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New Bern and its mother city, Bern, Switzerland, were both victims of major fires in years past. Our town had its house burnt on December 1, 1922, while much of the Swiss capital was reduced to ashes on May 14, 1405.

Here the fast spreading flames fanned to terrifying fury by gale winds, consumed 40 residential blocks and left 2000 homeless. Miraculously, only one life was lost. An elderly woman entered her burning home for a pot of flowers.

Bern's catastrophe dwarfed ours. Three fourths of the city was destroyed, and more than one hundred persons died. Few believed the ancient community, not a great deal larger than New Bern's present area, would come back.

The turn of the century had proved promising for Bern. At the beginning of the 14th century it was still ruled by powerful overlords, but by 1500 had achieved independence and established itself as the most influential factor in the Aare district.

The great fire left the city so weak its strong position appeared impossible to maintain, but in their moment of need the Bernese received offers of help from all sides. Never was a neighborly spirit more in evidence.

Although the little village of Freiburg, nearby, could have been jealous of Bern's power, it demonstrated compassion above and beyond that proffered by anyone else.

Freiburg sent more than one hundred volunteers to help the Bernese clean up the debris and rebuild the stricken city. Such a magnanimous gesture made a deep impression on citizens of Bern.

In gratitude the Bern Council decided to grant to Freiburg the right for all time to come to hold a market in Bern. The fourth Monday in November was the day granted to them, and since the 15th century the farmers of Freiburg and round about have made use of this right.

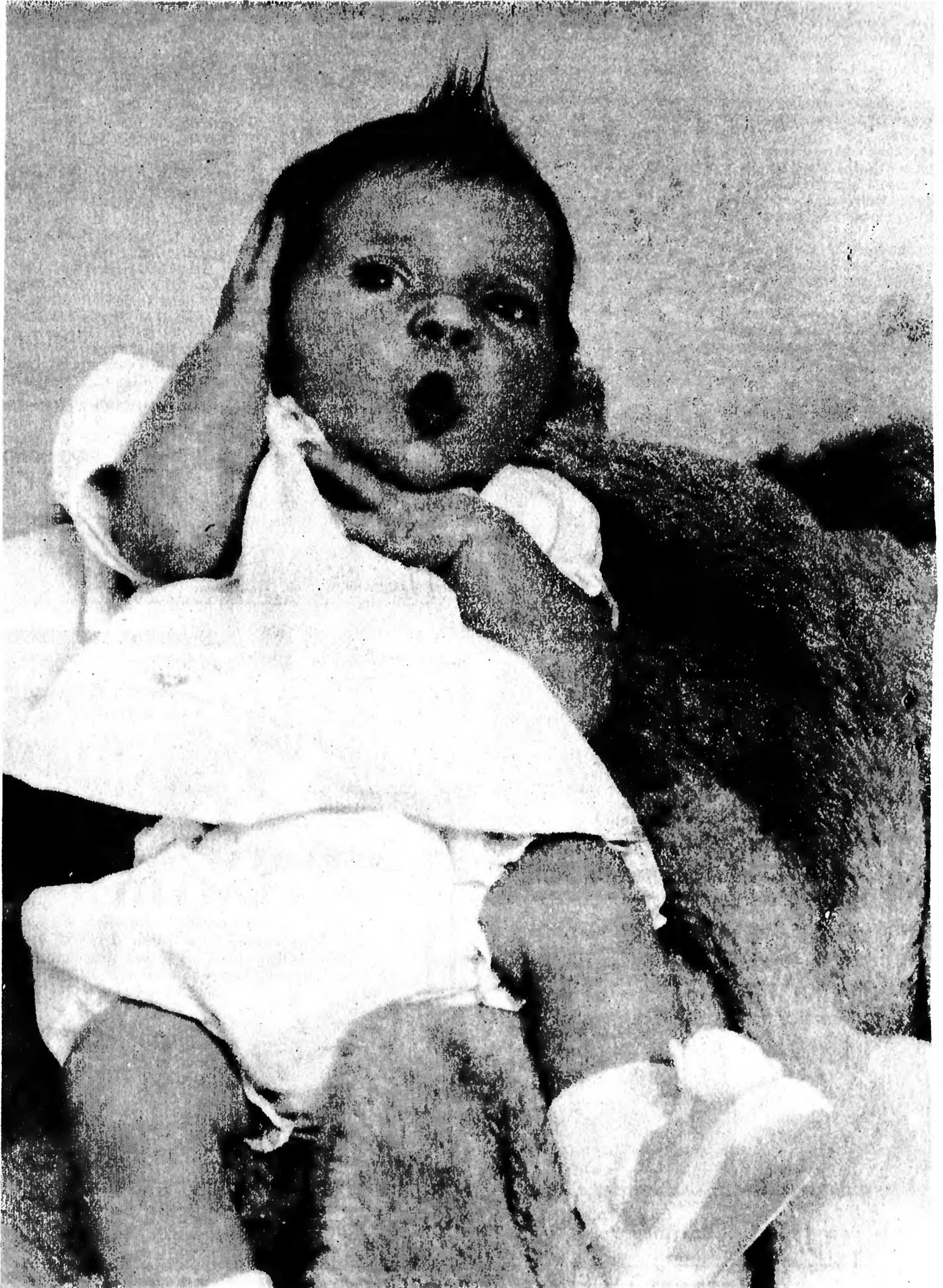
As the onion was the main product of the area, the Onion Market was the inevitable label given the project. Historians say that the granting of this privilege on the part of Bern's Town Council was not a purely disinterested act. Who is to confirm or deny at this late date?

It is known that in olden days the onion was considered a good remedy against the plague, so by permitting this large scale sale of onions, the Council was doing its best to offer Bernese protection against the dread illness.

The Onion Market is still a festival as well as a serious business, although the piece of onion cake that used to be offered to every guest free in restaurants must be paid for now in hard cash.

Towards dusk there is the confetti battle, which is the delight of all school children and the not so young too. Its origin stems from the days prior to 1647, when the town crier rode from fountain to

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AIN'T IT AWFUL — Christine Ferree, daughter of the Robert Ferrees (he is serving in Vietnam) of Route 2, New Bern, shows you how losing candidates and the Craven County Board of Elections must have felt Tuesday night. The defeated candidates were wondering what happened to those who promised their support, while the Board of Elections had a collective headache because it failed to see that voting

machines were correctly labeled and functioning properly before they were opened for business at polling places. The Mirror has no basis to charge that the machines were deliberately rigged to prevent citizens from fully exercising their privilege of unrestricted choice. It is unnecessary to charge carelessness. The facts speak for themselves.—Photo by Eunice Wray.