

Turning Points in American's Democratic Federalist Republic Sources [Turning Points in American History Summary](#) and [Presidential Courage Summary](#) by [W. Antonioti](#) Please Share [Share](#) [ShareThis](#)

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A Turning Point is when a society takes a new historically significant trajectory creating a new historical reality. It may be marked by the emergence of a new technology and the establishment of a new ideal. The impact may be immediate or develop of time.

Part One The Early Colonial Period

#2 1619 Began Representative Democracy and Slavery

The Jamestown colony had floundered until 1611 when tobacco was introduced to meet growing European demand. Crops were worked by indentured servants. In 1619 Jamestown decided to be governed by a representative democracy. Also two groups of slaves arrived and they were quickly integrated into the economy. The number of slaves grew very slowly and their treatment was much like that of local indentured servants. By the 1660's freed and existing slaves were becoming numerous enough to be competition for non-slave poor workers. They were also creating other domestic problems making large planters unhappy. This anxiety resulted in laws which removed freedoms from both existing and new slaves.

A 1662 Virginia law made children of enslaved women and white father a slave whereas they had been free. [Bacon's Rebellion of 1766](#) was caused by poor landowning recently freed indentured servants and freed slaves paying taxes to faraway Jamestown. They also formed an army to solve their problems. Issues between Bacon's army and Jamestown developed. Eventually about 1,000 rebels chased the Governor out of the capital. "Government forces from England arrived soon after and spent several years defeating pockets of resistance and reforming the colonial government to one more directly under royal control." Slaves had once been more expensive but fear of rebellions by indentured servants added to the cost of hiring white and slaves thus became a cheaper source of farm labor.

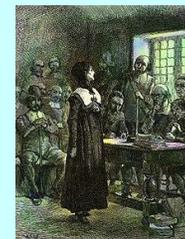
The Burning of Jamestown by [Howard Pyle](#) 1905. Click to enlarge and view a slide show. Click on Most Pictures to Enlarge. **Editor's Note: Our Democracy has been built over 400 and isn't finished. Criticizing today's fledgling democracy seems a bit hypercritical.**



#3 Freedom of Religion Began in 1636 When Massachusetts Expelled Roger Williams

Roger Williams immigrated from England to Boston in 1631. He refused preaching/teacher work because as a Separatist he did not agree with Boston's less radical Puritans. He left for more Separatist oriented Salem caused Puritans unhappiness. He soon moved to Separatist Plymouth where he got along with the people and studied the Indian behavior. Eventually he preached ideas too unconventional for Plymouth and by 1633 he was back in Salem. Roger Williams preached separatism, denounce as blasphemous the King's claim to Indian land, denounced the Bay Colony's loyalty oath as sacrilegious and he denied the right of civil authority to punish violation of the first five commandments. They related to idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, profanity, dishonoring your parents, and blasphemy. Eventually he was convicted of sedition and heresy. Order to leave Williams took his time but fear of imprisonment forced a quick winter departure where the cold didn't get him because he was helped by his Indian knowledge. In 1836 he and his followers founded Providence where they signed a pact allowing

government that could only deal with civil matters. [Anne Hutchinson](#) a Puritan spiritual advisor was also doing her best to upset Puritan Boston and she also ended up in Rhode Island. Together they would uphold liberty of conscious. Providence grew rapidly and in 1640 Williams returned to England where his received a charter that allowed religious freedom. Later he would get a more definitive charter specifically granting religious freedom. He felt tolerance was not enough, only freedom would suffice. Other colonies followed and in 1861 even Quaker established Pennsylvania allowed religious freedom. His ideas would travel back to England and in 1869 John Lock would write on [limiting government](#). Over time the U.S has fostered faith by leaving it alone. **This did not eliminate the negative attitude of some toward 19th century arriving Roman Catholics or 21st century Muslims from being looked upon poorly.** But we have narrowed disputes. We do not argue over a person's freedom to exercise their religion. Instead we argue about the public expression of religion such as prayer in public schools and public display of the ten commandments.



#4 All Immigrants Welcomed by 1654 New Amsterdam

The Dutch West Easiest Company settlement of New Amsterdam grew rapidly and soon had 500 diverse inhabitants. They spoke eighteen languages. It was established for profit so anyone who worked was welcome. In 1643 twenty-three Jewish people arrived looking for work. They had been expelled from their Portuguese controlled South American Dutch Colony.

