

# GILBERT ACADEMY FOREVER

Let us see! How shall I begin? Gilbert Academy is the name of a high school. Notice, I am writing about a school that is, not was in existence. In 1949, the doors were closed; however the seeds which were planted from Gilbert Academy's beginning continue to grow today -- seeds of godliness, integrity, strength and knowledge.

My journey to Gilbert Academy began at Mc Donogh No. 6 Elementary School. There, I had three excellent music teachers -- a private piano teacher, a band and a choir teacher. The band teacher was Mr. Wilson, who was also the band teacher/director at Gilbert Academy. Gilbert Academy was highly recommended to my parents as the school I should attend. My parents agreed. My college preparatory journey began.

I would like to mention each faculty member by name with honor. They were all responsible for setting educational/academic goals of the highest standards. They encouraged their students to work with perseverance. Students were motivated to achieve the best and beyond. I would be remiss if the name of Dr. Margret Davis-Bowen is not mentioned in this writing. The students called her Mrs. Bowen; she was our principal, an outstanding woman -- a mother away from home. Mrs. Bowen was the "Pillar" of wisdom, knowledge and strength that created the firm foundation upon which Gilbert Academy continued to grow.

While at Gilbert Academy, I continued my studies in instrumental music and participated in the band with Mr. Wilson as my teacher/director. Mrs. Mildred Greenwood-Hall was my music teacher -- Private piano teacher and choir teacher/director. Both were superior teachers. Upon graduation, I received a music scholarship to Alabama State University in Montgomery; where I continued my studies in classical piano performance under Mrs. Hall, my former music teacher at Gilbert Academy. My coral training was under Dr. Frederick D. Hall. Dr. A Duncan was my instrumental music instructor and band director. Upon graduation, I received a B.S. Degree in Music Education/English. The following year, I returned to continue post-graduate studies. During that year, I taught general music and piano at the Preparatory High School on "Bama" State's Campus. In 1948, I was informed that Gilbert Academy was in need of a music teacher. I was thrilled to return to New Orleans, my family and my home to become a teacher at Gilbert Academy, my alma mater. The students were wonderful. As their teacher and director, I had great hope. I wanted them to experience and have the wonderful opportunities that were opened to me when I was a Gilbert Academy student. Mr. James D. Brown directed students in speech, dramatic reading, and drama. Mrs. Mildred G. Hall and Mr. Brown co-directed the operettas.

As a person, I like structure and organization. In January of 1949, the “Campus Society of Musicians” became a reality. It was an organization of interested Gilbert Academy students who were excellent in music theory, vocal and instrumental performance and creative art. From January to May of 1949, these students added creative dance and a verse speaking choir to their program of artful performances. However, the 1948-49 school session was Gilbert Academy’s last. A high school loved and respected for its rich history of high achievers and outstanding student body had come to an end.

Note: This was not the end! A “Gilbert Academy Seed” was planted; It continues growing, 60 Years! When Gilbert Academy was discontinued, it was very difficult for the music students and their teacher to dissolve The Gilbert Academy Campus Society of Musicians. The primary reason was that this “Society” of students had worked both diligently and untiringly to perfect skills of musicianship and artful performance. These students were considered outstanding young musicians and also had become a superior choral group.

In 1950, The G.A. Campus Society of Musicians along with the piano students of Sallier School reorganized and became the New Orleans Society of Musicians, Inc. (NOSMI), which was a viable organization with a rich history to recount. The headquarters for the “Society” was the Sallier residence (1930 Second Street) where all the meetings and rehearsals were held. There were many innovative concerts featuring the “Society” and other young people city-wide. Concerts always included dance, drama, and visual arts. The New Orleans Society of Musicians, Inc. continues today – the seed is still growing.

Patricia Sallier Seals