



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

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(Southern California Fire Insurance Atlas) Calipatria Imperial Co. Cal.

Stock#: 97013
Map Maker: Sanborn Map Company
Date: 1922 (with updates to 1930)
Place: New York City
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 21.5 x 25.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Calipatria (Imperial County) in 1930

This fire insurance atlas of Calipatria, California, produced in March 1922 and updated in February 1930 by the Sanborn Map Company, provides an in-depth cartographic depiction of Calipatria's infrastructure, buildings, and fire protection facilities. The atlas contains seven detailed maps of the town, with annotations indicating the architectural, structural, and material makeup of buildings, as well as local protective measures against fires. At an elevation of 180 feet below sea level, Calipatria is the lowest incorporated city in the Western Hemisphere, and is notable for its proximity to the Salton Sea. The indexed maps offer a glimpse into the commercial and civic life of Calipatria during the 1920s, a town that had only recently been established in 1914.

In the 1920s, Calipatria, situated in the north part of Imperial County, was a relatively new settlement established primarily as an agricultural center. Located in one of the lowest regions of the United States, the town was part of the larger Imperial Valley area, a significant agricultural zone enabled by irrigation from the Colorado River. The town attracted farmers and laborers seeking to capitalize on the fertile soil and irrigation projects, contributing to a modest population increase during this decade. According to a 1919 promotional work on Imperial County, Calipatria's development was initially stymied by a corporation that owned alternate sections of land and refused to sell in small tracts, preventing other owners from developing the needed canals and irrigation improvements to make the place thrive. This finally changed when a syndicate bought the land and established a mutual water company, illustrating how



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Calipatria's growth was inherently tied to water management and technology put into place ca. 1920.

Several business and civic establishments are shown in the atlas, including the segregated Bonita Public School (for Mexican and African American students), California Wharf & Warehouse Company, Congregational Church, Globe Cotton Oil Mills, and the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot, among others, reflecting the diversity of the community. The construction material of each building, whether made of wood, brick, or fireproof materials, is denoted by a color: yellow for wood frame buildings; red for brick; blue for stone; gray for iron; and brown for "fire proof." A few buildings are noted as adobe structures.

Selection of structures and sites noted in the atlas include:

- Honey Extracting Plant
- Bonita Public School (Negro & Mexican)
- Kerckhoff Cuzner Mill & Lumber Co.
- Imperial Mill & Ginning Co.
- American States Water Co.
- Californian Hawaiian Milling Co.
- Southern Pacific Co.'s Employee's Quarters

The detailed annotations on water facilities, maintained by the American States Water Co, reflect the town's preparedness for firefighting. The descriptions provide a sense of scale and capability, from the extensive storage facilities to the sophisticated distribution methods. Similarly, insights into the local volunteer fire department, their equipment, and their readiness help underscore the challenges and constraints they faced. The boundaries for fire and city limits further demonstrate the municipality's commitment to safeguarding its populace and infrastructure.

Beyond a tool for assessing fire risks, the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas of Calipatria* is a historical document that documents the town's architectural, industrial, and civic evolution during the early 20th century. Such specialized maps offer a wealth of building-level information about the area, and thus stand as a valuable resource for studying changes in urban environments. The precision and care with which it was created contribute greatly to its present value as a primary source for understanding the development of this small settlement near the Salton Sea.

Rarity

While any early 20th-century map of Calipatria would be scarce, the complete Sanborn Atlas for Calipatria is extremely rare in both the antiquarian market and within institutional confines. No copy of any issue is traced in OCLC, though California State Northridge lists 1916, 1922, 1930 and 1941 editions in the index



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of their Sanborns Atlas holdings. The Library of Congress has a digitized version of the 1922 iteration updated to 1941, but not the present edition updated to 1930.

Detailed Condition:

Original hand-color. Unbound, with sheets mounted on alternating tabs. 7 maps, including the index page. Complete. Pastedown updates to February 1930.