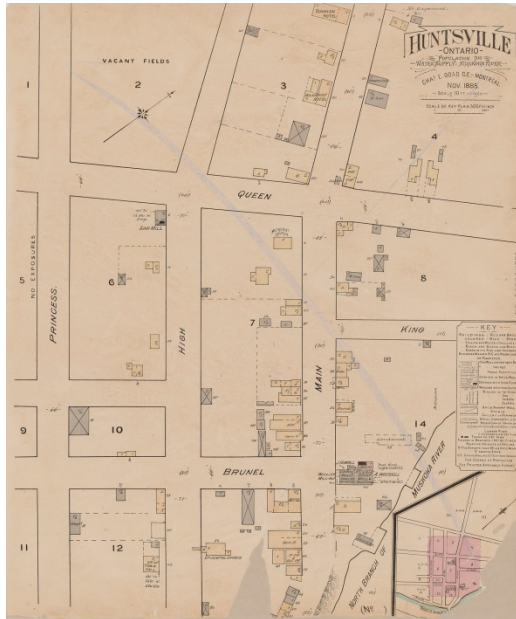


# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MAP & DATA LIBRARY

Monday, April 25, 2011

Library and Archives Canada Fire Insurance Plans/Atlases online



Access to and restrictions on the use of Fire Insurance Plans and Atlases limits our ability to conduct much historical research. These restrictions have been a constant concern and impediment for both librarians and researchers for years. A healthy knowledge of the issue is important when undertaking a Spatial History (read HGIS) project in Canada (the issue is very different in the United States). Fear of copyright infringement has led many libraries and archives to restrict and in some cases eliminate the duplication of all fire insurance plans by researchers. There is a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding on the issue, which accentuates the difficulties of accessing many fire insurance plans and atlases in collections across Canada.

CGI Environmental Services currently claims copyright on all fire insurance maps published by Charles E. Goad and all successor companies such as the

Underwriters' Survey Bureau and the Canadian Underwriters Association, regardless of date of publication. Under Canadian Copyright law, any map that is fifty years old and a day is considered to be outside of copyright protection. That is, only if no cartographer is named for the map in question. Charles E. Goad and successor companies are not considered the cartographers of fire insurance plans, but instead corporate authors. CGI and previous successor companies do not interpret the law in the same manner, and thus a stalemate existed for many years over what could and could not be done with these invaluable sources of historical information. In 1993, the Ontario Archives, Library and Archives Canada and CGI reached a compromise agreement according to which the two government institutions would enforce restrictions on reproducing maps less than ninety years old. As a result of this agreement, which was widely discussed and documented in the library and archives community at the time, many other institutions, including university libraries, implemented the same restrictions. Every so often the issue resurfaces in the community and new discussions revert back to this agreement and its particular compromise. Many institutions have openly questioned the agreement. In 2010, a municipal government in Québec, following an investigation by their lawyers, concluded that they were within the bounds of the law in allowing the duplication of any fire insurance plans older than fifty years.

Researchers interested in high resolution fire insurance plan and atlas images can now consult hundreds of reproductions on Library and Archives Canada web pages:

[Description found in Archives - Search - Library and Archives Canada](#)

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