

# Bangor calendar provides window into city's past

BY NOK-NOI RICKER  
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — Have you ever wondered where in Bangor the historic fire of 1911 started and what it looks like today?

To see such an image, all you have to do is go to the month of April in Bangor Historical Society's new "Ghosts of Bangor" calendar, done in collaboration with local photographer Rick Haney, who superimposed historic pictures on ones taken more recently.

"They're fantastic," Melissa Gerety, Bangor Historical Society's executive director, said Friday. "April is Frank Green's hayshed, which is where the fire of 1911 started. You can see the address and everything."

Bangor Professional Firefighters, IAFF Local 772, sponsored the April calendar page.

Bangor has changed a lot in the last century, with fires, redevelopment and urban renewal demolitions in the 1960s and 70s that re-

moved a lot of buildings in downtown Bangor and along the Kenduskeag Stream.

"You can only learn so much about history in a book," Haney said Friday. "People who like history would rather see what it looks like."

To remind people about Bangor's history, last year Haney started a photo project called "Ghosts of Bangor" by using Photoshop to lay historical images on top of present-day photos to give viewers a sense of what the city was like back then.

"Once I did the first one, people started donating all their own personal photographs," Haney said.

"I grew up right after [Bangor's] urban renewal, and I always wondered: Why does this neighborhood end here? Why is this old and the next thing new?" Haney said later. "I always imagined what used to be there. 'Ghost of Bangor' is my imagination coming to fruition, I guess."

The local history buff said the Queen City has lost a lot of its history, and his goal is



### Frank Green's Hayshed

A bronze plaque on the edge of Gomez Park at Broad and Washington Streets marks the site of the start of an event that would dramatically change Bangor's landscape. It was here on April 30, 1911 that the first sparks caught fire and erupted into a devastating conflagration that burned for 15 hours destroying 267 buildings, charring 55 acres and resulting in an estimated \$3 million in damages.

This look back is sponsored by:



COURTESY OF BANGOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An image of Frank Green's burned hayshed, where the historic 1911 fire started and destroyed much of downtown Bangor, is superimposed over an image taken recently of Gomez Park by Bangor photographer Rick Haney, who created the Ghost of Bangor calendar in partnership with the Bangor Historical Society.

to preserve everything he can. He approached the city's historical society about doing the calendar so others can get a glimpse into the past.

"Rick took the images and superimposed them. We went ahead and did the re-

search so there is four or five sentences about what it was and what it is now," Gerety said.

The "Ghost of Bangor" calendars cost \$19.99 plus tax and are available at the Antique Marketplace & Cafe,

The Briar Patch, Chapel Hill Floral, Rebecca's, State Street Wine Cellar, Epic Sports and the Thomas A. Hill House Museum, at 159 Union St.

The calendar proceeds benefit the Bangor Historical Society.

Orders for the calendars are coming in from all over the country, from people who have connections to Bangor. One was sent to Tennessee Friday.

"There is a lot of interest, not just locally," Gerety said.

# Families of Holocaust survivors share memories

BY NITA LELYVELD  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

After Mona Shafer Edwards' mother died five years ago, nearly a decade after her father, she yearned for their accents, the rhythms of the Polish they spoke, the tastes and smells of the world she'd grown up in.

It was a world that straddled Los Angeles and Europe, peopled by those with a shared history. Her parents had survived the Holocaust, as had their closest friends.

"We clung to each other," one of them, Mila Page, says. "Most of us didn't have families, and so our friends became our family."

And it is family Page welcomes into her Beverly Hills apartment. It is family for whom she has set her table with china and silver, and laid out fancy cookies, chocolates and cherry pie.

She is hosting what she calls a "kindergarten coffee" for the children of the friends she's outlived — children who today are in their 60s. She is 95.

The more-or-less monthly tradition started five years ago, when Edwards reached out to

Page as a way to hold on.

Thanks to her prodigious memory for names, dates, the smallest details, Page has held on to much of their collective past — and parts of her own that she might wish to forget.

She remembers her wartime job repairing German army uniforms, often covered in lice and blood. She remembers traveling in a cattle car to Auschwitz. She remembers the wonderful scent of Oskar Schindler, the man who saved her life, when he would stride, tall and elegantly dressed, across his factory floor.

