

THE WEEK IN HISTORY



In defiance of Daniel Webster

The Onondaga Historical Association looks back at the week in local history:

163 years ago: On May 26, 1851, Daniel Webster, then U.S. secretary of state, spoke from the balcony of the Courier Building at Montgomery and Washington Streets.

He called for all Syracusans to obey and respect the law and uphold the Constitution in what became known as "The Treason Speech." The law in question was the Fugitive Slave Act, which was a part of the Compromise of 1850. It stated that all citizens were required to help capture



Drawing of Daniel Webster speaking in Syracuse, from the Daily Standard in 1894. (OHA)

escaped slaves and return them to the south.

Syracuse, with a large anti-slavery population, openly defied his speech later that

year by freeing an escaped slave who had been imprisoned in what became known as The Jerry Rescue.

—Daniel Connors of the OHA