

Find Out About Your Old House Part II

—Maps by Nelson Knight

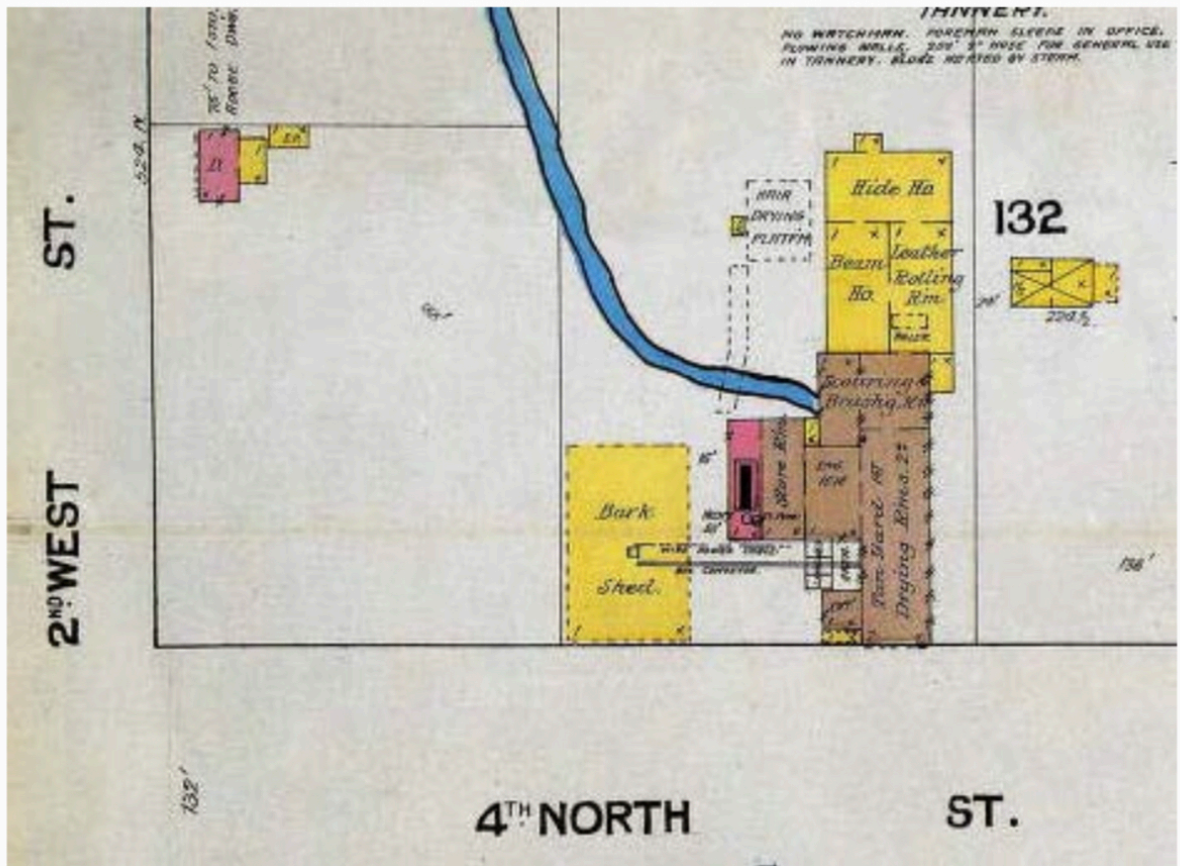
Back before I found my true calling as a writer for the Capitol Hill Newsletter, I worked for Salt Lake City, staffing the city's Historic Landmark Commission and serving as community planner for Capitol Hill. A few weeks after I assumed my duties, I received a large envelope containing a letter in neat script, along with an elaborate hand-made map, detailing the history of a property for which I was reviewing a project. That afternoon, I received a phone call from the sender, which began, "Hello, this is Hermoine Jex, I would like to know what you plan to do about this..." That day, I became a fully-fledged member of the city planning staff.

Over the past decade, I have relied on Hermoine's expertise and encyclopedic knowledge of Capitol Hill in my job and in writing these articles. I amassed a thick folder of Hermoine's maps, and found others in the files of the city and at the state historic preservation office where I now work.

