



SPY? BURGLAR? Just a Sanborn man at work

SANBORN'S FRIENDLY SPIES



Don't shoot at the snooper who's sketching your house from a treetop. He's probably just one of the agents of this strange insurance "espionage" corps

by Nelson Valjean

Drawing by Robert Bugg

PEEKING from her window, the housewife followed every move of the stranger in the street. He walked along slowly, scrutinizing the houses and scribbling mysteriously on what looked like a map. Presently, quick as a phantom, he ducked into the alley and climbed to the vantage point of a shed roof. The woman called the police.

"Hurry!" she pleaded. "There's a regular snoop out here. Maybe a — a spy! The war, you know!"

The police hurried, and found just what they expected — a tanned young man with a nice grin who had shown his credentials and registered with them the day before, a precaution wisely taken by the 125 surveyors of the Sanborn Map Company. Keenly aware of an actual spy danger, the cops thanked the woman for her alertness but released her suspect.

Unknown to his accuser, the surveyor, on entirely legitimate business, had just placed the woman's own home on his cartograph. Fire-insurance companies, tax assessors, city planners, market-research organizations and other Sanborn subscribers wanted to see it. Millions of other dwellings are likewise on the map — including yours.

If you live in any one of 13,000 cities or

towns of the United States, Alaska or Hawaii, your home is almost certainly on the map, scaled 50 feet to the inch and in color.

Strangely enough, not one home owner in an estimated thousand knows that he's been mapped. Why the mystery? Simply because Sanborn men work quietly, without asking needless questions. That way, you are saved annoyance and the surveyors can cover more ground more quickly.

Trouble With the MP's

EVEN SO, during wars or world tensions this very quietness sometimes boomerangs. The Korean fighting, for example, has brought a rash of spy accusations, ironic in light of the company's record in World War II when it made 85 per cent of our Air Force maps and prompted the commanding officer of the Corps of Engineers to say: "Without your help our mission could never be accomplished." Despite this, the spy accusations still pop up. In Paso Robles, Calif., the Military Police seized a Sanborn man near Army installations. His notes and maps looked mighty suspicious; credentials didn't mean a thing. It took a company vice-president, Harold E. Oviatt, to clear him.

Occasionally, when not suspected of espionage,

the fieldmen are mistaken for meter readers, sewer inspectors, union sleuths, city detectives or burglars out casing the neighborhood. But these plotters who inventory the nation's structures for the biggest company of its kind in the world are masters of tact and champions at absorbing rebuffs.

Their biggest job, naturally, is New York City, which they have laboriously portrayed



SANBORN'S President Buchanan: His men cover 13,000 cities and towns

with 7,100 map-pages, each measuring 21 by 25 inches, approximately four times the size of the page you are reading. Bound in 78 volumes, the New York maps show almost every nook and cranny of the city's five boroughs — and sell for \$11,330.

In 1866, D. A. Sanborn, a civil engineer, recognized the need for fire maps with standardized colors and symbols — characters that would indicate story heights, wall thicknesses, cornices, doors and windows, every detail essential to the quick appraisal of each structure as a fire risk. He founded the business that year. Today his symbols are an accepted language among fire-insurance men and other Sanborn clients, all of whom, in one way or another, affect your welfare.

Are You a Fire Hazard?

SUPPOSE you want fire insurance on your dwelling. You apply to your agent. He, in turn, sends a description of it and the street address to one of the companies he represents, where a clerk checks a Sanborn map. True, a rating organization already will have established insurance rates for houses constructed like yours, but the insurance company wants to know exactly what it insures when it insures it — and the map tells the story. It tells the story of the house itself and of any neighborhood fire hazards. Further investigation, rejection of your application or issuance of the policy can result.

Sometimes surveyors wind up in weird spots. One of them got himself locked out on the roof of a San Francisco building. He wasn't rescued until the pebbles he kept tossing down attracted attention as nightfall neared. Sanborn sleuths' work takes them into occupied jail cells or brings them face to face with screaming mental patients. They may spend a half hour diagramming chicken coops, then walk around the corner and map a million-dollar factory.

For Surveyor F. Rives Heath the job is anything but humdrum. As he trudged toward a lonely shack once at Nogales, Ariz., near the Mexican boundary, warning bullets whipped up dust at his feet. Plain scared, he

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