

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 19, 2010

A Fateful Week in April: The week of April 12–19 has been an important week in U.S. History. Paul Revere rode out of Boston (actually Charlestown) on April 18, 1775, to warn the Minute Men at Lexington and Concord that the British were coming. The shots fired near Lexington Green the next day were heard “round the world” and signaled the beginning of the American Revolution.

The first major decision of Lincoln's presidency was on April 12, 1861, when he sent supplies and federal troops to defend Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor (the Confederates captured it on April 14), which was the official beginning of the War Between the States. President Lincoln's last day alive was on April 14, 1865, when he was shot at Ford's Theatre and died shortly after 7:00 the next morning in a room across the street.

The Titanic, flagship of the White Star Line, hit a huge iceberg on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York on April 14, 1912, and sank off the coast of Newfoundland with over 500 fatalities. The United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, beginning America's official involvement in World War I (one week earlier than the fateful week).

On April 12, 1945, I was flying training missions from Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, and upon returning to my barracks late in the afternoon, I heard that President Franklin Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs, Georgia. Although he was in very poor health and showed it at the Yalta Conference with Churchill and Stalin in February, he was nearly three months into his fourth term as president, and we “assumed” he would go on forever. Whether you liked him or not, people my age had really never known another president, as I was eight years old when he was elected the first time in 1932. What would we do now? How could the nation get along? Who was Harry Truman? Why didn't we elect Tom Dewey the fall before? These were the questions on everyone's lips. With World War II nearly over, the nation survived well, history has given Truman good marks, we have had good times and bad, but as Winston Churchill aptly said, “Democracy is the worst possible form of government, until compared with everything else.”