

**Leisler's Rebellion:** 1688 and 1689 were watershed years in England. James II, last of the Stuarts, was deposed; William and Mary came to the throne in the Glorious Revolution. The impact of this change was felt in the colonies, notably in the ouster of Sir Edmund Andros and demolition of the Dominion of New England.

In New York as well, democratic movements were afoot. An armed mob seized Fort James and installed Jacob Leisler, a militia commander and immigrant from Germany, as the head of a new government. Leisler's willful personality was similar to that of Peter Stuyvesant, but for a while he enjoyed popular support because he established a legislative assembly that was not dominated by the wealthy merchants and landowners.

Leisler's rule was short-lived. A new governor was dispatched by William III in 1691. Leisler was convicted of treason and sentenced to be executed.

In May 1691, Leisler and an associate were taken to the public square, which today is City Hall Park in New York City. There, before a hymn-singing crowd, they uttered their final remarks and were hanged. The bodies were taken down – the associate semiconscious – and their heads were hacked off by the executioner's axe. Supporters removed pieces of hair and clothing from the corpses as mementos, while the opponents had Leisler's heart cut out and held aloft. The heads were sewn back on the bodies and they were buried.

The divisions within society he had highlighted lived on in New York for many years. Pro-democratic forces, sometimes called Leislerians, contended with the more aristocratic anti-Leislerians in attempts to win political control.



**BACON'S REBELLION** was a popular revolt in colonial Virginia in 1676 led by Nathaniel Bacon. High taxes, low prices for tobacco, and resentment against special privileges given those close to the governor, Sir William Berkeley, provided the background for the uprising, which was precipitated by Berkeley's failure to defend the frontier against attacks by Native Americans. Bacon commanded two unauthorized but successful expeditions against the tribes and was then elected to the new House of Burgesses. When he attempted to take his seat, Berkeley had him arrested. Soon released, Bacon gathered his supporters, marched on Jamestown, and coerced Berkeley into granting him a commission to continue his campaigns against Native Americans. The governor, having failed to raise a force against Bacon, fled to the Eastern Shore. He gathered enough strength to return to Jamestown, where he proclaimed Bacon and his men rebels and traitors. After a sharp skirmish Bacon recaptured the capital but fearing that he could not hold it against attack, set fire to the town. Bacon now controlled the colony, but he died suddenly (October, 1676), and without his leadership the rebellion collapsed. After a few months Berkeley returned to Virginia to wreak bloody vengeance on the rebels before he was forced to return to England. Berkeley's removal from the colony and the end of attacks by Native Americans were the only benefits the farmers had won in the rebellion, and the tidewater aristocracy long maintained its power.



**THE PROTESTANT REVOLUTION** of 1689, sometimes called "**COODE'S REBELLION**" after one of its leaders, John Coode, took place in the Colony of Maryland when Puritans, by then a substantial majority in the colony, revolted against the proprietary government, led by the Roman Catholic Charles Calvert, 3rd Baron of Baltimore. The rebellion followed the "Glorious Revolution" in England of 1688, which saw the Protestant Monarchs William and Mary replace the Catholic King James II. The Lords Baltimore lost control of their proprietary colony and for the next 25 years Maryland would be ruled directly by the British Crown. The Protestant Revolution also saw the effective end of Maryland's early experiments with religious toleration, as Catholicism was outlawed and Roman Catholics were forbidden from holding public office. Religious toleration would not be restored in Maryland until after the American Revolution.



**THE NEW YORK SLAVE REVOLT** of 1712 was an uprising in New York City, in the British Province of New York, of 23 enslaved Africans who killed nine whites and injured another six. More than three times that number of blacks, 70, were arrested and jailed. Of these, 27 were put on trial, and 21 convicted and executed.

Between twenty-five and fifty blacks congregated at midnight in New York City, New York on April 6, 1712. With guns, swords and knives in hand the slaves first set fire to an outhouse then fired shots at several white slave owners, who had raced to scene to fight the fire. By the end of the night, nine whites were killed and six whites were injured. The next day the governor of New York ordered the New York and Westchester militias to “drive the island.” With the exception of six rebels who committed suicide before they were apprehended, all of the rebels were captured and punished with ferocity ranging from being burned alive, to being broken by a wheel. But the swift punishment of the guilty was not enough to quell the concerns of slave owners and their political body. Within months, the New York Assembly passed “an act for preventing, suppressing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of Negroes and other slaves.” Masters were permitted to punish their slaves at their full discretion.

Early on the morning of Sunday, September 9, 1739, 20 black slaves met in secret near the Stono River in South Carolina to plan their escape to freedom. Minutes later, they burst into Hutcheson's store at Stono's bridge, killed the two storekeepers, and stole the guns and powder inside.

The group of slaves grew in number as they headed south. The slaves may have been hoping to reach St. Augustine, Florida, where the Spanish were offering freedom and land to any fugitive slave. **STONO'S REBELLION**, the largest slave uprising in the Colonies prior to the American Revolution, was under way.

When the slave owners caught up with the rebels from the Stono River in 1739, they engaged the 60 to 100 slaves in a battle. More than 20 white Carolinians, and nearly twice as many black Carolinians, were killed. As a result, South Carolina's lawmakers enacted a harsher slave code. This new code severely limited the privileges of slaves. They were no longer allowed to grow their own food, assemble in groups, earn their own money or learn to read. Some of these restrictions were already in place, but they had not been strictly enforced.