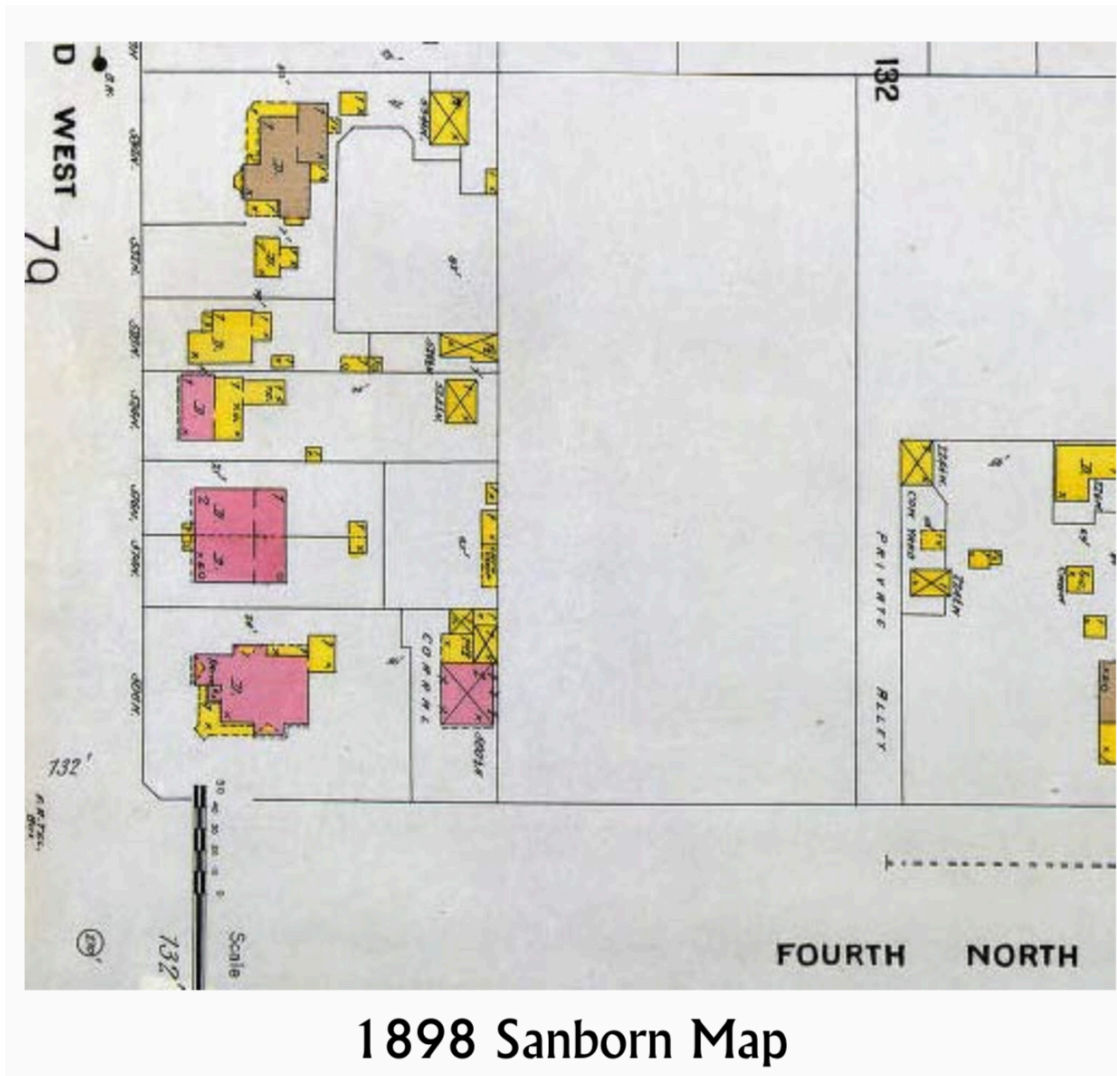
In honor of Hermoine, and continuing our series of articles on researching the history of your building, this month we will focus on maps. The most useful tools available to Capitol Hill residents are the maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company. These maps were produced to provide insurance companies details about buildings in urban areas. Details include building footprint, placement on the lot, construction materials, and door openings. Although these maps will not provide an exact construction date, you may be able to narrow down a date by comparing two consecutive maps, where the building won't show up on the first, but will on the second. You can also get an idea of the original footprint and materials of your house. This is particularly useful if it has been altered or received more-recent additions.

The maps were produced for Salt Lake City beginning in 1884, but only small parts of Capitol Hill were covered that year, and in the subsequent 1889 edition. The 1898 edition covers all of the built-up area of Capitol Hill up to that point, while later editions covered neighborhoods such as the DeSoto/Cortez, Swedetown, and Ensign Downs up through the year 1969.

The maps are available in microfilm format at the Utah History Information Center at the Rio Grande Depot, in a hard copy format at the University of Utah and online at the University of Utah's Special Collections at: <http://www.lib.utah.edu/digital/collections/sanborn/> The online version is most convenient (and in color), but only the 1884, 1889, 1898 and 1911 editions are available due to copyright issues. To locate your address, find your block on the keyed index map at the beginning of each edition, then find the corresponding individually numbered sheet. A map key explaining the colors and notations is also found on the index map.



1889 Sanborn Map



1898 Sanborn Map

To illustrate the value of these maps, I have included a portion of the 1889, 1898 and 1911 editions of the corner of 300 West and 500 North. Note that the 4th North and 2nd West street names on the map reflect the existence of 1st West and 1st North on the street grid. In 1972, the city changed the system so that the house numbers and street numbers would correspond. In 1889 this corner was home to one of a cluster of tanneries that stood along 3rd West. The large two story structure was primarily adobe, with wood frame additions on the north and west sides. A bank of windows on the east side provided light and air for the interior. A stream (probably fed by the spring and pond just south of the site, where the LDS meetinghouse now stands) fed into the south wall of the building, providing either a water source or drainage (and no doubt an environmental nightmare) for the tannery. The only other structure on the corner at the time was a small brick house along 3rd West. By 1898, the tannery was gone (and the lot where it stood cleared) and homes were constructed on the corner, the most substantial of which was a brick home with a wood porch and a distinctive tower. A brick duplex stood next door, and a two-story adobe house was further up the block. By 1911, the former site of the tannery was filled with brick homes, and the entire block was now mostly filled. These home would

later be demolished to make way for a Safeway grocery store, which itself was demolished several years ago to make way for what will soon be the Marmalade Project.

Want to find other maps? The Utah History Information Center at the Rio Grande Depot and the University of Utah Marriott Library's Special Collections have maps that would be helpful when researching Capitol Hill properties. For an online source, the Library of Congress has a great site at <http://memory.loc.gov>. Among the library's collections are great birds-eye views of the city in 1870, 1875, and 1890. Such views were popular in the 19th Century, and give a great overall idea of how a city looked, though such views weren't all that accurate for individual buildings. However, an 1875 close-up of our subject corner shows the stream and pond that later appeared on the Sanborn Map.



1911 Sanborn Map