

SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS

The Sanborn Company produced 1.2 million color-coded fire insurance maps between 1867 and 1970. These maps helped insurance companies determine the risks involved in insuring a specific property. They allow genealogists to find information about ancestral homes or businesses. By studying the neighborhood, one may find the local church or school that family members attended.

The fire insurance maps record a building's street address, shape and height of a structure, dimensions of the lot, construction materials, and often the locations of windows and doors.

The largest collection of Sanborn Maps is held at the Library of Congress. The Los Angeles Public Library allows library cardholders to access 660,000 digitized black and white Sanborn Maps from home. www.lapl.org

Los Angeles Public Library Guide to Using the Sanborn Maps

The Sanborn Collection at LAPL does not include some map revisions from the 1950s to 1970s, and there may be other gaps. See the Union List of Fire Insurance Maps in the bibliography below.

1. On the Library's home page click on "Research & Homework"
2. Scroll down and click on the Sanborn Map collection
3. Click on "Browse Maps"
4. Select a state from the dropdown list
5. Select a city from the dropdown list
6. Select the date of a map you wish to view
7. Choose a volume, and check the "Street Index" to find the needed address (one may need to view many volumes and time periods to find the desired address)
8. Each street in the index provides the relevant "Sheet Number"
9. Once the appropriate Sheet has been selected, click on "Download" and use the "Zoom" tool to enlarge and view the map in detail
10. Maps can be downloaded to a computer, or sections can be "clipped" and inserted into a word processing document. One can also use a program such as Snagit to capture a relevant section of a map

Bibliography and Resources

Library of Congress: *Introduction to the Sanborn Map Collection*

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/about-this-collection>

Small online digital collection: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps?st=list&c=150>

Cyndis List – Free websites containing Sanborn Maps (includes a huge collection of New York maps through the NY Public Library) <http://www.cyndislist.com/maps/fire-insurance/>

University of California at Berkeley: *Union List of Sanborn & Other Fire Insurance Maps* by Philip Hoehn http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/sanborn_union_list

Sanborn Map Abbreviations:

<http://www.engg.ksu.edu/CHSR/outreach/tab/workshops/docs/07BSanbornkey.pdf>

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