



Gilbert House
Children's Museum



PRESS KIT
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photo by Ron Cooper



Gilbert House Children's Museum



The Gilbert House Children's Museum is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) children's museum connected to downtown Salem's Riverfront Park.

Founded in 1989, Gilbert House Children's Museum is named after Salem native, A.C. Gilbert. Gilbert was a scholar, inventor, Olympic athlete and gold medalist, entrepreneur, magician, and so much more. Gilbert's famous Erector Sets were the inspiration for our giant outdoor Erector Set, the highlight of our 20,000 ft² Outdoor Discovery Area.

Gilbert House Children's Museum provides innovative and stimulating educational experiences which spark children's natural curiosity.

The Museum's mission is to "inspire children to learn through creative play." This is accomplished through 15-hands on exhibits, Outdoor Discovery Area, camps, birthday parties, field trips, membership opportunities and educational programs in the sciences, arts, and humanities.

The Museum's exhibits are located inside three historic houses; the Rockenfield House, Gilbert House and Parrish House.

Who is A.C. Gilbert?

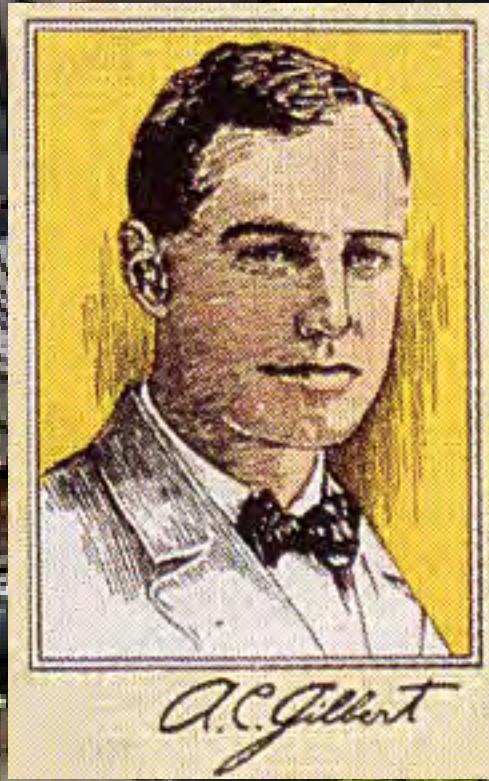


Alfred Carlton "A. C." Gilbert was born in Salem, Oregon on February 15, 1884. In 1900, at the age of 16, Gilbert attended Tualatin Academy, a prep school for Pacific Academy in Forest Grove. In 1903, Gilbert transferred to Yale University and studied medicine, planning to use his degree to become a coach. To help pay his tuition, Gilbert performed the magic tricks he learned as a child, often making as much as \$100 a night. Gilbert and his friend, John Petrie, began to manufacture the magic sets in a tool shed in Westville, Connecticut.