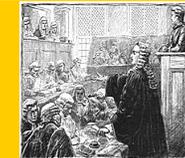
Anti-Semitic Governor [Peter Stuyvesant](#) wrote Holland asking to exclude them because they were poor and too dependent. The Jews wrote their successful business friends in Holland asking for support with the Dutch West Indies Company. The company decided they could stay as long as they were not a burden. This was a symbolic turning point because most countries restricted immigrants to maintain their cultural, ethnic, and religious identity. There would be four

great foreign immigrants waves and while assimilation was not easy, immigrant culture eventual became an important part of our culture. Assimilation is one of many contentious questions that began when during the Colonial period and continues today. Pizza anyone? Click to enlarge and watch a slide show.



6 Freedom of the Press Began with the 1735 Zenger Trial In late 1733 The New York Weekly Journal publisher Peter Zenger began printing opinions critical of the corrupt British colonial governor [William Cosby](#). A late 1734 arrest order was executed. An inappropriately large bale was set. Zenger's lawyers did not pay as they wanted to stir up publicity against the Governor and his friendly judge. Eventually Zenger was charged with [seditious liability](#). The law required the jury only determine if the defendant had perpetrated the material. Things didn't look good as when the judge dismissed Peter's two lawyers and replaced them with a governor friendly lawyer. The short trial was about to end when a star Philadelphia defense lawyer took over. He agreed that his client had published the material but

he told the jury they should acquit because true statements could not be libel. The jury acquitted. While no precedent was set what did begin was a belief that liberty required freedom of the press and speech. The trial would be publicized and soon state governors began acting more responsibly. It would take decades to determine the exact legalities of freedom of the press and speech. President Adams would pass Alien and Sedition Acts to stop an adversarial press. Only a few were prosecuted though some were jailed. The law was repealed under President Jefferson. Freedom of the press and speech issues during difficult periods would continue to haunt leaders.



10. Shays' 1786 Tax Rebellion Leads to a Constitution

Farmers in western Massachusetts were having serious problems paying taxes after the state government began accepting only hard currency and not the worthless continental currency or farm goods. Farmers felt oppressed by a few elite eastern merchants and politicians who had set up the tax and legal systems to benefit themselves. Civil disobedience in the form of not allowing judges to foreclose on farm property began in August of 1886. It was the main tool used by the protesters. The Massachusetts Militia refused the governor's orders to control the disobedience. The purposely designed weak central government under Articles of Confederation was unable to raise a meaningful army. Sam Adams had been the most aggressive revolutionary leader when it came to English oppression but now he was a member of the establishment. He wanted harsh treatment including execution. The governor offered a few minor tax collection adjustments to help farmers. But he also passed the very harsh Riot Act which took away human rights and a Militia Act that allowed the

extestuation of militia who refused to follow orders. Soon the governor began to raised a privately financed state militia. This caused a severe reaction by farmer who saw a private army is the first step on the road to tyranny. The farmers raised their own army led by revolutionary war veteran and militia member [Daniel Shay](#). Their main battle was to be a surprise attack at the federal Springfield arsenal. It didn't work. The armory was unexpectedly defended by militia men who were quickly dispersed. Four rebels were killed. They regrouped but the new Governor's privately financed army led by [Benjamin Lincoln](#) arrived and dispersed them with a surprise attack. That was it. Rebellion over. Eventually there was an amnesty based on signing of a loyalty oath. Twenty-one leaders were order hung but only two got the rope. The governor lost reelection and the new governor was more sympathetic to the farmers and he pardoned Shay and the other leaders. In Philadelphia those in Congress who feared the rebellion of citizens and resulting anarchy wanted a strong central government so the May of 1887 Philadelphia Constitutional Convention was called. By September a constitution was written. Ratification followed in July of 1788 and the Bill of Rights followed in 1791. The founders wrote what is now the world's oldest written constitution. France was writing her first constitution and she is now on her seventeenth and counting.

Contemporary depiction of protest leaders [Daniel Shays](#) (left) and [Job Shattuck](#). Editors Note: **A tax and legal system was set up in Massachusetts to benefit business. Difficult economic times after the revolution caused by an almost worthless Continental Currency caused many farmers to lose property to Easterners.**



Note: : [textbooksfree.org](#) summaries do little justice to the fascinating lectures available through [Turning Points in American History](#) audio course of [E. T. O'Donnell](#)

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