

THE WEEK IN HISTORY



Labor Day storm damage at St. Lucy's Church on Gifford Street. (1998 photo David Lassman / dlassman@syracuse.com)

The Labor Day storm of 1998

The Onondaga Historical Association looks back at the week:

16 Years Ago: Shortly after 1 a.m. on Labor Day in 1998, a line of fierce thunderstorms moved into the area, striking Central New York from the west with wind gusts of up to 115 mph.

The storm devastated the community, damaging hundreds of buildings and tens of thousands of trees. More than 200,000 people lost power, which was not restored to some until the following week.

New York state declared the community a disaster area and federal aid was sought. Hundreds of work crews, including utility squads and National Guard Troops, worked around the clock to overcome mounting problems. Traffic lights were out, the State Fair was closed, bus service was cancelled, 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 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.

—Daniel Connors of the OHA

'Town of Onondaga' book signing announced