

Memorial To Sir Gilbert Parker

By Margaret Wakelin

IMPETUS WAS given to the Women's Institute tradition in nurturing things Canadiana when the Camden East branch sponsored in June the unveiling of a plaque to the memory of Sir Gilbert Parker, whose novels in the early 1900's made the world conscious of Canada.

The plaque may be seen from the Lennox and Addington County Highway No. 4 as one passes historic St. Luke's Anglican Church. The handsome blue plaque with gold letters is placed near the Parker family plot in the church yard.

Only a few years ago there would have been old-time residents who could have remembered Sir Gilbert as a boy, probably attending the local school or as a youth, clerking in the village store. Such sketchy details as are available now are the result of the Camden East Institute's Tweedsmuir Historical Research project.

Sir Gilbert was born in 1862 in a plain, square, two-storey frame house just down the street from the church. His early life seems much like any other youngster's growing-up days. His clerking in Hayden's store did not impress the villagers with the promise of great things to come. But as he moved from this village to Belleville, thirty-five miles westward, and later as he shifted from con-

tinued to continent, his extraordinary talents became front page news.

For a while he taught school near Belleville and simultaneously continued his studies at Trinity College, Toronto. During this same period he also instructed at the School for the Deaf in Belleville. His first novels were written about this time. After a dismal beginning his talents were recognized and later he was rewarded by having his novel, "The Seats of the Mighty," a story of the French Canadians, chosen as required reading for public schools.

However, Parker did not wait in Ontario for fame to come to him. He embarked for Australia where he accepted a job as assistant editor for the Morning Herald in Sydney. In this capacity he reported on events in all parts of Australia and even covered special happenings in the South Sea Islands.

His next hop took him to England where he embarked on still another career—politics. He arrived in England in 1889 and in 1900 he stood for Parliament in Gravesend. He was elected and represented this constituency for eighteen years. It was two years after this he was made a baronet and the following year was named a privy councillor. His death in 1932 brought a varied and distinguished career to a close.

Not only were Women's Institute members

At the unveiling of the Sir Gilbert Parker historical plaque at Camden East. Left to right: Rev. John Weese, pastor of the United Church; Rev. J. M. Stone of the Presbyterian Church; Mr. Nelson Kennedy, reeve of Camden East; Canon A. G. Wakelin, rector of St. Luke's Anglican Church; Mr. D. J. Rankin, M.P.P.; Mrs. Allan Carroll, Pres. Camden East Women's Institute; Mrs. Ted Allore, Institute member who unveiled the plaque; Mrs. R. J. Penney, F.W.I.O. Board; Dr. G. F. G. Stanley, a member of Historic Sites Board.

