

# Join the Jamaica Plain Historical Society

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\$10 Member  
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Member benefits: Newsletters  
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Mail your check to:  
(made out to JP Historical Society)  
JPHS, P.O. Box 2924, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Questions? Call (617) 522-1150

## Fire protection, circa 1867

"Our maps are made for the purpose of showing at a glance the character of the fire insurance risks of all buildings. Our customers depend on the accuracy of our publications... incurring large financial risks without making personal examinations of the properties."

So intones the manual for the Sanborn Map Company, founded by Somerville native D. A. Sanborn in 1867.

Fire insurance maps, made by Sanborn and other companies, provide a rare look at the development of cities

across the country after the Civil War. The maps show the size and construction material of buildings, sprinkler systems, types of roofs, and the locations of water mains, fire alarm boxes and hydrants, as well as street dimensions.



Insurance companies were small affairs 200 years ago, covering nearby locales. But a major fire in New York

City in 1835 caused more than \$20 million in losses and wiped out the smaller insurance companies.

The larger companies that formed as a result thus needed insurance maps, as they could no longer complete the personal inspections the small companies had done.

The earliest fire insurance map of Boston appeared in 1867, and is part of a collection now available on CD through the JP Historical Society. Call us at 617-522-1150 or see our website: [www.geocities.com/jphistoricalociety](http://www.geocities.com/jphistoricalociety)

Information taken from University of California Berkeley Library's website, <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/snb-intr.html> Sample map below.

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**P.O. Box 2924**  
**Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**