Database Guide:
Digital Sanborn Maps 1867 - 1970

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Founded in 1867 by D. A. Sanborn, the Sanborn Map Company was the primary American publisher of fire insurance maps for nearly 100 years. The Digital Sanborn Maps collection is a browsable set of more than 660,000 digitized images of the 1867–1970 Sanborn maps for approximately 12,000 cities and towns in the United States. This resource was created from ProQuest Information and Learning's microfilm collection of Sanborn Maps, which were filmed from the Library of Congress' collection. The Library's Sanborn collection includes all maps submitted to the Library through copyright deposit and a set of maps transferred to the Library from the Bureau of the Census. Maps from the Bureau of the Census include corrections issued by the Sanborn Company that were pasted over the original map sheet. If a map is from the Bureau of the Census, an asterisk (*) will follow the date in the date selection box. Maps acquired through copyright deposit remain in their original form.

The maps contain information such as the outline of each building, the size, shape and construction materials, heights, and function of structures, location of windows and doors. The maps also give street names, street and sidewalk widths, property boundaries, building use, and house and block numbers.

Textual information on construction details (for example, steel beams or reinforced walls) is often given on the plans while shading indicates different building materials. Extensive information on building use is given, ranging from symbols for generic terms such as stable, garage, and warehouse to names of owners of factories and details on what was manufactured in them. In the case of large factories or commercial buildings, even individual rooms and the uses to which they were put are recorded on the maps. Other features shown include pipelines, railroads, wells, dumps, and heavy machinery.

How to browse and view maps

1) Select the particular **state** of interest from drop-down menu on the **Browse Maps** page.

2) Select the **city** of interest from the drop-down menu that appears.

3) Select the **date** from the next drop-down menu that appears.
   Note: the dates that display in the menu will vary depending upon the city and state selected.

Once the date is selected, the screen will refresh to display thumbnail images of the maps available for that city and date selected. *The number of maps will vary depending upon the size of the area the city/town covered at that time.* Two drop-down menus will appear at the top of the page allowing you to change the city and date at any time. To find images for a different state, click "Browse Maps" and begin with step one above.

4) Click on the **thumbnail image** of the map that you would like to view. If you are using Mozilla Firefox as your browser, you may right click on the thumbnail image and select for the image to open in a new tab. Only 25 thumbnails will appear per screen. If there are more than 25 sheets within the map, you can scroll through the additional thumbnails using the navigation icons at the bottom of the screen.
   Note: the first map will always contain an index, key (i.e. legend), and the first sheet of the series.

5) A **new window or tab will open** with the map image you chose. Zooming, sizing to fit the window, and re-centering options will be presented on this page.

6) **Click on the map image** to automatically re-load the image to that area of the map at 60% zoom. A second click will enlarge the section on which you click to 121% and so on up to 560%.

7) For **optimal viewing**, maximize the size of the window, select the largest of the "Select window size for viewing" boxes and then utilize the zoom options.

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8) Use the **arrows** along the border of the image to move the image North, South, East, or West.

9) Choose either "Download Map" or "Print Current View."
   a. "Download Map" will open the entire map in Adobe Acrobat Reader (new window or tab) with options to print, save, zoom, etc.
   b. "Print Current View" will open a new window or tab with the selected portion. To print, use the browser's File > Print option.

Dates & Notes

As cities expanded, the Sanborn Company created new maps to document changes and update their records. The dates listed for each city tell you when new versions were created. The Sanborn Company reached a peak in production during the 1930s and reduced its efforts to isolated revisions in the 1960s.

Why do I see date ranges and multiple dates?
In the date list you will sometimes see a range of dates, such as 1894-1895. This range indicates the date the mapmakers began work on the map and the date of completion. In later years the Sanborn Company issued revisions that were intended to be literally pasted over the original map sheet. In these cases the last date refers to the date of the most recent pasted correction. Digital Sanborn Maps includes versions of maps with and without these pasted corrections. Our collection, originally microfilmed from the Library of Congress' collection, includes all maps submitted to the Library through copyright deposit in their original form and a set of maps including pasted corrections that was transferred to the Library from the Bureau of the Census. In some cases you may notice the same date listed twice for a city or listed once as a single year and a second time as the first date in a range. These two dates correspond to the two versions: one deposited to the Library by the Sanborn Company and one transferred from the Bureau of the Census, which may contain pasted corrections not on the other version.

The date box may also contain an entry for "new and additional sheets." These are updated sheets created by the Sanborn Map Company intended to replace sheets of previous maps. The image of the sheet will refer to what sheet it replaces.

View Note
Additionally, some maps are accompanied by a comment. Clicking on the *Editor's Comment* link will open up a separate window displaying the comment. Please note that the Editor's Comment link will not display if the selected map has no corresponding comment.

Key and Index Sheets

Each Sanborn Map is divided into numbered sheets, each approximately 65x55 cm. If you arranged all the sheets together on the floor, you would have a complete, but very large map! Because streets and buildings are located on various sheets, you need to use the key and index sheets to navigate.

Maps with several sheets also include a key sheet and/or an index sheet. A key sheet provides a birds-eye view of the city. You will be able to see sheet numbers (or volume numbers) over different areas of the town. You can then browse the sheet thumbnails to pull up the sheet you are looking for. An index sheet provides an alphabetical list of streets (usually including block numbers) and prominent buildings, labeled "specials." The index refers you to the sheet number for that address or building.

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Map Legend

The original Sanborn maps were very highly detailed, color maps. The maps are presented here as black and white digital images (digital images of the microform), thus the Sanborn Map Legend created specifically for the black and white maps is a vital resource to understanding and interpreting the maps symbols and notations (http://sanborn.umi.com/HelpFiles/bwkey.pdf?CCSI=82n). The legend may be accessed via the "Sanborn Maps Legend" link at the top of any page within the resource.

Where to find help

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                                +44 1223 271 496   (Outside of UK)