

# Digital Sanborn Maps Online

The Sanborn maps were created to aid in setting fire insurance policies. Today they serve as one of the best historical records of physical development in many cities and towns. Some of the information shown on the Sanborn maps includes:

- Street addresses and street names
- Building footprints
- Porches
- Construction type
- Accessory buildings
- Alleys
- Lot lines

In Des Moines, the main Sanborn updates available online are 1884, 1891 1901, and 1920 (with updates through 1950).

The maps chart the city's development over time – as new areas incorporated they were added to the maps, so earlier versions may not show all areas. The 1901 map, for example, only shows a small portion of today's Drake neighborhood.

## How to Look Up an Address

Online access to the Sanborn maps is available through the Des Moines Public Library (library card required) and the State Library of Iowa (free library card required).

1. Open <http://www.pldminfo.org/search/databases.html> in your web browser

The screenshot shows the Des Moines Public Library website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "SEARCH OUR CATALOG" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar is a dropdown menu labeled "HOW DO I..." with the option "-- select one --". The website has a navigation menu with links for SEARCH, BRANCHES/HOURS, ABOUT US, EVENTS/NEWS, BLOGS/WIKIS, KIDS/TEENS, MY STUFF, JOBS, and CONTACT US. The main content area is titled "Online Resources" and contains the following text: "The following resources contain books and articles (or points to them) like a library does, but in electronic form on your computer instead of in the library on a shelf." Below this text is a list of resources: "Auto Repair Reference Center", "Biography Resource Center and Marquis Who's Who", "Des Moines Register", "Digital Sanborn Maps of Iowa (use outside the library)", and "Digital Sanborn Maps of Iowa (for in-library use only)". On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar titled "ONLINE RESOURCES" with a list of links: "Printed Resources", "Learning Express", "Live Homework Help ©", "Address / Telephone", "Auto Repair", "Biography", "Business", "Genealogical / Historical", "Health / Medical", "Kids", and "En Espanol".

– Learn more by visiting the Des Moines Rehabbers Club at <http://RenovateDSM> –

2. Click on “Digital Sanborn Maps of Iowa (use outside the library)”
3. Enter your Des Moines Library Card Number and PIN (last 4 digits of your phone number)
4. Select State (IA), City (Des Moines), and Year (start with the earliest for your neighborhood)



**BROWSE** the **MAPS** by selecting options:

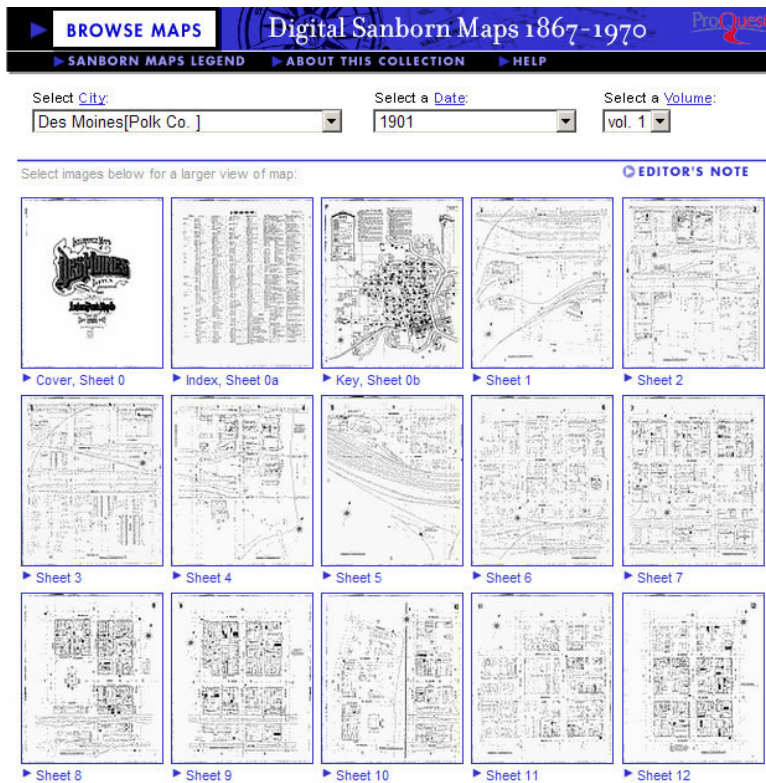
1 **SELECT STATE:**    
Your library subscribes to maps of the state(s) above

