

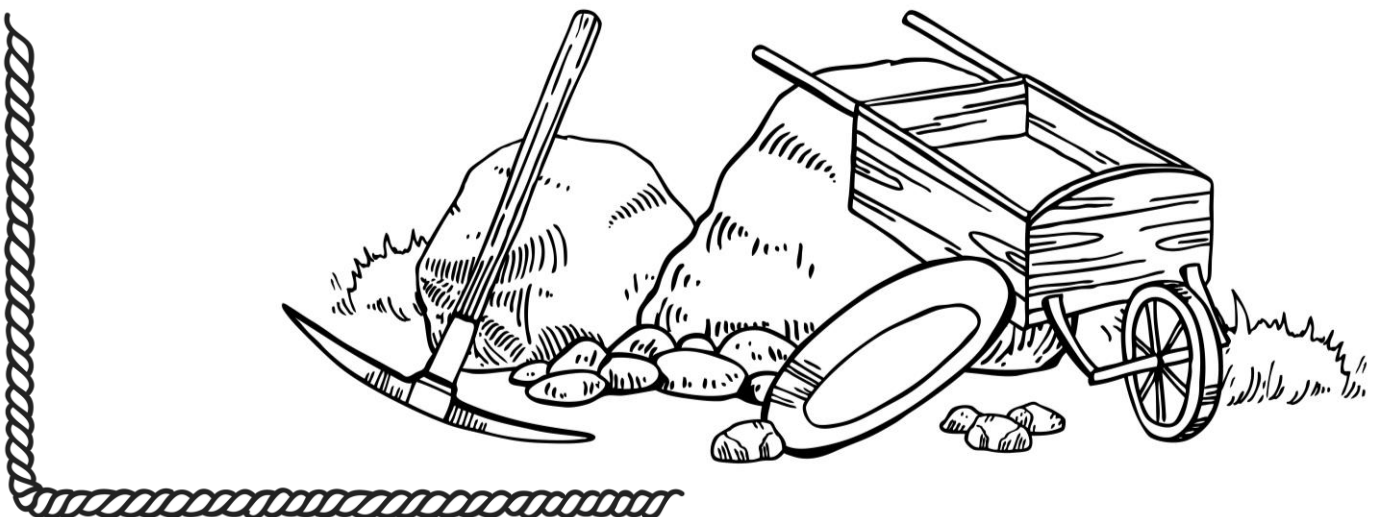
The Beginning of Gold Rushes in Australia

In February 1851, a man named Edward Hargraves found gold near Bathurst, New South Wales. This event sparked a series of gold rushes in Australia. Although Hargraves was long credited as being the first person to discover gold in Australia, there were several reports of gold having been found years before Hargraves' discovery.

In 1841, small particles of gold were discovered in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. The governor at the time believed the discovery of gold would cause problems in the colony. Authorities feared convicts would become unruly if it were discovered that gold could be found close by. The believed this would be difficult to manage. For this reason, the discovery in the Blue Mountains was kept quiet by the government.

In 1848, William Tipple Smith became the first to find payable gold in Australia. He found gold near the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. Smith asked the government for money in exchange for the location of his discovery. The government ignored Smith's request and his discovery was kept a secret.

In the same year, gold was discovered in California, America. This discovery saw thousands of settlers seek their fortune on the American goldfields. The flow of workers out of the colony meant there was a shortage of workers. This led to a change in the government's position. The governor of New South Wales believed that the discovery of gold in local areas would help stop the workers leaving the colony. As a result, he offered a reward for the discovery of payable amounts of gold in the colony.



William Smith became aware of this change in the government's position. He approached the government with his discovery from the year before and requested the reward. The government, however, refused, claiming that Smith had actually brought the gold over from California. Edward Hammond heard the rumours of the discovery of gold on near the Blue Mountains. Hargraves gathered a small team to help him search. Before long, two members of his team, William Tom and John Lister discovered payable gold. Hargraves bought the gold nuggets from them and claimed the government's reward of 10,000 pounds for himself.

Word of the discovery travelled quickly, and Australia's first gold rush was born. The hope of striking gold attracted excited people from all over the world. Miners were given the nickname 'diggers'. Diggers worked long hours in difficult and sometimes dangerous condition to try their luck in the goldfields.

This discovery of gold in 1851 began the first of a series of gold rushes in Australia. Soon after, gold was discovered in a number of other regions. While some struck it rich on the goldfields, most diggers returned ragged, starving and empty handed.

