



The historical sign that marks the location of the Gunpowder Explosion on what is now Willow Street.

THE WEEK IN HISTORY

The Gunpowder Explosion

176 Years Ago: On Aug. 20, 1841, a fire broke out in the carpenter shop of Charles Goings, near the Oswego Canal, along what today is Willow Street. Volunteer fire companies rushed to the scene along with hundreds of spectators drawn by the excitement. Unknown to all, a gunpowder consignment of 625 pounds in 27 kegs was stored in Goings' shop. Within a few minutes, as the firemen were starting their hoses, a shattering explosion ripped the night. Wooden pieces of the building became lethal missiles. Bystanders were blown into the canal. Others were buried under debris. The blast snuffed out the fire. Twenty-five people were killed immediately and over 60 were hurt. It is the single largest loss of life in Syracuse history. — *Dan Connors for the Onondaga Historical Association*



Luther Gifford, age 30, a Syracuse architect and volunteer fireman, was injured in the 1841 gunpowder explosion.