

## THE WEEK IN HISTORY

**The gunpowder explosion**

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

**173 years ago:** On Aug. 20, 1841, a fire broke out in the carpenter shop of Charles Goings, which stood near the Oswego Canal, along what today is Willow Street. The village's volunteer fire companies rushed to the scene along with hundreds of spectators drawn by the excitement. But unknown to all, a gunpowder consignment totaling 625 pounds in 27 kegs was stored in Goings' shop. Within a few minutes, just 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, heard as far as 26 miles away, snuffed out the fire. Twenty-five people were killed immediately, with 60 more injured. The event remains the single largest loss of life in Syracuse history.

— *Daniel Connors of the OHA*



**Luther Gifford, 30, a Syracuse architect and volunteer fireman, was injured in the 1841 gunpowder explosion.** (From the OHA Collection)