

## Keep the Michener House Running!

The Michener House Museum first opened to the public on May 25, 1984. The birthplace of one of Canada's most popular Governor Generals, the museum depicts the life and times of the Michener family at the turn of the century, while displays illustrate the public career of Roland Michener.

The Lacombe and District Historical Society was created with the specific purpose of saving the Michener House. The Society strives to preserve the history of Lacombe and District. We provide tours to local schools, participate in many local events, provide research services, and copies of photos from our extensive archives.

Interested in getting involved with the museum? Volunteers are appreciated helping out in the garden and at the Blacksmith Shop Museum during the summer and in the archives all year long.

Email [info@lacombemuseum.com](mailto:info@lacombemuseum.com) for information or to apply.

Admission is free, donations are gratefully accepted and help operate the museums in Lacombe. Donations can be made to:



**Lacombe & District Historical Society**

**5036 51 Street**

**Lacombe, Alberta T4L 1W2**

Charitable receipts are provided upon request for any donation of \$20 or more.

## Roland and Norah Michener

Shortly afterwards, Michener met Norah Willis, a university graduate and teacher of music. They married on February 26, 1927.

They had three daughters together: Joan, Diana, and Wendy. Norah put aside her desire to teach in order to raise their children. Once they were all in school, Norah returned to the University of Toronto and got her Doctorate in Political Philosophy in 1953.

She published a book in 1955 titled *Maritain on the Nature of Man in a Christian Democracy*.



Roland and Norah Michener, 1967

## Political Career

Michener's first foray into public life and politics was in the 1943 Ontario provincial election where he was initially defeated and then elected in 1945. After another defeat in 1948, he turned his sights to the federal House of Commons. He was elected as the representative for St. Paul's in Toronto in 1953 and sat for four years on the Opposition side of the House. Michener was re-elected in 1957 and helped form the first Conservative federal government in 22 years.



Mark Drouin, President Eisenhower, and Roland Michener, 1959

From 1957 to 1963, Michener held the position of Speaker of the House of Commons for the federal government. Impartiality was key and Michener was highly regarded for the equal speaking opportunities he gave to each side of the House. He regarded this position as his favourite of his political career.

In 1964 Michener became the first Canadian Ambassador to Nepal as well as the High Commissioner to India.

## Governor General

The year of Canada's centennial, Roland Michener was appointed Canada's 20th Governor General by his good friend and current Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson on March 29, 1967.

To Michener, a Governor General was to be both a representative of the Queen and a symbol of Canadian unity. He traveled extensively across Canada in his Vice Regal capacity. He was the official patron of 123 associations, and was the first Governor General to bestow on outstanding Canadians, the Order of Canada and the Order of Military Merit.

Following his retirement from public life in 1974, Michener became Chancellor of Queen's University in Kingston and a member of the Board of Governors at Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific.

A unique distinction came in 1979 when the Alberta government named a mountain for him. Michener climbed "his" mountain, Mount Michener at the age of 82. Over the years, Michener frequently visited the community of Lacombe and his birthplace, the Michener House. Michener passed away in 1991 in Toronto at the age of 91.



Roland drives around Lacombe during his 89th Birthday Celebration, 1989

## Restoring Michener House

By the time Michener House was declared a Provincial Historic Resource in 1977, the building had changed considerably since its occupation by the Michener family. A two room addition was built onto the rear of the house and a porch was added in 1918. When the Methodist church sold the manse in 1922, the new owners repeatedly altered the interior.

In 1970, the Lacombe Chamber of Commerce expressed an interest in preserving Michener's birthplace. In 1971 the Maski-Pitoon Society (now the Lacombe & District Historical Society) was formed and plans for the restoration of the house soon took shape.



From 1980 to 1984, the Society and the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, restored the Michener House.

The original part of the house was refinished to its appearance at the time of

Roland Michener's birth in 1900.

The porch and rear addition (originally added to the home in 1918) were also kept.

A concrete basement was added beneath the house and is now used to store artefacts and records important to Lacombe's history.

The Michener House was designated a Provincial Historical Resource in 1977 and became a Municipal Historic Resource in 2016.