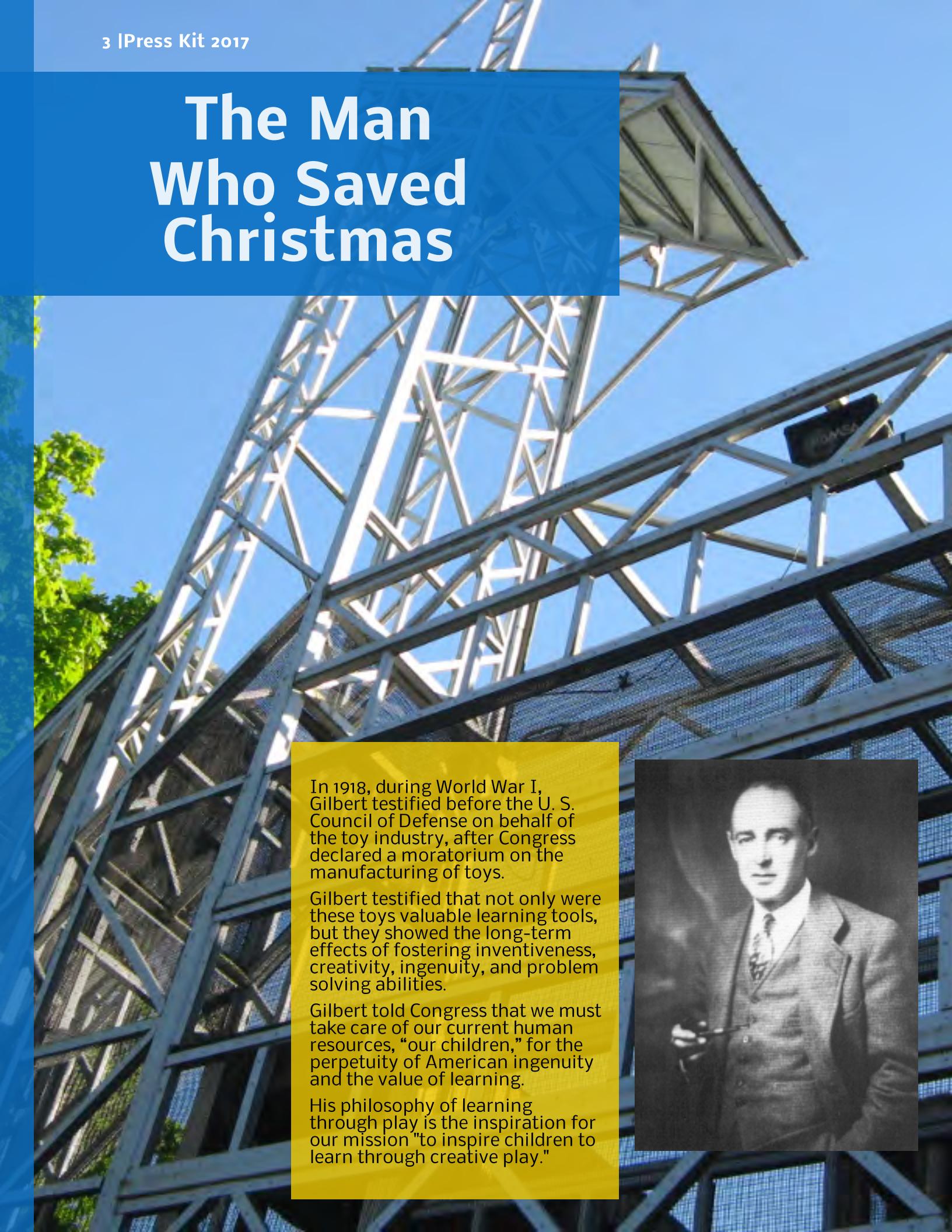
Early in 1911, Gilbert got the idea for his Erector Set while riding a train from New Haven to New York. Railroad crews from New York, New

Haven and Hartford Railroad were raising new power lines that would convert the train from steam to electricity. Gilbert was fascinated by the architecture of the steel towers that carried the power lines. Gilbert and his wife cut out some cardboard girders and worked with them until the pieces fit together and could be used to build a variety of objects.

Gilbert's educational sets revolutionized the toy industry. He was one of the first toymakers who believed that playing was essential to learning. Gilbert sensed the possibilities of scientific toys which would enable a child to play with ideas and hypotheses, and at the same time teach them about the laws of physics, engineering, and nature.



The Man Who Saved Christmas



In 1918, during World War I, Gilbert testified before the U. S. Council of Defense on behalf of the toy industry, after Congress declared a moratorium on the manufacturing of toys.

Gilbert testified that not only were these toys valuable learning tools, but they showed the long-term effects of fostering inventiveness, creativity, ingenuity, and problem solving abilities.

Gilbert told Congress that we must take care of our current human resources, "our children," for the perpetuity of American ingenuity and the value of learning.

His philosophy of learning through play is the inspiration for our mission "to inspire children to learn through creative play."



History of the Museum



Making a Museum

The home of Andrew Gilbert (A.C.'s uncle) was built in 1887. The grand home was eventually turned into apartments in 1947, and through the years the once elegant home fell into disrepair.

In 1987, Museum founder, Martin Morris, envisioned turning the historic Victorian home into a children's museum.

