

SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (commonly called “Sanborn Maps”) are highly detailed, 1” = 50’ scale maps of America’s towns and cities. They were published and frequently updated by the Sanborn Map Company between the 1870s and the 1960s. These large maps (21” x 25”) indicate the location, use, plan, construction material, and number of stories of individual buildings in a community. This information is shown graphically, through notation, and a color-coded system of symbols.

Sanborn maps are an invaluable research tool and should be consulted in compiling documentation for a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. They are especially useful when dealing with commercial properties, industrial complexes, and historic districts. Sanborn maps can be used to date historic buildings and structures, to document development patterns in districts, to determine the integrity of structures and districts, and to locate vacant lots and the sites of demolished historic structures.

In 1981 the Library of Congress compiled a U.S. directory of published Sanborn maps. This directory is useful in determining which communities within a given state were mapped and whether there were later revisions to that original mapping.

Sources and availability of Sanborn Maps:

- <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn>
Includes the entire state of Georgia. These are scanned from the Library of Congress collection, but not all cities/years are completed at this point.
- **Atlanta History Center** – 130 West Paces Ferry Rd., NW, Atlanta, GA 30305, 404-814-4040. The AHC carries Sanborn Maps from the 1880s and forward. These are available on microfilm and are primarily of metropolitan Atlanta. Black and white copies can be made in person only.
- **DeKalb County Library – Decatur branch** - 215 Sycamore St., Decatur, GA 30030, 404-370-3070. The Decatur library carries Sanborn maps on microfilm of the entire state. Copies can be made from the microfilm.
- **Georgia State University**, Pullen Library, Microfilm Room, 100 Decatur St., Atlanta, GA 30303. Sanborn Maps from the 1880s and forward of the entire state on microfilm. Copies available in person only.
- **University of Georgia**, UGA Science Library, Map Collection, Athens, GA 30602, 706-542-0690. Sanborn Maps from the 1880s and forward of the entire state on microfilm. Copies available in person and through mail order.