

This Week in History:

A FROZEN CITY

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Student walking to class on a snowy Storrs campus. UConn has been hit with more snow days this year than in the last two combined.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

This past winter, Connecticut received significant snowfall this past winter, with some areas getting up to around 60 inches throughout the season, according to CT Insider. During the blizzards this year, as I sat inside my warm apartment with a cup of hot chocolate, I couldn't help but think of some of the other winter storms that have occurred over the years. One of which was so devastating that it revolutionized New York City's transportation system: the Great Blizzard of '88.

On March 10, 1888, the weather was a balmy 55 degrees. However, on March 11, cold arctic air combined with warm Gulf air from the south to create a severe storm that would shut down most of the Northeast. Telegram lines and telephone poles fell with the hurricane-force winds, preventing communication, and large drifts reached the second and third floors of some buildings. At the time, the city didn't have adequate infrastructure to handle this kind of storm, but many still left their homes for work that day.

As thousands boarded trains for their commutes, they were unable to go very far because the railways were frozen or blocked by snow. As a result, it's estimated that 15,000 people were stranded in the storm. Of the 1,100 workers expected at the New York Stock Exchange, only 30 made it, according to the article "Great Blizzard of 1888" by Lisa Wroble. Those who walked to work didn't fare much better, with people collapsing in the snow drifts and freezing to death.

Those who were stranded often migrated to hotels to wait out the storm, with Connecticut's own Mark Twain making an extended stay in New York after visiting. P.T. Barnum was similarly stuck and even put on a show for those taking refuge in Madison Square Garden.

The storm lasted for three days, with the city shutting down as 58 inches of snow accumulated. The East River, which separates Manhattan and Queens, froze over in a rare event, as the flowing water often prevents it from doing so. This caused some to attempt to walk over the icy bridge, but they found themselves trapped when the tide changed and the ice broke.

By March 15, the city was able to return to its normal activities, with the aptly named "White Hurricane" coming to a close. It's estimated that over 400 people died during the storm, and in the coming days after the storm, the search for survivors persisted. Despite the damage the blizzard caused, the event led city officials to realize that keeping transportation and communication wires above ground was a problem, prompting the creation of the subway system.



COMIC BY COSETTE ELLIS, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS