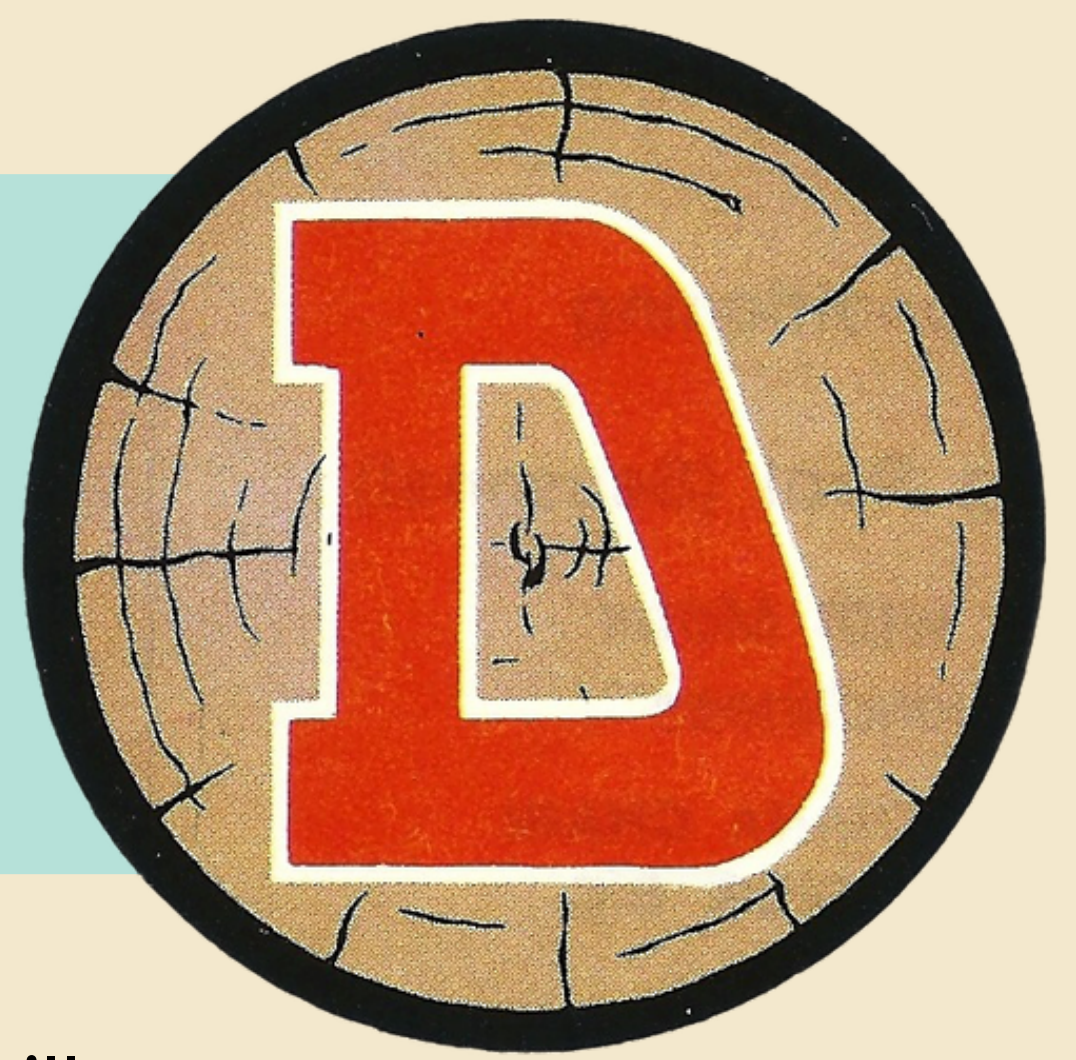


The Doman Family

- Building a Lumber Empire



Doman Industries was once one of North America's largest forest products company. It operated sawmills, pulp mills and value-added plants, as well as owned extensive timber rights and logging operations. Through grit and hard work, three brothers were able to build a lumber empire off the back of a single truck and excel in an industry that was European dominated.



Herb Doman at an unknown age. Image from the Doman family.

IT STARTS WITH A FAMILY OF SIKH IMMIGRANTS

Attar Doman Singh arrived in Canada in 1905. He later settled with his wife, Purab Kaur, and his children first in Paldi, and later in Duncan. He was a partner in the Mayo Lumber Company, and later left to become a foreman for the Hillcrest Lumber Company. He had a dream of establishing a prosperous lumber company that thrived off the lush forests of Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, he would not be able to see this dream come to fruition— Attar Doman Singh died in 1944.

THE DOMAN BROTHERS

Attar Doman Singh's three sons would carry on with that vision. Herbanese ("Herb"), Gurdial ("Gordy"), and Didar ("Ted") were able to use the funds accumulated by their father as the capital base for Doman Lumber Company in 1953, which was incorporated as Doman's Lumber & Transport Ltd. in 1955. It was renamed Doman Industries in 1964 when it became a publicly-traded company.



The Doman brothers (Gordy, Ted and Herb) and an unidentified man standing beside a Summit Wood truck. Gordy left in 1968 to concentrate on his own business – G.S. Doman Ltd. Ted was heavily involved with the Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoo, a fraternal organization whose members are involved and interested in the forest products industry. Ted passed away in 1978. Image from the Doman family.

