

I had the honour of visiting the Morden Mine near Nanaimo B.C. this August. Some time ago, I made enquiries on a genealogy website about my grandfather, Col. Walter Grant Morden. Soon I was corresponding with a Helen Tilley of Nanaimo, and hearing all about a mine site from the turn of the last century named after one of the Pacific Coast Coal Company directors, my grandfather. How thrilling to find out my family footprints crossed paths with men, women, and children whose lives were dedicated to building the mining industry on the West Coast, and indeed the building of our young country.

My family came with me for a visit to my friend Helen and the Friends of the Morden Mine. Their dedication to preserving the remains of Morden Mine, as a tribute to the significance of mining in B.C.'s history, struck home. I was moved as I gazed into the eyes of the miners whose images were captured in photographs displayed in Helen's living room. Their footprints became very tangible. Then we saw the very site of the mine. The tipple was everything a monument should be. It was tall, majestic, and felt steeped in history.

I was thrilled to tell the group my story of Grant Morden. He was born in 1888 near Kingston, Ontario to a steamship captain who worked on the St. Lawrence River. His father had a vision of uniting all the small steamship companies in and around the Great Lakes. My grandfather must have made his father proud as he was able to negotiate financing for the mergers that formed the Canada Steamship Lines in 1913. He was recognized as a founder of that company now run by our former Prime Minister, Paul Martin. Through many such business dealings in Canada, Morden was developing what his obituary in *The People* called "an inexplicable ability to negotiate". Some called it a "lucky touch".

In his career, Morden became director of 35 companies in Canada and abroad. Interestingly, Morden became director of the Canada Cement Company shortly after he married Doris Henshaw of Vancouver in 1909. Morden Mine remains standing now because the structures were made of cement rather than traditional wood. After moving to England with Doris, he had both an illustrious military and political career. He became the first Canadian Member of British Parliament for Brentford-Chiswick. After becoming a Lt. Col., he played a key role in the formation of a separate Royal Canadian Air Force. His stately home near London, Heatherden Hall, was a social hotspot and later turned into Pinewood Studios (famous for many classic and contemporary movies).

Grant Morden died in 1932 after the Stock Market Crash of 1929 led to the loss of all of his wealth. The end of his life was spent in sickness. His four children (including my father, John Grant Morden) and wife were cared for by family friends Lord Beaverbrook and Winston Churchill. Their lives changed drastically. Starting anew in Canada, my father went on to his own accomplishments in academia and theology. He would not talk about his early life until I was 48 years old. What a gift it was to then receive his carefully kept records. I have cherished becoming a family historian ever since.

An elderly gentleman in the bookstore looked up from his veteran's magazines and said, "A young man once told me that history doesn't really matter." I immediately reflected on what a privilege it is to follow and pay tribute to the permanent footprints of all of those who have gone before us, upon whose lives we have been able to build our own. Thank you, Friends of the Morden Mine, for including me in your quest to preserve history, and prove that footprints matter.