

LOCAL HISTORY

Labor Day storm struck with ferocity

19 Years Ago: Shortly after 1 a.m. on the morning of Labor Day 1998, a line of fierce thunderstorms moved into the area, striking with wind gusts of up to 115 mph. The storm caused two deaths and brought widespread devastation, damaging hundreds of buildings and thousands of trees. More than 200,000 people lost power, which was not restored to some until the following week. Hundreds of work crews, including utility squads and National Guard troops, worked around clock to overcome mounting problems. Traffic lights were out, the state fair was closed, bus service was canceled, and many schools were closed for more than a week. Niagara Mohawk incurred millions of dollars in costs to restore power. Scenic neighborhoods, parks, golf courses, arboretums, Burnet Park Zoo, and historic Oakwood Cemetery suffered severe tree losses. The storm



The Labor Day storm of 1998 caused widespread damage, including this hole in the roof of St. Lucy's Church on Gifford Street on Syracuse's Near West Side. *Post-Standard file photo*

caused tens of millions of dollars in damage to the area. However, the city was resilient. By Friday most damaged

businesses had reopened at least on a limited basis. — *Dan Connors for the Onondaga Historical Association*