



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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(Southern California Fire Insurance Atlas) Calexico, Imperial Co. Cal.

Stock#: 97012
Map Maker: Sanborn Map Company
Date: 1920 (updated to 1930)
Place: New York
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21.5 x 25.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Calexico, California in 1930

Calexico, Imperial Co. Cal., a fire insurance atlas produced by the Sanborn Map Company in July 1920 and updated with pasted corrections through May 1930, provides an elaborate depiction of this Southern California border town's built environment. Interestingly, neighboring Mexicali is also shown on one of the map sheets, with a well-labeled street grid. Comprising 18 individual sheets, the present atlas provides detailed information about the construction materials and risk factors related to buildings in Calexico. The atlas's color-coding system distinguishes between different building materials: yellow for frame structures, red for brick, and so on. Such color coding simplifies the map's reading, offering at-a-glance insights into the distribution of materials and, by extension, the relative vulnerability of different sections of the town to fire. Several buildings are noted as being of adobe construction. Such maps were crucial for insurance companies in assessing fire risks in urban areas during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the 1920s, Calexico was a growing border town experiencing economic and demographic changes largely spurred by irrigation from the Colorado River in the Imperial Valley, which had only recently enabled a vast agricultural enterprise in the region. The development of Calexico's agricultural sector and



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the improvement of water management systems marked significant strides in the community's economic stability during this time. The extensive pasted updates on the present maps, installed by a Sanborn Map Co. "paster" who was charged with maintaining the atlas, attest to the extensive changes happening in Calexico in the 1920s. Founded in 1904 as a railroad town, Calexico was partly defined by cross-border trade with Mexico, growing alongside its Mexican counterpart, Mexicali. The decade saw the town continue to serve as a significant port of entry between the United States and Mexico, fostering a bi-national community influenced by both Mexican and American cultures. A building labeled "Mexican tenements" suggests segregate housing, as does another structure "Mexican Lodging" located directly next door to Hotel Los Angeles.

Fire insurance maps, like those comprising the present Calexico atlas produced by the Sanborn Map Company, are valuable historical resources for understanding urban development and planning in America. They meticulously detailed the construction materials, usage, and risk factors of individual structures, allowing insurance companies to better understand the challenges posed by populated urban centers. Calexico, situated on the U.S.-Mexico border, was not immune to these challenges and witnessed considerable growth during this period, making such maps a prime source for historians of the urban environment.

A selection of structures, including municipal buildings and businesses, noted in this atlas here follows:

- Imperial Ice & Development Co.
- Imperial Irrigation District Headquarters
- Calexico Cotton Co.
- Mexico Tenements
- Mexico Lodgings (next door to Hotel Los Angeles)
- U.S. Customs & Immigration Office
- Calexico Compress Company
- Baptist Church Rm. (African)
- Cantaloupe Packing Shed
- Imperial Ice & Development Co.
- Southwest Cotton Co.
- Overland Hotel
- Adobe buildings ("not used, damaged by earthquake")
- Hotel Burdick
- Calexico City Hall
- Adolph Kessler Abattoir
- Majestic Theatre



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- Mule Market & Corral
- Globe Cotton Mills
- Rockwood Ave. Public School
- Southern Pacific Depot
- U.S. Army Barracks
- Carnegie Public Library
- J. P. Manuel's Mill & Carp'r Shop
- Mt. Signal Produce Co. Vegetable & Produce Shipping

It is also worth noting the mention of specialized structures like stables made from concrete blocks, which speaks to the transitional period in transportation, where the automobile had not yet wholly replaced horse-drawn carriages. The inclusion of specific landmarks, such as the fire station, and the detailing of relative building heights further contribute to an overall understanding of Calexico's urban topography at the time.

Rarity

The Calexico Sanborns Atlas is superlatively rare. OCLC locates no examples of any edition, though California State Northridge lists 1910, 1916, and 1920 editions as part of their large Sanborns Atlas Collection. The Library of Congress has digitized an example that was updated to 1949, differing substantially from the version presented here. The present example, incorporating extensive pasted updates for May 1930, may be a unique exemplar.

Detailed Condition:

Original hand-color. Unbound, with linen-backed sheets mounted on alternating tabs. 18 maps, including the index page. Complete. Pastedown updates to May 1930.