She also remembers Edwards, who is 64, as a baby "sitting like a Buddha in the playpen."

Edwards, her husband, Barry, and her brother, Martin Shafer, 61, arrive at the kindergarten coffee bearing boxes of chocolate.

Come sit, Page urges them. Come eat and eat some more.

Her own daughter, Marie Knecht, circles the table, pouring coffee.

It is just after 2 p.m. on a weekday, a time when this younger generation ordinarily would be occupied.

Knecht, 59, teaches senior

fitness classes and plays tuba and euphonium in three bands. Edwards is a courtroom artist. Shafer is chairman and chief executive of Castle Rock Entertainment. Only one of the invited children, Joan Isaacs, 66, hasn't made it, and that's only because she is traveling in China.

"I'm busy too, very busy," says Page, smiling. "Doctors and doctors and doctors."

Kindergarten coffees, however, are a time out. No phone calls, no texting.

At Page's table, time is taken to admire the pie with its crisp, buttery crust. And to travel from the present to taste memories of LA bakeries, sweet shops and restaurants.

Remember Allen Wertz Candies? Bit of Sweetland on Third Street? What was that thing they made with hazelnuts? No, with almonds.

How about those Saturday nights, says Edwards, when "half of Beverly Hills" could be found at Wil Wright's ice cream parlor, with its cheerful red and white awnings.

"Beverly Hills was a lot different then. It was a small town," Shafer says.

Food memories lead to talk of the important moments they've shared.

Before long they are back at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, where Page's son, Freddy, now 65, was bar mitzvahed. He would have loved to have been here and seen everyone, Page says. He's a teacher, though, and couldn't make it.

Because this is kindergarten coffee, Fred is Freddy here, just as Joan is Joanie. The childhood names, like the memories, have stuck.

Mention of the Beverly Wilshire jogs other memories, of the years when Edwards' and Shafer's father was the hotel doctor, often called on to treat big-name guests. The two of them start laughing about when he asked, "Do you know Mike Jagger?"

"One time he said, 'You know Steven Katz?' And I said, 'You mean Cat Stevens?'" Shafer says.

Soon they're all picturing Joseph Shafer, the sun-worshiper, lying by his Coldwater Canyon pool, and joking about how he should have been a cruise doctor.

"I never saw my father without a tan," Martin Shafer says.

How did the Shafers first meet the Pages?

Page, when Edwards asks her, recalls it perfectly.

She and her husband, Leopold, who died in 2001, were newly arrived in Los Angeles — and Poldek, as she calls him, was sick. Their landlady sent him to see Joseph Shafer.

When Shafer learned his patient was from Poland, he called his wife, who came to the office. That night, the Pages had the Shafers over for coffee. The Pages also were among a small group of Polish Holocaust survivors who, around the same time, started the 1939 Club — now called the 1939 Society — to take care of one another and their families.

People talk about the Holocaust much more since "Schindler's List," Page says. She and her husband appear as characters in the movie and in person at Schindler's grave at the end.

It was Leopold Page (born Pfefferberg) who would first tell the story that eventually led to "Schindler's List" — when the writer Thomas Keneally wandered into the Pages' Beverly Hills leather goods shop in search of a briefcase.

"He was always trying to tell the story, trying to get anybody to write the story about his survival. He would try to get anybody to listen," Knecht says.

Some parents, says Page, kept silent about their Holocaust experiences. "My mother didn't want to talk about it at all," Edwards says.

Nor is it a subject they dwell on here, as the talk glides on to new movies and to more recollections of old L.A.

The pony rides at Beverly Park, on the site where the Beverly Center is now. Ontra Cafeteria, where the Shafer kids — to their parents' horror — used to love to get Jell-O.

"They would say: 'You're eating this crap?'" Shafer says, imitating their accents.

"Whenever my parents would travel," Edwards says, "I would always call Mila to hear that accent."

"To hear my voice, yes," Page says. "And you were already a grown-up then!"

"True, but I would always do that, and it was very nice," Edwards says, reaching for Page's hand. "It still is."

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