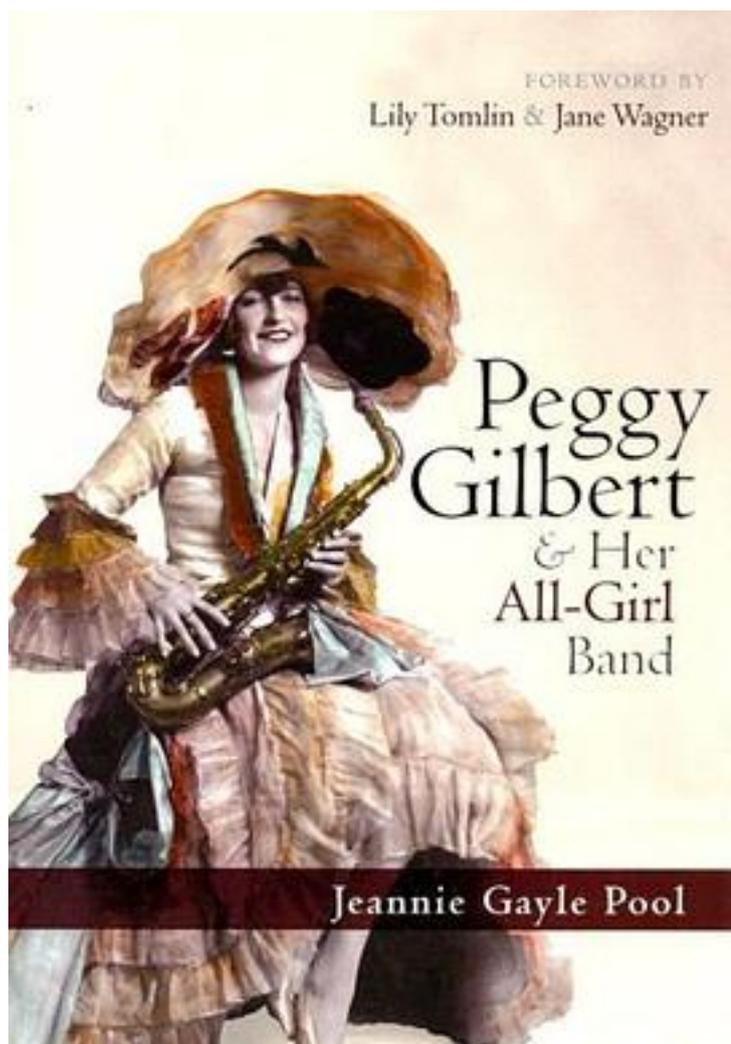


Peggy Gilbert and Her All-Girl Band



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Peggy Gilbert, born Margaret Fern Knechtges (1905-2007), arrived into a musical family and grew up hearing music in her house every day. Her father was a violinist who played in theatre pit bands in Sioux City, Iowa, and her mother sang for touring opera companies whenever they appeared in town. Margaret started taking piano lessons at 8 and soon after accompanied her father at stage shows. But it wasn't until after she turned eighteen that Margaret took up the saxophone. At the time, there weren't many girls playing horns, but she immediately took a liking to the free and loose feel the saxophone gave her. In the early 1920s, girl bands had become fairly common and the notion that one could make such a living intrigued the young musician. Peggy soon organized the first all-girl band, "The Melody Makers," in Sioux City, where her group found success playing twice a day at the Martin Hotel. Before long, the band's music was heard nightly on KSCJ, a fledgling radio station in 1927, making Peggy a broadcast pioneer. A professional tenor saxophonist for more than eighty years, Gilbert inspired several generations of musicians and continued to perform professionally into her nineties. Her last band, "Peggy Gilbert and the Dixie Belles," played hot Dixieland jazz on national television, at jazz festivals, and in concerts from 1974 until 1998. Their appearances on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, The Golden Girls, Ellen, and Simon & Simon, among other programs, made them famous coast-to-coast, even as octogenarians. In Peggy Gilbert & Her All-Girl Band, Jeannie Gayle Pool profiles the fascinating life of this multi-talented saxophone player, arranger, bandleader, and advocate for women instrumental musicians. Based on oral history interviews and Gilbert's collection of photographs, newspaper clippings, and other memorabilia, this book includes many materials not previously available on all-women bands from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. This volume also includes a chronology, bi

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