2 **SELECT CITY:**

3 **SELECT DATE:**

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This page will open, showing you thumbnails of all the pages available:



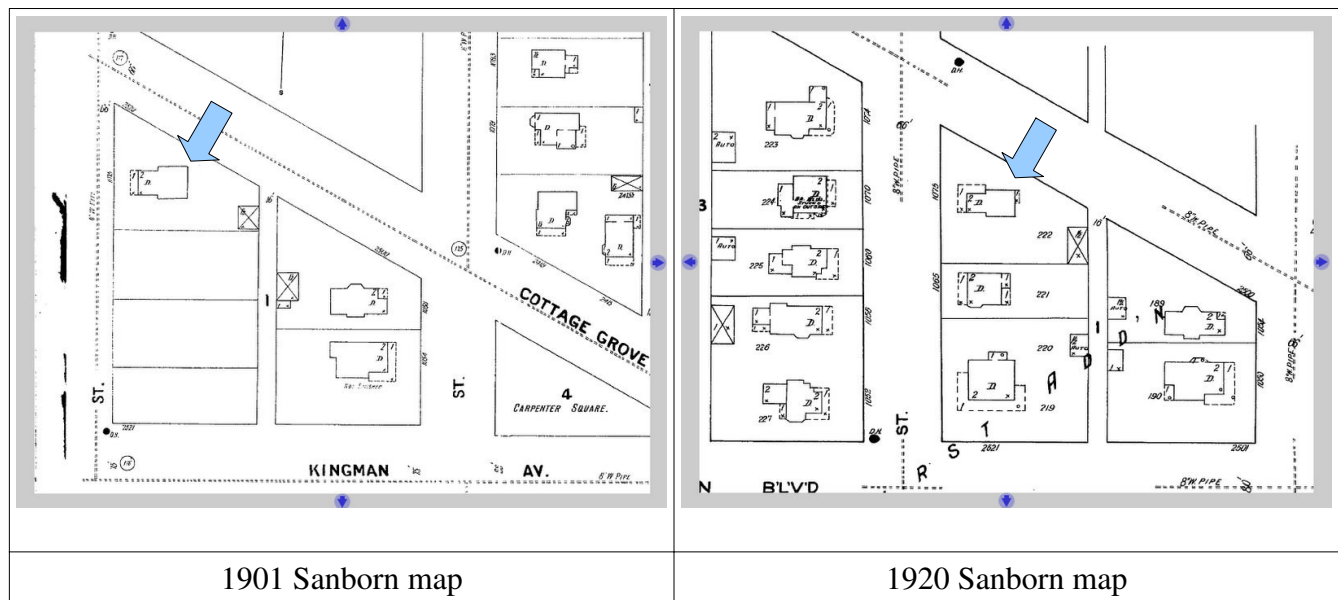
– Learn more by visiting the Des Moines Rehabbers Club at <http://RenovateDSM> –

- Click on the “Index” page thumbnail to locate your address of interest (can zoom in and pan)

.....100-139	3	.....1200-1277	56	
.....900-949	31	.....1200-1341	56	
.....62	“	.....1342-1529	55	Daily News Pri
.....200-421	93	.....977-1079	*34	Davis, G. C., Tr
.....500-625	16	.....1000-1080	*33	Davison Bros. O
.....610-740	22	.....1081-1177	43	Deering Harves
.....721-860	21	.....1200-1359	56	Des Moines Ink
.....900-1047	37	.....1360-1537	55	“ “ Brid
.....1200-1318	*62	.....943-1059	*35	“ “ Coll
.....1201-1317	*64	.....976-1090	*34	“ “ Driv
.....1319-1433	*63	.....1061-1091	*44	“ “ Driv

- Note the page number of the address range that contains your property and go back the the main Sanborn thumbnail window (you can close the window with the index page if you want).
- Click on the appropriate page thumbnail (opens in a new window).
- Pan and zoom until you find your house.

### Example – 1075 26<sup>th</sup> Street



1901 Sanborn map

1920 Sanborn map

We can see from these two Sanborn maps (1901 and 1920) that there were several changes going on. During the time between these two maps, the rest of the 1000 block was developed with single-family homes. The porch on our target home was altered (expanded around the side of the house) and a back porch or sunroom was added. The garage appears to be a different shape, but it is possible that is just a drafting error because both are noted “1-1/2”.

Also note that the southern street is Kingman Av. in the 1901 map and Kingman Blvd. in the 1920 map. This highlights the fact that street names have changed over time. Another example is that University Avenue was originally named North.