Restoration began the summer of 1988. With the help of several volunteers, the City of Salem, and funding from grants and foundations, enough money was raised to

restore the home and Gilbert House Children's Museum opened in December 1989.

Through the years, two other historic homes were moved to the site and expanded the Gilbert House Children's Museum.

The Josiah L. Parrish House (built in 1852) was moved from its original location to the Museum in 1990, even getting "stuck" under the bridge on its voyage. Local National Guard volunteers helped dislodge the house to move it to its now home.

The Rockenfield House (built in

1883) was moved from its original location to the Museum in 1991, and opened in 1992 as another building to house exhibits and play areas.

The Little Gem Grocery Store (built in 1925) was moved to the Museum in 1998, and now features the exhibit "A.C. Gilbert's Legacy of Play" and houses many of his inventions, including assembled Erector Set toys.

We are grateful for the vision and determination of Morris and other Salem community members to bring creative play to the children of Salem.



The Largest Community Build

The Outdoor Discovery Area at Gilbert House Children's Museum is the result of the largest community build in Salem's history, to date.

Opened in June 1998, the Outdoor Discovery Area is the result of a community effort involving thousands of volunteers and generous in-kind and monetary donations.

The 20,000 ft² Outdoor Discovery Area features a 52-foot tall tower comprising giant Erector Set pieces inspired by A.C. Gilbert's most famous creation. It also features a maze, slides, and a climable model of an American Flyer steam engine, as well as a large replica of the Earth's Core.

The Outdoor Discovery Area was built in 19 days with the cooperation of hundreds of local businesses, and thousands of local volunteers.

If you laid the lumber used in the build end to end, it would stretch more than 20 miles, and an estimated two tons of nails were used in the construction of the Outdoor Discovery Area.

"A.C. Gilbert believed kids learned best when they were having fun," said Museum founder, Martin Morris, "I really think we accomplished that."

A 2015 addition of the Discovery Campground includes a nature-inspired playscape for children to climb, crawl, and balance.

FAQs

What is the appropriate age range for the Museum?

Exhibits are designed for children ages two to ten years old. However, older siblings (and grown-ups) enjoy being the play guide for younger relatives.

How long does it take to visit the Museum?

On average, many of our visitors explore the Museum for about an hour and a half. We advise planning for 1-3 hours. However, many families like to take their time and spend a few hours enjoying the exhibits and activities. When the weather is nice, you can spend hours outside exploring our 20,000 square foot Outdoor Discovery Area!

Is the museum wheelchair/stroller accessible?

Because our exhibits are housed in three unique historical houses, the first level of each house is accessible by wheelchair, which includes about half the exhibits. The Outdoor Discovery Area is accessible all the way up to the Erector set climbing tower. If you have any questions about accessibility and would like

help planning your visit, please call us at the Museum at 503-371-3631.

What about other special restrictions?

For the comfort of our visitors and their families, we are a weapons-free zone. We ask that visitors not bring any sharp objects or concealed weapons into the Museum.

When is the Museum closed?

The Museum is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Easter, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We are also closed for a week in September for maintenance. We are closed on Mondays during fall and winter months.

Where can I park?

There is some free parking in front of the Museum under the bridge, and a city metered parking lot. The permit lot marked by signs is monitored by the city and is available on weekends. Please note metered parking is free on weekends and holidays as well. Riverfront Park, just down the street from us, has many events throughout the spring and summer and our parking will occasionally be impacted due to proximity.

I don't have any children but I am a kid at heart, can I come and enjoy the museum?

Please note that Gilbert House Children's Museum exhibits and programs are designed for children, ages 2-10, with the following admission policy:

Minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult—we do not admit children without an adult. Parents under the age of 18 are always welcome with their own children. If you are interested in viewing our museum or our A.C. Gilbert exhibit in particular, our visitor services staff will be happy to give you a brief tour of our facility. The Museum reserves the right to refuse admission.

Why do adults need to pay admission at a children's museum?

The Museum's mission is to create a community where children and their grown-ups learn through play. All of our exhibits have been designed for adults and children to play and learn together. We encourage you to explore and experience our Museum with your children and are certain that you will "play" too.

