

# [***Today in History: April 12, Civil War begins with gunfire at Fort Sumter***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BSJ-5FN1-JC5B-G11J-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

April 12, 2024 Friday 4:00 AM GMT

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**Section:** DOMESTIC NEWS

**Length:** 603 words

**Byline:** The Associated Press

**Body**

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 12, the 103rd day of 2024. There are 263 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On April 12, 1861, the U.S. Civil War began as Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.

On this date:

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia, at age 63; he was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman.

In 1955, the Salk vaccine against polio was declared safe and effective.

In 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to fly in space, orbiting the earth once before making a safe landing.

In 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, charged with contempt of court and parading without a permit. (During his time behind bars, King wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”)

In 1981, former world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, 66, died in Las Vegas, Nevada.

In 1985, Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, became the first sitting member of Congress to fly in space as the shuttle Discovery lifted off.

In 1988, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issued a patent to Harvard University for a genetically engineered mouse, the first time a patent was granted for an animal life form.

In 1990, in its first meeting, East Germany’s first democratically elected parliament acknowledged responsibility for the Nazi Holocaust, and asked the forgiveness of Jews and others who had suffered.

In 1992, after five years in the making, Euro Disneyland (now called Disneyland Paris) opened in Marne-La-Vallee, France, amid controversy as French intellectuals bemoaned the invasion of American pop culture.

In 2015, Hillary Rodham Clinton jumped back into presidential ***politics***, announcing in a video her much-awaited second campaign for the White House.

In 2018, the Screen Actors Guild issued new guidelines calling for an end to auditions and professional meetings in private hotel rooms and residences in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal.

In 2020, Christians around the world celebrated Easter Sunday isolated in their homes by the coronavirus. St. Peter’s Square was barricaded to keep out crowds. Pope Francis celebrated Easter Mass inside the largely vacant basilica, calling for global solidarity in the face of the pandemic.

In 2022, actor and standup comic Gilbert Gottfried died at age 67.

Today’s Birthdays: Playwright Alan Ayckbourn (AYK’-bohrn) is 85. Jazz musician Herbie Hancock is 84. Rock singer John Kay (Steppenwolf) is 80. Actor Ed O’Neill is 78. Actor Dan Lauria is 77. Talk show host David Letterman is 77. Author Scott Turow is 75. Actor-playwright Tom Noonan is 73. R&B singer JD Nicholas (The Commodores) is 72. Singer Pat Travers is 70. Actor Andy Garcia is 68. Movie director Walter Salles (SAL’-ihs) is 68. Country singer Vince Gill is 67. Model/TV personality J Alexander is 66. Rock musician Will Sergeant (Echo & the Bunnymen) is 66. Rock singer Art Alexakis (Everclear) is 62. Country singer Deryl Dodd is 60. Folk-pop singer Amy Ray (Indigo Girls) is 60. Actor Alicia Coppola is 56. Rock singer Nicholas Hexum (311) is 54. Actor Retta is 54. Actor Nicholas Brendon is 53. Actor Shannen Doherty is 53. Actor Marley Shelton is 50. Actor Sarah Jane Morris is 47. Actor Jordana Spiro is 47. Rock musician Guy Berryman (Coldplay) is 46. Actor Riley Smith is 46. Actor Claire Danes is 45. Actor Jennifer Morrison is 45. Actor Matt McGorry is 38. Actor Brooklyn Decker is 37. Contemporary Christian musician Joe Rickard (Red) is 37. Rock singer-musician Brendon Urie (Panic! at the Disco) is 37. Actor Saoirse (SUR’-shuh) Ronan is 30.

**Load-Date:** April 12, 2024

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