the efforts of the federal and state governments, severe economic and social conditions lingered until the advent of the Second World War. The persistence of the great depression caused various political organizations, commercial interests, and civic groups to either oppose government efforts altogether or offer recovery plans of their own.

Upton Sinclair, the celebrated "muckracking" author and Socialist, had definitive ideas about ending the depression that were rather quickly employed as the tenets of his **End Poverty In California** (EPIC) movement and gubernatorial campaign. Today, Sinclair's campaign remains a significant political milestone in California's political development. Remarkably, in 1934, Sinclair convinced hundreds of thousands of Californians to support his EPIC program, which favored heavy government intervention and a utopian vision of California society. These followers fanned out over the state chartering hundreds of EPIC clubs that engaged in grassroots fundraising and were committed to spreading Sinclair's ideas. In response to his growing popularity, Sinclair switched from the Socialist to the Democratic Party, winning that party's nomination for governor over the objections of state party leaders.

Fearing Sinclair's mass appeal, the Republican Party galvanized well-financed support around its nominee Frank Merriam. The party hired political consultants Clem Whitaker and Leone Baxter to instituted innovative campaign tactics adapted from the public relations and advertising professions for the first time. The motion picture industry joined forces with Whitaker and Baxter, producing movie trailers and pseudo newsreels shown in movie theaters throughout the state, portraying an extremely unflattering image of Sinclair. The weight of the business community's steady stream of financial contributions, Hollywood's mass-market cinematic smear campaign, the brush-off by state Democratic Party leaders and President Roosevelt, sank Sinclair in the polls. Merriam would go on to win the election for governor, receiving 1,138,000 votes to the 879,000 ballots cast for Sinclair.[40] Whitaker and Baxter, who would become legends as political consultants, demonstrated how public opinion could be shaped and molded to win elections.

So often in California's political and economic development, difficult times bring out the very worst in Californians. Once again, the state became the site of misplaced fears and xenophobia when state government implemented laws, with the

full support of Congress, mandating the mass deportation and repatriation of Filipino and Mexican residents. Worried about deteriorating economic conditions, the general public identified these groups as visible scapegoats. Bearing the brunt of these policies, between 1931 and 1933, more than four hundred thousand undocumented Mexican workers, as well as legal residents and American citizens of Mexican origin, were deported to Mexico.[41]

A small man installs control wires inside the fuselage of a 'Valiant' basic trainer while a woman works standing outside. Vultee Aircraft Downey Plant, Ca. 1942–43. (Shutterstock)

17.5c The Effects of World War II on California

World War II literately transformed California. Within days of the Pearl Harbor bombing in December of 1941, California assumed the role as the major staging area and logistics center for the war against Japan. Millions of military personnel poured into a large number of military installations throughout a hastily fashioned garrison state. In fact, more military bases would be built in Californian than in any other part of the country. Between 1940 and 1946, the federal expenditures in California amounted to about $35 billion out of the $360 billion spent within the continental United States.[42] California's vast and diverse land mass and long coast were ideal locations for defense industries supplying the war in the Pacific.

More than 1.6 million people moved to California during World War II. By 1943, 243,000 defense workers were employed by aviation companies in Southern California and another 280,000 workers by shipbuilding companies in Northern California.[43] "Between 1940 and 1944, more than $800 million was invested in some five thousand new industrial plants in Southern California alone."[44] Approximately 60 percent of all aircraft and close to 40 percent of all naval and freight ships used during the war were constructed in California.

The wartime draft created a severe labor shortage in defense industries that was filled by a diverse workforce of women and minorities previously denied industrial work. The **"Rosie the riveter"** iconic defense plant worker in California broke many prevailing stereotypes, engaging in skilled and frequently dangerous tasks and heavy physical labor, giving the struggle for women's equality a major boost. Northern California shipyards employed nearly one hundred thousand women during the war.

Employment opportunities in defense industries also dramatically increased the African-American population in California, which prior to World War II had been relatively small. Major California defense contractors actively sought African-Americans to fill industrial jobs, sending recruiters to the South—Louisiana and Texas in particular. The city of Los Angeles would have the third highest concentration of African-Americans outside of the South by the war's end.[45] For a large number of African-Americans, work in the state's defense industries not only dramatically increased their personal income, but it also brought greater personal freedom amid slightly more relaxed racial attitudes.

