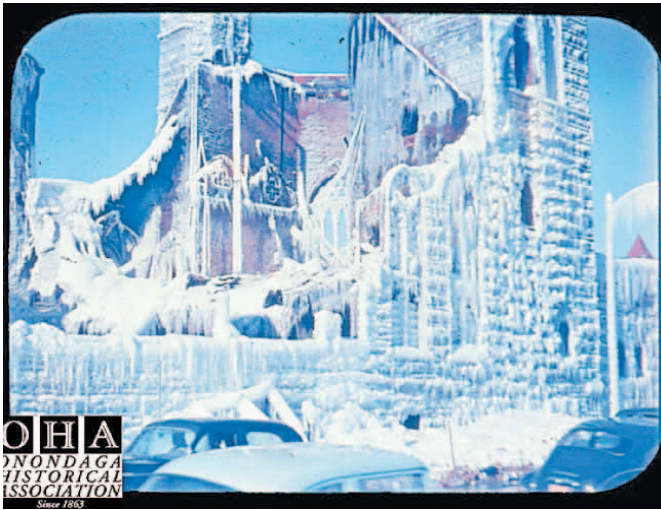


LOCAL HISTORY



Thick ice formed on the remains of the First Methodist Church after a fire in 1957. OHA photo

61 years ago: In January 1957, Syracuse experienced a cold spell similar to our most recent stretch of Arctic weather. According to The Post-Standard, temperatures “plummeted to a January record low of 24 below zero.” At 5:15 p.m. on Jan. 15, a fire broke out at the First Methodist Church on Block 114 and lasted for several hours. The fire ultimately destroyed the church along with the Wesleyan Publishing Co. and two other buildings. This added up to one of Syracuse’s worst fires in more than a decade. As the 350 firefighters coated the church with “between three million and five million gallons of water,” it quickly turned to ice that was reported to be up to three feet thick. After the fire, the Temple Society of Concord invited the church to hold its Sunday worship services there. Plans for the church were created by architect Archimedes Russell, who is responsible for many buildings in downtown Syracuse including Central Technical High School and the Fourth Onondaga County Courthouse. In April 1899, The Post-Standard called the church, “An ornament.”

Jon Zella for the Onondaga Historical Association