

# Bessie Gilbert

## Philadelphia

- 1869 Bessie Gilbert is born possibly in Philadelphia.
- 1883 Gilbert ran an ad in *Musical Record*, published by Oliver Ditson Co. of Boston, for her Bessie Gilbert Concert Company. The contact was William F. Bacon at #89 Court St in Boston. A quote from March 3<sup>rd</sup> says, "Little Bessie Gilbert is rapidly becoming a very popular concert cornetist. She plays the cornet with wonderful skill for one so young."
- Another quote from March 24<sup>th</sup> says, "Miss Bessie Gilbert, the precocious cornet soloist, has played before an audience estimated at 8,000 at Lynn (MA) at the Coliseum."
- 1885 Gilbert performs in Cambridge, MA (news report).
- 1886 Performs at the Baltimore County Fair. It was reported that "Miss Bessie Gilbert is only seventeen years old and the most wonderful lady cornet soloist in America."
- 1887 Performs at Neshaminy Falls Grove, PA with Jules Levy (Holman). Performs with Adam Forepaugh and his All-Star Vaudeville Co (ad card at right).
- 1889 Gilbert performs at the Grand Opera House in Salt Lake City (Holman).
- 1890 Gilbert is proclaimed the "Champion Cornetist of the World."
- 1893 "Miss Bessie Gilbert, the most renowned cornet soloist in the world, will perform every afternoon and evening in connection with the Neopolitan Band at Union Park." (*The News Journal*, Wilmington, DE, August 8<sup>th</sup>)
- 1896 She added middle name "Peart" (Holman)

Gilbert finished the summer season at Young & McShea's Ocean Pier in Atlantic City, NJ and was heading to play at the Toronto Expo. It was said that the "renowned cornet manufacturer Ferdinand Coeulle (photo 4), of Spring Garden St, Philadelphia, has created a splendid golden cornet for Miss Gilbert, which she pronounced a work of art and which she will use on the occasion of her debut in Toronto. She has performed upon the instrument of many makers but unhesitatingly pronounces this one both in tone and beauty to be superior to all." (*Daily Union*, Atlantic



Immediately following the  
Circus and Wild West Exhibition,

## THE ADAM FOREPAUGH

All-Star Vaudeville Company  
Will be seen in a New and Brilliant Programme.

**Just Look at the Array of Attractions!**

EVA HOLLIS, the Piquant and Peerless Serio-Comic Vocalist.  
ADMIRAL DOT, in Topical Songs of the Day.  
SADIE CONNOLLY, in Artistic Songs and Dances.  
PAT HARRIS, the High Priest of Irish Wit and Song.  
MINNIE DUNN, in Beautiful Ballads.  
WALTON AND SLAVIN, the Eccentric Burlesque Sketch Artists.  
PHIL GIBBONS, the Master Spirit of Ethiopian Comedy.  
RENCH AND EDWARDS, the Kings of Song and Dance.

**The Wizard of the Cornet!**  
LEVY'S ONLY RIVAL!

### MISS BESSIE GILBERT

The Undisputed Champion Lady Cornetist of the World.

IT COSTS ONLY 10 CENTS TO SEE THE CONCERT.

The Many wonderful cures by Hood's Sarsaparilla have won for it the title of "The greatest blood purifier ever discovered."



City) [Coeuille only made his “Telescope” model cornet shown in photo 3; author’s collection.]

Commenting on her performance in Atlantic City in July, one reporter said that, “...Levy, the once great cornetist, rarely ever performed in tone, volume or lip action with sweeter effect than does Miss Bessie Gilbert. To say that Miss Gilbert’s work is superior to the best efforts of the great Levy in his palmy days is but stating the truth.” (*Daily Union*, July 14<sup>th</sup>)

1897 Performs in New York at Tony Pastor’s (*NY World*).

1898 Performs in Rochester, NY (news article) and with the Gilbert Imperial Vaudeville Co. in Portland (*Portland Daily Press*). Jules Levy pronounced her the “Queen of the Cornet” and she is described as “late of Sousa’s and Gilmore’s bands.”

1899 Performs at the Columbia Theater in Boston (Holman) and with Gaylord’s Concert Band at the Onandaga County (NY) Fair (*Syracuse Journal*, October).

She is in a Conn ad for the New York Wonder cornet (photos 1&2, author’s collection) and listed with Alice Raymond as a distinguished soloist.

1903 Performs with Helen May Butler’s Concert Band (news article, photo 3 is Helen Butler).

In New York, Arthur Hopkins is booking for Gilbert.

1912 Gilbert performed in “Last Days of Pompeii” in August (*Richmond Palladium*, photo 1 on page 1).

1913 “Bessie Gilbert, the cornet soloist, spent a few hours at her old home in this city last week. She is now connected with Pain’s big spectacle, “The Last Days of Pompeii,” directing the band and playing numerous cornet solos during the performance.” (*The Player*, August 29<sup>th</sup>, Philadelphia correspondent) [This is my only clue so far as to where she lived but have not found a definite match at this time.]

She was also at the New York State Fair in Syracuse this year where we are told that “the concert opened with a solo performed by Miss Bessie Gilbert, daughter of the famous soloist with the Gilmore Band.” [Another clue to her origin which I have not been able to confirm.] She was also the “musical director for the entire spectacle.”

Gilbert tours with Webber’s Cincinnati Band (*Washington DC Herald*).



1918 Gilbert was scheduled to appear at Proctor's Theatre in New York City as part of Wills, Gilbert & Co (*NY Clipper*, July 31<sup>st</sup>).



In this 1912 photo she appears to be playing a Conn Conqueror model cornet (author's photo below).