For the Japanese community in California, the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the ensuing war with Japan resulted in the loss of personal freedom. Immediately following the Japanese attack, many Californians, including influential government and business leaders, subscribing to falsehoods and rumors, vehemently pressed for Japanese internment. Initially opposed, Lieutenant General John DeWitt, head of the

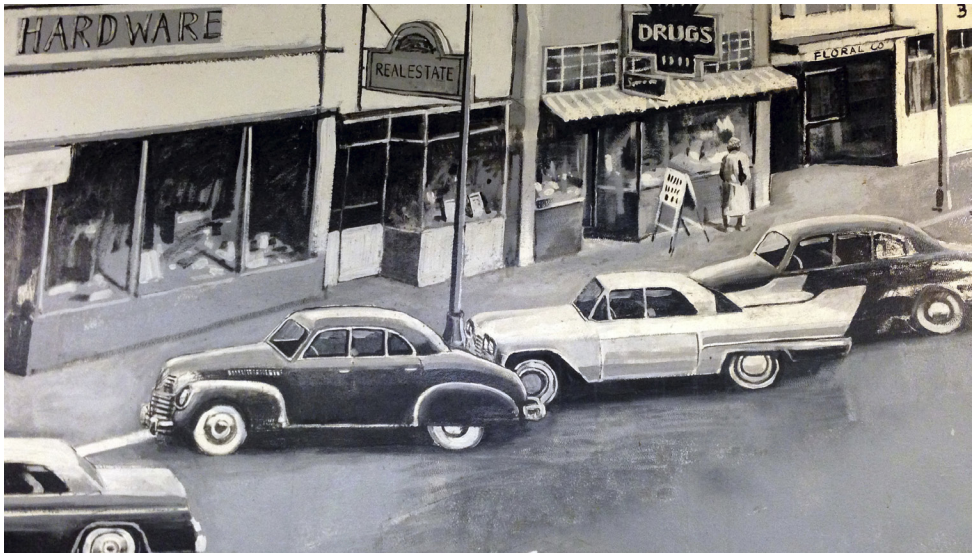
Manzanar War Relocation Center was one of ten camps where Japanese American citizens and resident Japanese aliens were interned during World War II, located in the Owens Valley. (Thinkstock)

Western Defense Command, relented to civilian pressure and the perceived threat of a Japanese attack on the Mainland. In doing so, General DeWitt recommended that President Roosevelt issue what would become **Executive Order 9066**, the relocation and internment of ninety three thousand Japanese legal aliens and American citizens in California.[46] Paradoxically, few members of the Japanese community in Hawai'i, which outnumbered the West Coast population and provided vital services to the U.S. military, were interned. By implementing the evacuation order, the Japanese in California lost much of their property and possessions and America lost an element of its moral credibility. The interment order should remind all Americans of the fragility of freedom.

If labor shortages were common in industry, they became critical for the state's agricultural sector. Huge demands for food from both the military and growing state population forced the U.S. government in 1942 to reach a labor agreement with the Mexican government. This agreement known as the **Bracero program** granted Mexicans temporary employment status in California and other western states. Part of that agreement required U.S. government officials to take responsibility for the recruitment of Mexican workers to ensure decent working conditions and basic living necessities. Unfortunately, the provision failed to protect the thousands of Mexican farmworkers who received low wages and experienced poor working and living conditions. Extremely popular among California growers, the Bracero program continued well after the war until growing public criticism pressured Congress in 1963 to finally end what was becoming the customary two-year extension of the program.[47]

17.5d California: Post-War and Beyond

Postwar California was a time of guarded optimism about the future. Returning veterans and a greatly enlarged California population faced a society of shortages that encompassed housing, schools, and practically every consumable good. The state's emerging diversity and changing cultural norms required a good deal of tolerance that certainly did not occur either rapidly or easily, especially when confronting race relations, women's rights, and the plight of veterans. Massive wartime federal expenditures in California fueled the growth of an enormous peacetime industrial base that would indulge state residents who had accumulated tidy sums and pent-up consumer demands during the war years. With a large part of the world reduced to ruins and American power projected to far-flung corners of the globe, the state's industrial and technological markets became much more global. For many California-based defense industries, World War II was only the start of lucrative contracts for weapons systems and technology that would span the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. The economic juggernaut erected during the war propelled California to the forefront of the American experience, providing an explosion of housing tracts, retail businesses, and recreational outlets, notwithstanding the



Mural of San Bruno, California portrays the main street this city south of San Francisco in the 1950s. (Thinkstock)

cultural icon—Disneyland! Led initially by Governor Earl Warren, state government expanded the infrastructure necessary for continued growth by earmarking billions of dollars for the construction of freeways, public hospitals, and water management systems. Beginning in the 1940s and 50s, affordable and accessible California public colleges and universities became the norm.

