

Vincent Massey

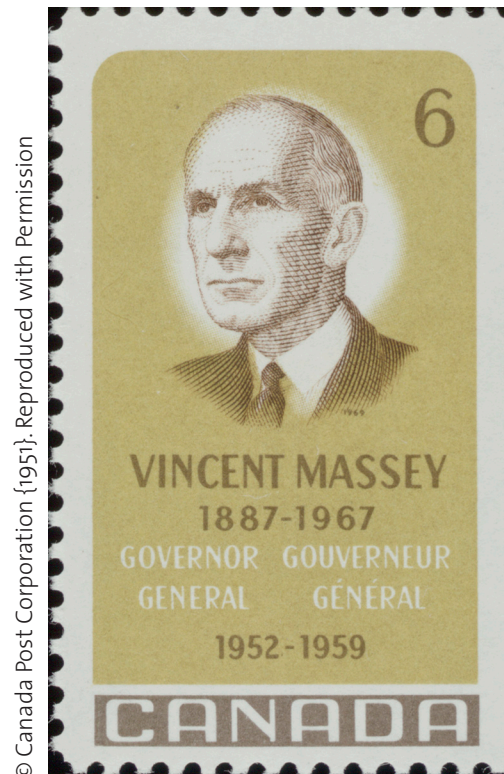
First Canadian-born Governor General of Canada (1877 – 1967)

Vincent Massey was a lawyer and diplomat who, until September 15, 1959, served as the Governor General of Canada. He was appointed to that position on February 1, 1952, by George VI, just five days before the King's death.

Massey was born into an influential family in Toronto, the son of Chester D. Massey, who owned the Massey-Harris Co. (predecessor company to the Massey-Ferguson Tractor Company). Vincent would later serve as company president. He was educated in Ontario and at Oxford, obtaining a degree in law. After a brief stint in the Canadian Cabinet he began a diplomatic career, serving in envoys to the United States and United Kingdom.

Massey married Alice Parkin, the daughter of Sir George Robert Parkin, in 1915, and then served in WW I. Through the marriage, Massey later became the uncle of George Grant, and the great-uncle to current Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff. In 1918, he started the Massey Foundation and in September 1925, Massey was sworn into the Queen's Privy Council, which entitled him to be called The Right Honourable. He joined the Century a year later and was a member till his death. His younger brother, the distinguished actor RAYMOND MASSEY, was elected a decade later, and their uncle, the American Bishop MARVIN R. VINCENT, joined in 1878.

Massey was High Commissioner to England from 1936-1946, chaired the National Gallery of Canada from 1948 to 1952, and was the Chancellor of the University of Toronto from 1948 and 1953. In 1952, he was appointed as the Canadian viceroy and proved to be a successful transition for the office between empire-born and Canadian-born governors general. When Vincent was appointed Governor-General, journalist B.K. Sandwell commented, "Toronto has no social classes — only the Masseys and the masses."



Massey's official portrait as Governor General. The Right Honourable Vincent Massey was always in costume, even when he wasn't. Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, described him as an elegant individual — citing Massey's Oxford schooling and tailored clothing as illustrations — and noting that "Vincent's a fine chap, but he does make one feel like a bit of a savage."



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