## Michener House Museum & Archives

### Provincial Historic Resource



BIRTHPLACE OF

### RT. HON. ROLAND MICHENER

20TH GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA



## Introduction

Daniel Roland Michener, Canada's 20th Governor General from 1967 to 1974, was born in this house on April 19, 1900 to Reverend Edward Michener and Mrs. Mary Michener.

Throughout his distinguished career as a lawyer, politician, and statesman, Michener was guided by the values of hard work and a strong sense of duty. These values can be traced to his early life which is, in part, represented by this turn-of-the-century Methodist manse.

His birthplace has been restored to introduce the lifestyle of a Methodist minister and his family. The main floor of the house, consisting of the parlor and kitchen, portray a typical prairie manse in the early 20th century.



Michener House Museum & Archives, 2017

The majority of the Michener Collection is on display in the second floor landing and two bedrooms. This collection contains artifacts depicting Roland Michener's family, education, and political career.

## Mary and Edward Michener

Roland's father, Edward Michener, was a teacher in Ontario for a number of years before becoming an ordained Methodist minister in 1885. He accepted a position in the West and had his first parish in Banff, Alberta. In September 1887, he married his former student Mary Roland.

In 1899, Edward took the position of minister for the Lacombe circuit and the Micheners moved into the Methodist manse in Lacombe.



Mary Michener, 1872-1960

In June 1900, Edward retired from the ministry and the family moved to Red Deer to take up farming.

Edward became a successful businessman, participated actively in community

affairs as a member of the Board of Trade, the Hospital Board, and church organizations.

He was elected mayor of Red Deer from 1904 to 1906 and sat as an independent Conservative in the provincial legislature in 1909.



Edward Michener 1867-1947

## The Michener Family

On April 19, 1900 Daniel Roland Michener was born inside the manse in Lacombe.

Six weeks later, the family moved to Red Deer.



Mary and Edward had a large family of four boys and five girls:

Anne Marie, 1898; Daniel Roland, 1900; John Victor, 1902; Marion Louise, 1904; Charles Edward, 1907; Margaret Ruth, 1909; Grace Eileen, 1911; Olive Rose, 1913; and Joseph Stanley, 1915.

Unfortunately, their first child, Anne, passed away from scarlet fever in 1903.



Michener Children, 1912

## Hobbies

His father's hard work and ambition set an example for young Roland.

Roland was active in the Methodist Church, the Boy Scouts, the Red Deer Citizen Band (where he played the cornet), and in a variety of sports.



University of Alberta Band, circa. 1918 (Roland back row, middle)

The rifle range, the track, the basketball court, and the hockey arena were only some of the places he could be found when he was not busy with school work.



University of Alberta Hockey Team, circa. 1918

## Education

Roland participated in debate and acting in school and also earned four gold medals for his high academics.

Roland graduated from high school in Red Deer in 1917 and entered the University of Alberta. He had an ambition to join the military but promised that he would not join until he was eighteen.

In 1918, he and three friends enlisted in the Royal Air Force. Though, they never saw action as the armistice was signed while they were still in training in Toronto.



Roland in RAF Uniform, 1918

Upon his return home, Roland re-entered University. Despite a busy social life of sports, student politics, and drama, he maintained high academics.

He graduated in 1920 and took the gold medal for the highest standing in the province.

## Becoming a Lawyer

His outstanding academic and athletic achievements, as well as his proven leadership qualities, won him the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. He left for England in August 1920 to attend Hertford College at Oxford.

These three years were among the most stimulating of his life.

He was part of the hockey team, rowing team, and track and field team. This involvement in sports allowed him to meet and work with people from all parts of the Commonwealth, Europe, and even a few Canadians.

Among those friends was Lester "Mike" Pearson. Roland later stated that at Oxford he adopted a "tolerant approach to everyone and a dislike of jealousy and inter-racial disputes," an attitude which was beneficial later in his life.

Roland Michener graduated from Oxford in 1923 with a degree in Civil Law and Jurisprudence.

He returned to Toronto where his family had since relocated. He attempted to enter the Bar in Ontario but the Law Society of Upper Canada refused to recognize his qualifications since he had been educated overseas.

It took him six months to convince the Society and he eventually opened his own unsuccessful law practice before joining the Toronto law firm of Gregory and Gregory.