As many problems as prosperity solved, many others remained unsolved or were the direct result of the state's postwar experience. Not every Californian's boat rose with the rising tide of economic success, in particular those wartime industrial workers who became redundant in the peacetime economy. For instance, shipbuilding companies that had recruited thousands of workers were notorious for leaving behind high levels of unemployment and poverty. Shamefully, the economic prosperity brought on either during or after war never seemed to improve the contemptible conditions of California farmworkers, who even today often face a challenging labor market and less than ideal living conditions. The environment also took its postwar hits, almost continuously subjected to massive concrete paving, resource depletion, pollution of both the air and water, and so many other affronts to California's ecosystems. And yet, in spite of these difficulties, California continued to move forward, chronicled by noted author and keen observer of California life, Cary McWilliams who wrote in 1948:

> "Today it has 10,000,000 residents; tomorrow it may have 20,000,000 residents. California is not another American state: it is a revolution within the states. It is tipping the scales of the nation's interest and wealth and population to the West, toward the Pacific. The nation needs to understand this tawny tiger by the western sea, and to understand this tiger all the rules must be laid to one side. All the copybook maxims must be forgotten. California is no ordinary state; it is an anomaly, a freak, the great exception among the American states."[48]

17.6 Post-Industrial California

California has entered a period that significantly contrasts the industrial age from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. Since the 1980s, this transformation has been induced by a multitude of causes, but it would be fair to suggest that some of the main accelerators of this evolution has been a declining industrial sector, rising imports from developing nations, California's computer and internet technological innovations, growing population diversity, resource scarcity, the end of the Cold War, and radically changing social roles and cultural patterns. Some might say that this transformation marks the state's decline.

Before rushing to judgment about California's future, citing the exodus of businesses, retirees escaping to Arizona, Nevada, and Oregon, lawless inner cities or the high cost of living, it may be valuable to ponder the past. California, as aptly demonstrated, has seen hard times. Some even venture to suggest that these times have been much more difficult than anything even remotely close to the present. Imagine crossing the Sierra Nevada, cashing out at the gold mine, losing land rights to encroaching settlers, being unemployed during successive economic depressions, or facing interment. With a number of basic economic and social indicators, along with some appreciation of the history that preceded them, forecasting fragments of the future just might be possible.

17.6a Demographics

Based on the recent estimates and growth rate, the 2013 population in California was estimated to be 38,441,387.[49] This population is slightly younger than in other states and split right down the middle in terms of gender.[50] California is the nineteenth fastest growing state with a yearly growth rate of 1.09 percent.[51] Latinos were projected to become the largest single racial/ethnic group in the state by March 2014, making up 39 percent of the state's population. California's demographers also projected that by mid-2014, the state's residents would be 38.8 percent white non-Hispanic, 13 percent Asian-American or Pacific Islander, 5.8 percent African-American non-Hispanic, and less than 1 percent American Indian. The per capita income level for Californians was $28,341, slightly higher than the national rate, and the median household income was $58,328, about 10 percent higher than the nation. Roughly 17 percent of the California population lives below poverty line, about 2–3 percent higher than the national rate. Children under 18 have a 23 percent poverty rate.[52]

17.6b Economics

California's gross state product exceeds $1.9 trillion, making it one of the world's largest economies.[53] The single largest industry sector in California is services and it accounts for a mixture of many high to low-paying positions. California has one of the world's largest economies with a gross state product of over $2 trillion.[54] The top industries in California are tourism, agriculture, **high-tech** (R&D, computers, biotech), Hollywood (film, TV, music), and construction/building.[55] A period of drought conditions has affected the profitability of various industries, the most serious being the state's multi-billion dollar agricultural sector. The tech industry has lost some ground to overseas manufacturing, but green tech and alternative energy are potential drivers of future job growth for this industry. In 2012, the output of the state's 80,500 farms and ranches was worth $42.6 billion. Total receipts from

The economic progress of California can be measured by the view of the Los Angeles Skyline. (Thinkstock)

farming were about 15 percent of the national total.[56] California continues to add jobs, but not nearly enough to keep up with labor force growth.

