

Sandon Townsite and Cemetery – Statement of Significance

March 15, 2022

Description of Historic Place

Sandon Townsite and Cemetery (Sandon) comprise the remains of the former city of Sandon as it was laid out in the 1890's, and include both extant and ruined structures, cultural landscapes, and artifacts dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This historic place straddles Carpenter Creek in the Selkirk Mountains, about ten kilometres east of New Denver in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia.

Heritage Values of Historic Place

Sandon is valued as the West Kootenay's best example of a mining ghost town. Sandon epitomizes the "boom-bust" narrative that threatened every town that sprang up at the discovery of rich ore deposits in the area at the end of the nineteenth century.

With the discovery of rich galena ore in the surrounding mountains in 1891, Sandon quickly grew into the region's second largest city after Nelson. The surviving cultural landscape retains evidence of the thriving city that was once home to a population of 5,000, and a centre for commerce, trade, social pursuits, and industry. While it was a largely self-sufficient prosperous community for a few years, Sandon also bears testament to the hardships that came with economic reliance on natural resources in a largely remote and arguably underdeveloped part of the province. Over the last 130 years fire, flood, avalanches, and reliance on a dwindling mining industry all contributed to the city's disincorporation in 1920, and solidified its identity as the area's most notable ghost town.



Photo By: Andrew Penner, Sandon BC

Sandon holds heritage value as the location of a Japanese Canadian internment camp during World War II. It is perhaps one of the best examples of how economically-struggling West Kootenay towns were used

to accept Japanese Canadian internees during a general era of economic hardship due to a declining mining industry over the previous decades. In 1942 the population of Sandon grew from under 50 to over 900 almost overnight as internees arrived to live under enforced confinement rules and to work on government-ordered projects. The associative values of the transformation the Japanese Canadian population brought to Sandon are passively evident amongst the ruins of buildings and sites that were once places of worship, schools, places of business, hospitals, gardens and homes.

Sandon holds significant value in the role it plays in the cultural and recreational tourism of the area. The



appeal of an 'authentic' historic site draws thousands of visitors each year. Although Sandon's remote location in a narrow valley and at a high altitude were factors that impeded its survival after mining stopped, this very dramatic natural setting is part of its appeal today. As the trailhead for the Idaho Peak Forestry Lookout Recreation Site, Sandon attracts thousands of visitors annually who are drawn to the natural beauty of the area, and the rich depth of the vast industrial cul-

tural landscape of the surrounding mountains and valleys, of which Sandon is the historic epicentre.

The Sandon cemetery, located 1.7 km from the townsite centre, is an important element of the narrative of this place; the historical record embodied in the cemetery is important to the story of the people who made the city what it was, and bore witness to the events that make Sandon what it is today.

Sandon holds further associative value as a symbol of community heritage conservation efforts and awareness in the West Kootenays. As early as 1971, with the intentions of Canada West Restorations Ltd., the Sandon Museum (1972) and the Sandon Historical Society (1979), political and public awareness around Sandon's value as a heritage resource were established. This awareness has endured over decades, sparking various initiatives of investment and repair, mostly privately funded. It is sustained today by the dedicated work of committed residents, property owners and volunteers.

Further significance of Sandon lies in the fact that it has sustained a community of residents, whether large or small, continuously since the 1890s.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of Sandon include:

- Continuous residential use by citizens since the 1890s

- The location of the former city alongside Carpenter Creek.
- The relationship of Sandon to mine sites in the surrounding mountains.
- The historic layout of the town, including former streets, railways and city lots.
- Ruins of buildings, structures, and infrastructure dating from the 1890s until the 1950s . All ruins related to commercial, domestic and industrial uses of the place have significance.
- Surviving original buildings dating from the 1890s until the 1950s, whether in their historic location or moved, including Sandon City Hall (1900), Ivanhoe Mine Manager’s Home (1900), Provincial Policeman’s Home (1925), the Hunter-Kendrick block (also known as the Slocan Mercantile Building (1900) and Tattie & Greer store), K & S Liquor Warehouse (1896), three brothels (1890’s) and several homes (1890’s).
- The operational Silversmith Hydroelectric Generating Plant (1897), Canada’s oldest hydroelectric system in continuous use, currently producing electricity for the region.
- Evidence of the city’s use as a Japanese Canadian internment camp.
- The relationship of the townsite to the Idaho Lookout Fire Service Road and as the trailhead to other historic corridors (railways, mining roads and horse trails).
- The Sandon cemetery.
- A number of carefully constructed replicas of original buildings in their original locations.

Resources

BC Geographical Names Office listing for Sandon: <http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/13711.html>

G. T. Atamanenko & Associates. 1990. Heritage Development Plan for Sandon, BC. Sandon Historical Society.

Veronika Pellowski. 1992. Silver, Lead & Hell The Story of Sandon.

