Homesteaders were the first people to claim land where the town of Gilbert began. In the middle 1800’s the U.S Government was giving away free 10 acres of land to pioneers who would move to new places in the west and live on the land for 5 years. Those pioneers were called “homesteaders”.

In 1918 Gilbert was known as the “Alfalfa Hay Capital of the World”. Alfalfa hay was used to feed cows and horses and grows extremely fast in the good soil and good weather in Arizona. Alfalfa grows so fast here that farmers could cut their fields of alfalfa 8-11 times in one year. They were shipping the alfalfa hay bales on the railroad to feed the horses of the U.S. Army during World War I.

The railroad was built across homesteader’s lands in 1903. The station (depot) was built on Bobby Gilbert’s homestead. Gilbert farmers could then ship their crops they grew here (like alfalfa and cotton) and sell them to people in other areas in the United States. They could also get other needed supplies from other parts of America.

Before 1957 all but one of the roads in the little town of Gilbert were made of dirt. Dirt roads do not stay level, they are dusty whenever a car travels on them, and muddy when it rains. Gilbert Rd. was the first town street to be paved in the early 1920’s. However, the rest of Gilbert had only dirt roads until 1957, more than 30 years after cars were the usual mode of transportation! In 1971 the first stop light (and then ONLY) stop light in Gilbert was at the intersection of Gilbert and Elliot Road. (You can see that very stoplight at HDSOUTH).