17.6c Education

Approximately 80 percent of Californians graduated from high school, slightly lower than the national average, and 30.9 percent earned a bachelor's degree or higher, slightly higher than the national rate.[57] California ranks fortieth in the nation for the number of high school graduates that go directly to college. By 2025, only 32 percent of the state's working-age adults will have a college degree. Economic projections indicate that two of every five jobs (41 percent) will require a college degree.[58]

17.6d Environment

Coastal waters off California are getting more acidic. Glaciers in the Sierra Nevada have shrunk. Spring runoff from snowmelt has declined, affecting Central Valley farmers and hydroelectric plants that rely on snowmelt to produce power. Annual average temperatures across the state have risen by about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1895, with the greatest warming seen in portions of the Central Valley and Southern California. Levels of carbon dioxide, methane, and other heat-trapping gases in the state increased between 1990 and 2011. In recent years, there has been a slight improvement in air quality, partly the result of industries and vehicles becoming more energy efficient. Among the key issues that top the environmental agenda is the effort to place a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, or "**fracking**."

17.7 Conclusion: The Future of California

From these indicators there are a number of very basic assumptions that can be made about the future of California. Demographically, the state is still growing, but just not as fast as in the past and that should generally be a positive development. As Californians of Latino ancestry become the new majority, many may wonder what will be the effect on the state's cultural and social fiber. Will that population mirror the assimilation patterns of other American ethnic groups and shed the major features

of Hispanic culture within a generation or will California develop very distinct Latin cultural traits. Historically, racial and ethnic integration has been problematic, but most of such problems have eventually been overcome through laws, education, activism, and by the conduct of normal social and economic affairs.

Most Californians would probably agree that it's a sobering thought to reside in a state that has one of the highest cost of living standards in the nation, yet has a per capita income level that is only slightly higher than the rest of the nation. Can the state's long-term social and economic security be assured when a quarter of the children live below the poverty line? Californians bridged the nation with the transcontinental railroad, turned miles of desert into lush farmland, and erected an industrial powerhouse. Certainly a state with such accomplishment can bring more children out of a poverty-ridden life.

The California economic powerhouse, still ranking well above all other states and even most nations, has the capacity to accomplish any number of feats. Preserving the state's main industries is expected to be a challenge in the future that hopefully will not take another world war to achieve. Solving California's enigmas have historically engendered a route to prosperity and green-tech and alternative energy sources are often used as ideal examples of the trend in developing innovative industries. That route will however encounter serious roadblocks unless the state can do a better job at improving the educational quality of its residents, particularly in higher education.

It almost seems inconceivable that with one of the largest and most affordable public colleges and universities system in the world, California should be lagging in the number of college and university students that graduate. California's demography, economy, and educational outcomes will not matter much if the state's air and water quality, climatic conditions, and ecology are eroded by environmental poor choices and lack of foresight. The California environment has some serious issues, not all of which were created by Californians. Yet, there have been some environmental success stories, most noticeably in improved air quality and energy conservation, the type of progress that could be replicated in other areas and serve as models for the rest of the world. Noteworthy examples of this recent success include California's enactment of the greenhouse gas laws, air quality cap and trade program, and long standing automobile emission laws. There is the stark possibility that as some have suggested, California is in decline, a fate that has befallen other formerly commanding states. If, in building toward the future, Californians can assert the qualities of past achievements: imagination, innovation, open-mindedness, vigor and dedication, exemplified by Serra, Judah, Johnson, Sinclair, Morgan, Warren, and so many others, continued progress will be assured.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. Settlers along the coast had all the conditions necessary for survival and establishing communities including ample water, fertile soil, and plentiful stands of timber.
2. The Native Californian population was extremely diverse and was represented by hundreds of different tribal and sub-groups that typically coalesced in small bands, villages, and extended families.
3. Mexican leaders struggling to contain a highly unstable social and political situation in post-independent Mexico had little choice in allocating inadequate resources or dispatching incompetent personnel to instill governmental authority within California.
4. Nine days after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo, John Wilson Marshall discovered gold in the American River while constructing a saw mill for John Sutter, which unleashed a flood of prospective miners and entrepreneurs into an area desperately in needed the government authority.
5. The transcontinental railroad was originally the vision of Theodore Judah, who was joined by four successful gold rush merchants and popular Sacramento businessmen;Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, Charles Crocker, and Leland Stanford, in launching the Central Pacific Railroad Company.
6. Although many of the reforms of the second California constitution remain to date and the delegates were responsible for certain lofty aspirations of this document, from the beginning, the attempts at reforming California's economic and political systems never really had much of a chance.
7. Governor and leader of the California Progressive movement, Hiram Johnson persuaded California voters to approve constitutional amendments that would strengthen the railroad commission and provide avenues for direct democracy.
8. World War II literately transformed California, assuming the role as the major staging area and logistics center for the war against Japan.
9. The economic juggernaut erected during the war propelled California to the forefront of the American experience, providing an explosion of housing tracts, retail businesses, and recreational outlets.
10. Since the 1980s, the California economy has been gradually transformed by a declining industrial sector, rising imports from developing nations, California's computer and internet technological innovation, growing population diversity, the end of the Cold War, and radically changing social roles and cultural patterns.