Philosophy & Vision



Why is play important to us at Gilbert House Children's Museum? We believe and know that play is a vital part of learning and development for children. Play is so important in child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right for every child.

"Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength," says a report by The America Academy of Pediatrics.

We at Gilbert House Children's Museum know the great

importance of play. We know that each time a child goes down the slide in our Outdoor Discovery Area, that child uses their imagination to be an astronaut, outrun a dragon, or travel through time.

"Play is important to healthy brain development in children," says Gilbert House Children's Museum Executive Director, Alicia Bay, "It is through play that children explore and interact with the world around them."

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, Gilbert House Children's Museum saw over 85,000 visitors. This is a nearly 25% increase from the previous fiscal year. This means that tens of thousands of children had

the opportunity to imagine themselves as astronauts, veterinarians, marine biologists, and more.

Gilbert House is committed to our role as ambassadors of play. While planning and implementing our exhibits, we closely examine the best ways to bring in creative, hands-on play for our visitors. We also consider creative play an integral part of educational programming for our workshops and camps.

Every day Gilbert House Children's Museum strives to provide more opportunities for children to play, and to fulfill our mission of inspiring children to learn through creative play.

Facts & Figures

Hours of Admission

Spring/Summer Hours:

Monday-Sunday
10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Fall/Winter Hours:

Tuesday-Sunday
10:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
Closed Mondays.

The museum is closed on:

New Year's Day
Easter
Independence Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day

The museum closes early on the following holiday:

Christmas Eve at 1:00 P.M.

Admission Prices

Members:	FREE
General (ages 3-59):	\$8.00
Senior (ages 60+):	\$6.00
Toddlers (ages 1 & 2):	\$4.00
Infants (under 1 year):	FREE

Admission/Membership Numbers

Total number of visitors in 2016: **91,296**

Total number of memberships in 2016: **3,201**

Percentage of memberships are ACCESS (reduced cost): **8%**

Donations and Sponsorships

Gilbert House Children's Museum needs support to continue to offer quality educational exhibits and programming. Approximately 87% of our annual operational expenses are covered by admissions and memberships. This means we rely on contributions for the remainder of our expenses , and to fund any new exhibits and educational programming.

There are several ways individuals and local businesses can support creative play for children at Gilbert House.

If you'd like to donate to Gilbert House Children's Museum, or would like more information about sponsorships, please contact Alicia Bay, Executive Director by email:
executivedirector@acgilbert.org

Exhibits



Rockenfield House

Main Street

Explore big ideas for our littlest citizens on the smallest Main Street in town!

Recollections

Create vivid, larger than life colored motion images set to music using your body and props in this dazzling projection exhibit.

Go Figure!

Make math and reading connections with gigantic storyboards that feature fun hands-on activities.

Forest Friends Toddler Room

Join in learning with your littlest ones in this room designed for infants and toddlers to play with their caregivers.

Gilbert House

All About Me

Put on a lab coat and get to work in this fun medical

exhibit! Tend to babies in the nursery, or look under a microscope!

Farm to Table

Plant and harvest your own crops from the farm to your table!

Up, Up and Away

Set sail in this aviation themed room filled with hands-on learning about aerodynamics!

Vet Clinic

Tend to animals in need of healing in your own vet clinic!

Creation Station

Create in this multicultural art studio that offers several theme-based activities to help kids explore and discover new cultures.

Center Stage Theater

Explore acting and drama together!

Tinker Tracks

Build tracks on the metal walls, learn about gravity and motion, and tinker with your

tracks to see how things change!

Fortopia

Build a world of your own imagination in a room made for creativity! Children create their dream landscapes with fort-building materials.

Parrish House

All Aboard!

Explore the trains that A.C. Gilbert made famous! This exhibit features working original American Flyer trains.

Imagination Playground

Use your imagination and the big blue blocks to create the structure of your dreams!

Little Gem

Legacy of Play

Discover the incredible life of our A.C. Gilbert. Learn about his many passions and inventions. See original Erector Sets, magic kits, and more on display.

Staff and Board Members



DISCOVER
THE WORLD

THROUGH THE
MAGIC OF PLAY

Staff

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