D

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Herb Doman was 12 years old when his father died. He quit school at 14 to help support his family by delivering newspapers and selling eggs and then firewood and sawdust door-to-door. Even at the age of 16, he had a knack for business and entrepreneurship. He bought a truck and began buying from local mills to sell their lumber to home builders. Five years of hard work and hard driving later, the brothers could afford another truck and they became confident enough to incorporate.

THE GROWTH

The brothers began their business with Doman's Lumber & Transport Ltd. They grew a trucking division that expanded throughout British Columbia and extended into Alberta and the Yukon and expanded in the United States. From 1965 through 1978, sales soared 1,800 percent from \$6 million in 1965 to \$115 million in 1978, while net earnings skyrocketed 47 times from \$237,000 to \$11.1 million. In 1990, the trucking business was sold and Doman Industries focused on lumber wholesaling.



Doman Industries truck. Image from the Doman family.

THE SAWMILLS

Doman Industries' first major sawmill was located at Ladysmith and was operational in 1967. In 1973, a sawmill was added at Chemainus, by which point the company was selling 20 million board feet annually, followed by a sawmill at Cowichan Bay in 1976 and another mill at Nanaimo in 1980. Some of their sawmills are still operational, such as the WFP Duke Point Sawmill in Nanaimo. In total, Doman Industries owned nine sawmills and two pulp mills, and worked with two million acres of timberland.



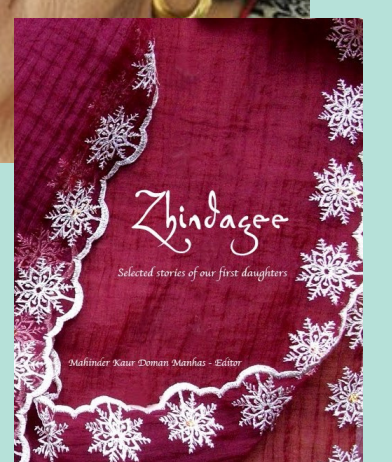
Doman Industries' sawmill at Ladysmith, 1972. Image from the Doman family.

THE DOMAN SISTERS

There were not only three brothers in the Doman family. There were two sisters: Mahinder Kaur Doman Manhas and Herbans Kaur Doman. In 2010, Mahinder authored the book *Zhindagee – Selected stories of our first daughters*. In this book, she gives a voice for the first Indian daughters born 1900–1950 in Canada by recounting stories from their descendants. It is through these women's sacrifice and hardships, how they became their mothers' helpers in the home and provided financially for their families whenever possible, that the Sikh community was able to grow into what it is today. Mahinder makes special mention of her sister Herbans, whom she described as a guiding light in her siblings' lives and helped ensure they all strived for success. Indeed, without such support, who knows if Doman Industries would have been what it was.



Mahinder Kaur Doman Manhas. Image from vicnews.com.





THE DOMAN NAME

You may have noticed that while Attar Doman's last name was Singh, his family uses his name as a surname. According to Harjinder ("Helen") Kaur Doman, Herb's wife, there were no nurses in Paldi. Mothers would need to go to the hospital in Duncan and this would be quite challenging as the women typically did not know a lot of English. When asked "what is your name?" they would reply with their husband's name. Purab Kaur likely said "Doman Singh" when she gave birth and thus her children were listed as "baby Doman". Hence, the father's name became the family surname (Source: canadiansikhheritage.ca).



Doman Industries trucks. Image from Doman family.

A LEGACY

"I always remember my father telling me of what my granddad had said. He'd tell my dad, 'Son, all those forests are out there. Go into that business and build a good lumber company... it was my dream but it was taken away from me.' And my dad did have a great vision for this company, but more than anything else, he wanted to honour my grandfather's dreams." - Rick Doman, Herb's son, who later became CEO of Doman Industries



Herb Doman. Image from Doman family.

"I built the company up for my father, for his family and for the family name," Herb Doman told the Vancouver Sun in 2002.

"My father's contribution to coastal British Columbia, and particularly Vancouver Island, was that he [and his brothers] created over four thousand jobs for people and their families, and built the business from scratch from the age of twelve." - Rick Doman.

THE END OF A LUMBER EMPIRE



Unquestionably, Doman Industries had a massive impact on local communities and the lumber industry at large. The company employed 6,000 people at its peak, but in the 1990's over-expansion and controversy relating to insider trading resulted in a deep debt. This was further exacerbated by Herb Doman's health issues and eventually his son Rick became CEO. Despite attempts to keep Doman Industries afloat, the company was later acquired by Western Forest Products in 2004.

The company's and family's legacy is remembered. Doman Industries excelled in a competitive industry and provided jobs for thousands of people. Through determination and hard work, three brothers who were smart businessmen were able to build a billion-dollar company that contributed greatly to the development of Vancouver Island.



TIMELINE OF DOMAN INDUSTRIES

- 1953: The Doman Lumber Company is founded.
- 1964: Doman Industries Limited debuts as a publicly traded company.
- 1967: The company's first major sawmill becomes operational.
- 1989: Doman Industries increases its investment in Western Forest Products Ltd., resulting in a significant debt.
- 1996: Former B.C. Premier Bill Bennett is convicted of insider trading involving the sale of shares in Doman Industries.
- 1997: Doman Industries acquires Pacific Forest Products Ltd., further increasing its debt.
- 2001: Rick Doman is appointed president.
- 2002: Reconstruction planned but later abandoned; company's debt problem continues to loom.
- 2004: Western Forest Products acquires all the assets of Doman Industries.