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POP QUIZ

1. The Sierra Nevada mountain range
   A) makes up half of the state's total land area.
   B) has virtually no water.
   C) was the location of the first Spanish mission.
   D) divides Northern and Southern California.
2. Gaspar de Portolá was
   A) the first governor of California.
   B) an early Spanish explorer and governor of Baja California.
   C) the general that led the Bear Flag Rebellion.
   D) a delegate at the first California constitutional convention.
3. How many native peoples are estimated to have lived in California prior to the arrival of European settlers?
   A) Over 1 million
   B) Between 50,000 and 100,000
   C) Between 100,000 and 300,000
   D) Very few.
4. The first Franciscan mission was established at
   A) Monterey in 1776.
   B) San Francisco in 1849.
   C) San Diego in 1769.
   D) San Jose in 1845.
5. Mexican settlers living in California were called
   A) Native Americans.
   B) Spaniards.
   C) Mexicanos.
   D) Californios.
6. Leading political figures in the United States believed the country had a divine right to spread the Christian way of life to an untamed country and "heathen" populations. That divine right was called
   A) Manifest Destiny.
   B) divine power.
   C) divine imperialism.
   D) Destiny's child.
7. During the Mexican-American War of 1846, what was the Mexican territory north of the Rio Grande River called?
   A) Utah
   B) the Texas Republic
   C) Iowa Territory
   D) Cozumel
8. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the
   A) gold rush.
   B) Mexican-American War.
   C) U.S. annexation of Spain.
   D) Spanish missions in California.
9. The gold rush unleashed a flood of
   A) mining company executives.
   B) prospective miners and entrepreneurs.
   C) government officials.
   D) farmers and shop clerks.
10. The Big Four were responsible for
    A) the discovery of silver in Nevada.
    B) beginning slavery in California.
    C) building the western portion of the transcontinental railroad.
    D) Lending money to the builders of the transcontinental railroad.
11. Which of the following articulated anti-Chinese sentiment.
    A) Denis Kearney
    B) Leland Sanford
    C) Charles Crocker
    D) Father Juniper Serra
12. Which of the following was responsible for fighting wild fires, building dams, planting trees, conducting conservation projects, and restoring historical sites during the depression in California?
    A) The Forest Rangers
    B) The Civilian Conservation Corp
    C) The Mountain Men and Women's League
    D) The Army Corp of Engineers

13. In California, Hiram Johnson would lead the
    A) Progressive movement.
    B) Workingmen's Party.
    C) anti-Workingmen's Party.
    D) Women's Suffrage Movement.
14. What of the following groups were responsible for the Alien Land Bill?
    A) The California Workingmen's Party
    B) The Grange
    C) The California Progressives
    D) The Californios
15. As a result of World War II, California experienced
    A) heavy damage to Californian cities.
    B) major labor shortages due to the drafting of working-age males.
    C) a decline in industrial production.
    D) an economic boom in the state due to federal spending.

Answers:
1. A 2. B 3. C 4. C 5. D 6. A 7. B 8. B
9. B 10. C 11. A 12. B 13. A 14. C 15. D