

# Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Baist Atlases

Research Guide

IUPUI University Library Center for Digital Scholarship

<http://ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship>

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The Sanborns were created by the Sanborn Company starting in 1867 specifically to assist insurance companies in determining fire risk and thereby premiums while the Baist Atlases were used for real estate zoning purposes. The Sanborns show what the buildings were made of such as brick, adobe, or wood and also show the number of floors each building had, the location of doors, windows, chimneys and elevators. Both the Sanborns and the Baists depict how the building or space was used, for example was it a dwelling, an apartment, a hotel, a church, a park, etc. Proper names of structures are included. Also listed are street addresses. Sometimes the maps tell the ethnicity of the people who lived and worked in the buildings. Today these maps are used by historians, geographers, preservationists, ethnic studies scholars, archaeologists, lawyers, urban developers, “treasure” hunters, and beyond.

## Freely Accessible, Digital Versions

### 1. Indianapolis Sanborn Map and Baist Atlas Collection at IUPUI University Library

<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/sanbornjp2>

#### Usage Tips:

Browse by **Volume** using the pull down box on the main search page.

Search by **location name**, Ex. Manual High School

Search by **location type**, Ex: high schools, parks, churches

**Address Searches:** The best way to locate a known address is to search by the nearest crossroad. For example if the known address is 5204 E. Walnut St. I would conduct the search: Walnut and Leland. Address ranges are provided near the bottom of the record and will help you quickly determine if that map includes the location for which you are searching.

**Map #:** The number recorded in this field is the number assigned to the map by the company who created the map. It often appears in bold in the right upper hand corner of the map. Notice along the edges of each map that other less bold but still prominent numbers appear. These are the Map #'s of the surrounding maps. Searching by these numbers in an Advanced Search, <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm/search/collection/SanbornJP2> limiting your field search to **Map #** will allow you to quickly locate a specific map.

**Referencing Tip:** Click on **reference url** to bookmark the constant url for a given map or site the map in a bibliography.

### 2. Georectified Sanborn Maps and Baist Atlases

<http://maps.indy.gov/MapIndy/Index.html?theme=Brownfields>

The City of Indianapolis has georectified the Sanborn Maps and Baist Atlases, making them searchable by exact address but also layering the historic maps on top of one another and on top of present day maps. Now you can see what existed in a particular location in Indianapolis throughout various time periods in one view.

### 3. Pre-1923 Digital Sanborns from IU Bloomington Wells Library

<http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=1002181>

These are color versions of pre-1929 Sanborn maps of Indiana, browseable by County.

## Freely Accessible Microfilm and Original Print Versions

<http://www.in.gov/library/sanborn.htm>

The Indiana State Library has both original and microfilm versions of Sanborn maps for the state of Indiana.

## Subscription-Based Digital Version

**Proquest Digital Sanborn Maps** <http://sanborn.umi.com/>

Access is available if you visit IUPUI University Library or Indiana State Library. These are Sanborn black and white microfilm reels in digital version and can only be browsed (not keyword searched) but do include later years of maps that are not available through the free IUPUI and IU Bloomington online resources.

## Sanborn Reference Tools

- List of maps available at the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/geogmap/sanborn/>
  - See what maps exist for specific state, city, township
- Abbreviation List: <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/files/Sanborn%20Abbrev%20EDR.pdf>
- B & W key: <http://sanborn.umi.com/HelpFiles/bwkey.pdf>
- Color key: <http://www.in.gov/library/images/mapkey.jpg>

## Suggested Readings

Oswald, Diane L. *Fire Insurance Maps: Their History and Applications*. College Station, TX: Lacewing Press, 1997.

Ristow, Walter W. "United States Fire Insurance and Underwriters Maps, 1852-1968." *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 25 (July 1968): 194-218.

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**For a digital, clickable version of this guide, visit:** <http://go.iu.edu/9GW>