

Year 4 General Studies

Eureka Stockade

The Eureka Stockade is considered the birthplace of Australian democracy. On December 3, 1854, it was the site of a conflict between gold miners, or diggers, and the government in Ballarat, Victoria. The conflict, also known as the Eureka Rebellion, is the most celebrated uprising in Australian history.

Background

In the early 1850s gold was discovered in Victoria. Thousands of people moved to the state to search for treasure. The state soon made laws that the gold diggers felt were unfair to them. For instance, all diggers had to buy a mining license to dig for gold. Diggers often fought with the police when the police checked these licenses and collected fees. The diggers were also upset about not being able to vote.

When Charles Hotham became the new lieutenant governor of Victoria, he made the police check mining licenses twice a week instead of once a month. Conflicts between the police and the diggers became more frequent. In October 1854 James Scobie, a digger, was killed. His murderers were not punished. The diggers responded with demonstrations and clashes with the police.

The Attack

On November 11, 1854, the diggers formed the Ballarat Reform League. The goal of the League was to achieve reforms, like the termination of mining licenses. On November 29 many diggers burned their licenses. The next day there were more clashes with the police.

The diggers then marched to Eureka, where they built a stockade. The stockade was a wooden barricade that covered about an acre (0.40 hectare) of the goldfields. They gathered guns and made pikes to defend the stockade. The police and military attacked the stockade and about 150 diggers on the morning of December 3. The attack lasted approximately 20 minutes. About 22 diggers and 5 soldiers were killed.

Some diggers were put on trial for treason. They were all found not guilty. In March 1855 all the demands of the diggers were met. The Eureka Stockade is the only Australian example of armed rebellion leading to the reform of unfair laws.



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Questions

1. When did the Eureka Stockade happen?

2. How long did the attack of the stockade last? (Circle the answer)

20 minutes / 3 hours / 5 days

3. Some diggers were put on trial for treason.

True / False

4. Why were diggers frustrated?

5. The Eureka Stockade is the only Australian example of armed rebellion leading to the reform of unfair laws.

True / False

6. Sequence the following events in order. (1 to 4)

Diggers burned their mining licenses.

In March 1855 all the demands of the diggers were met.

The police and military attacked the stockade and about 150 diggers on the morning of December 3.

Gold was discovered in Victoria.