**PAXTON BOYS** was an uprising in 1763 by Pennsylvania frontiersmen upon an Indian settlement during the Pontiac Indian uprising and the subsequent events related to the attack. On December 14, 1763, about 57 drunken settlers from Paxton, Pennsylvania, slaughtered 20 innocent and defenseless Susquehannock (Conestoga) Indians, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, whom they suspected of connivance with other Native Americans who had been pillaging and scalping frontiersmen. Governor John Penn thereupon issued proclamations ordering the local magistrates to arrest and try those men involved in the massacre

Since the residents of that frontier area were sympathetic to the actions of the Paxton Boys no prosecutions were undertaken. Besides revealing the prevailing bias of frontiersmen against Native Americans, the Paxton Boys uprising also took on a political tone. Residents of the Pennsylvania backcountry were already embittered over the eastern counties' disproportionate control over the colony's legislature and the failure of the eastern-dominated legislature to provide adequate appropriations for defense of the frontier. Consequently, sparked by the events surrounding the Paxton Boys massacre (the Conestoga Massacre), about 600 armed frontiersmen marched on Philadelphia in January 1764 to vent their anger against the provincial assembly. A delegation of prominent Philadelphians, including Benjamin Franklin, met the protesters and restrained them from entering the city by promising them that the legislature would provide a thorough hearing of their complaints.

**REGULATOR MOVEMENT**, a designation for two groups, one in South Carolina, the other in North Carolina, that tried to effect governmental changes in the 1760s. In South Carolina, the Regulator movement was an organized effort by backcountry settlers to restore law and order and establish institutions of local government. Plagued by roving bands of outlaws and angered by the assembly's failure to provide the western counties with courts and petty officers, the leading planters, supported by small farmers, created an association to regulate backcountry affairs. They brought criminals to justice and set up courts to resolve legal disputes. The assembly and the governor, recognizing the legitimacy of the grievances, did not attempt to crush the movement. By 1768, order was restored, and the Circuit Court Act of 1769, providing six court districts for the backcountry, led the Regulators to disband.

The movement in Western North Carolina, with different causes, arose at the same time. Led by small farmers protesting the corruption and extortionate practices of sheriffs and court officials, the Regulators at first petitioned (1764–65) the assembly to recall its officers. When this failed, they formed (1768) an association pledged to pay only legal taxes and fees and to abide by the will of the majority. They won control of the provincial assembly in 1769, but with Governor William Tryon, the provincial council, and the courts against them they were unable to secure relief. The Regulators resorted to acts of violence after Edmund Fanning, a particularly despised official, was allowed to go unpunished. Those actions alienated large property holders and the clergy from the movement. On May 16, 1771, Tryon's militia completely routed a large body of Regulators in the battle of Alamance Creek. Seven of the leaders were executed, and the movement collapsed. One group of Regulators moved west to Tennessee, where they helped form the Watauga Association, but most of them submitted. Tensions remained, however, between the western farmers and the eastern tidewater aristocracy.

## **THOMAS HOBBS:**

Throughout his life, Hobbes believed that the only true and correct form of government was the absolute monarchy. He argued this most forcefully in his landmark work, *Leviathan*. This belief stemmed from the central tenet of Hobbes' natural philosophy that human beings are, at their core, selfish creatures. According to Hobbes, if man is placed in a state of nature (that is, without any form of government) humans would be in a state of constant warfare with one another. In this natural state, Hobbes stated, the life of a man was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'

Hobbes' view of human nature was shaped largely by the **English Civil War**, which took place from 1642 to 1649 and culminated in the beheading of King Charles I. Hobbes considered the ensuing chaotic interregnum period, from 1649 to 1660, to be as close to that basic state of nature as humans could get. Considering the highly dysfunctional nature of English government during that time, Hobbes' views should come as little surprise.

Because of Hobbes' pessimistic view of human nature, he believed the only form of government strong enough to hold humanity's cruel impulses in check was absolute monarchy, where a king wielded supreme and unchecked power over his subjects. While Hobbes believed in **social contract theory** (that is, the theory that a ruler has an unspoken, implicit contract with his people requiring him to reign fairly), he ascribed nearly total power to the monarch, and did not believe the people to have any right to rebel whatsoever.

## **John Locke:**

Locke wrote that all human beings have a right to life, liberty, and property, and that governments exist to protect those rights. According to Locke, political power is the natural power of each man collectively given up into the hands of a designated body. The setting up of government is much less important, Locke thinks, than this original social-political "compact." A community surrenders some degree of its natural rights in favor of government, which is better able to protect those rights than any man could alone. Because government exists solely for the well-being of the community, any government that breaks the compact can and should be replaced. The community has a moral obligation to revolt against or otherwise replace any government that forgets that it exists only for the people's benefit. Locke felt it was important to closely examine public institutions and be clear about what functions were legitimate and what areas of life were inappropriate for those institutions to participate in or exert influence over. He also believed that determining the proper role of government would allow humans to flourish as individuals and as societies, both materially and spiritually. Because God gave man the ability to reason, the freedom that a properly executed government provides for humans amounts to the fulfillment of the divine purpose for humanity. For Locke, the moral order of natural law is permanent and self-perpetuating. Governments are only factors contributing to that moral order.