

ABSTRACT

In the years following the 1906 earthquake and fires, the streets of San Francisco were renamed, renumbered, and reshaped. These changes make it challenging to locate addresses found in historical directories, newspapers, and archives. Fire insurance maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company represent some of the most detailed sources of spatial information about early twentieth century San Francisco, but they are cumbersome to navigate.

Insurance maps contain detailed street indexes that mirror address geocoders in content and function—listing street names and address ranges. Exploiting their structure, the text of these street indexes was transcribed in order to create a geocoder that identifies map sheets. The Sanborn indexes served as reference data for an ArcMap address locator. The geocoder makes the insurance maps more navigable and provides historical context for addresses.