Concept Plan for Sandon as a Living Heritage Community (1993): <http://www.sandoninthekootenays.ca/sandon-concept-plan--ocp-1995.html>

Draft OCP for Sandon prepared by Regional District of Central Kootenay (1995): <http://www.sandoninthekootenays.ca/sandon-concept-plan--ocp-1995.html>

<http://www.sandoninthekootenays.ca/history.html>

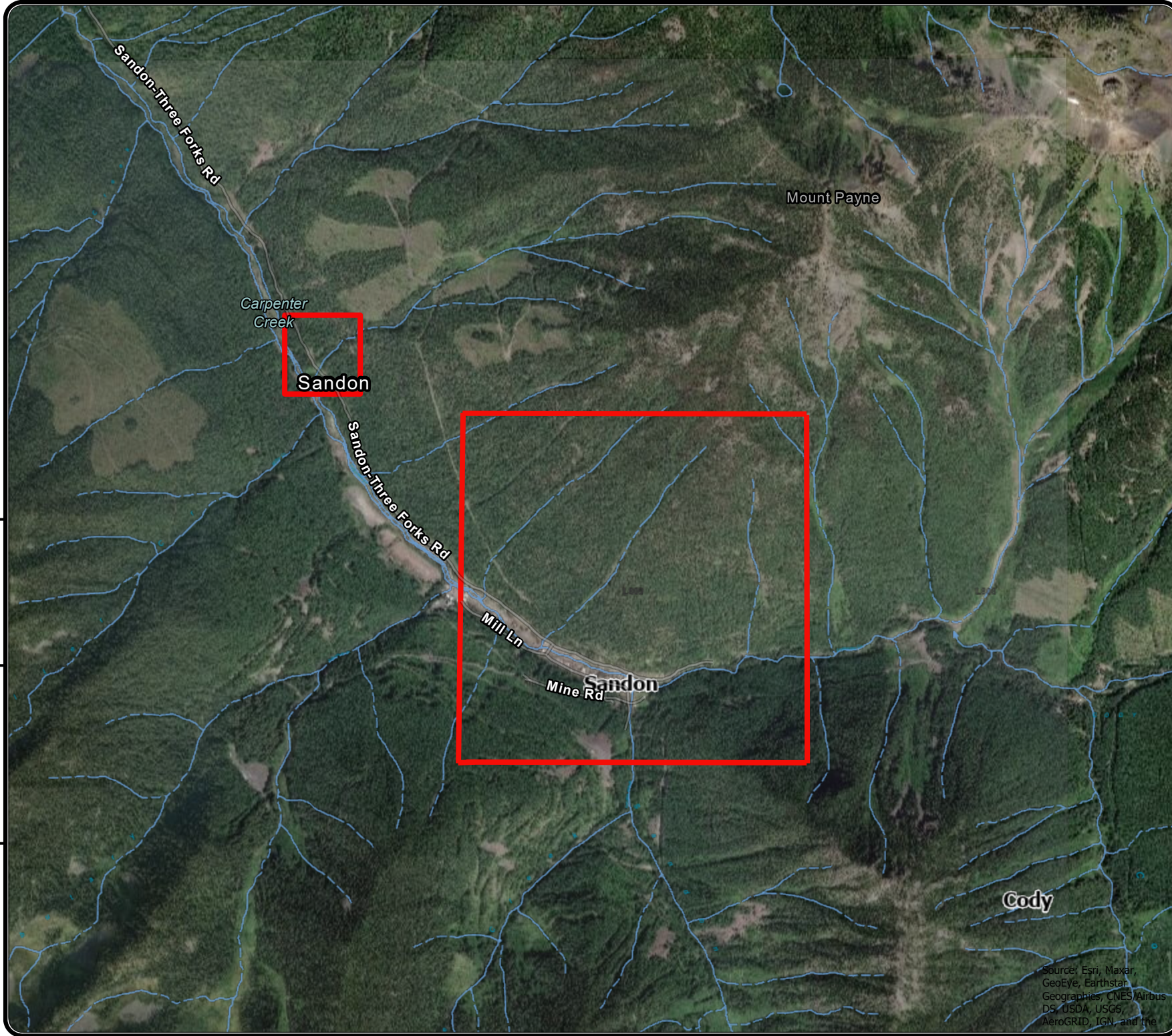
<http://www.sandonmuseum.ca/social-history/56-gone-but-not-forgotten>

Sandon Townsite & Cemetery



Legend

- Streams and Shorelines
- Place Names
- Electoral Areas



Map Scale:

1:36,112



Date:
July 30, 2020

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The mapping information shown are approximate representations and should be used for reference purposes only.
The Regional District of Central Kootenay is not responsible for any errors or omissions on this map.

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar, Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the