In 1949, Elizabeth and Bowman Gray Jr. hired William Roy Wallace to design an estate house for the dairy farm they had assembled west of Winston-Salem. Bowman Gray Jr. was born in Baltimore, Maryland, where his father worked as R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company’s eastern sales manager. The Gray family returned to Winston-Salem when Bowman Jr. was a young child. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, graduating in 1929 and beginning work as a salesman for Reynolds Tobacco in 1930. He was steadily promoted and had achieved the post of vice president when the estate house was commissioned.

Bowman Jr. and his wife, Elizabeth Palmer Christian, lived at Graylyn, the home of Bowman Sr. and Nathalie Lyons Gray, after their 1936 marriage. Within a few years, Bowman and Elizabeth purchased a large house in Reynolda Park on Arbor Road for their family. After serving in the military during World War II, Bowman Jr. and his brother Gordon returned to Winston-Salem. In 1946, the brothers decided to create a dairy farm west of Winston-Salem and began to acquire land. The Gray brothers hired local farmers to manage the farm, including the construction of necessary buildings, cultivation, and the care of livestock. The Grays chose the name Brookberry for the dairy farm as an homage to Brookbury, an estate owned by Elizabeth’s uncle in Virginia.

Brookberry Farm sold its Guernsey cow milk to Selected Dairies, winning awards from the Guernsey Breeders’ Association and North Carolina State Fair. In 1956 the herd had 300 head, though it had grown to 415 by 1960. The growing herd required more land, so the acquisition of acreage continued with 800 acres under Brookberry Farm management by 1960. The Grays sold the dairy cattle in 1967 because of declining demand for high-fat milk, switching to a herd of Charolais beef cattle. The Charolais herd was sold in 1969, the year of Bowman Jr.’s death.

In 1970, Elizabeth Gray married Richard Hunter. She continued to live at Brookberry Farm part-time until her death in 1974. Two of the Gray children, Bowman Gray III and Frank Christian Gray, lived at Brookberry Farm for periods from the 1970s to 1990s. Members of the Gray family have not lived at the house full-time since 1999, though the estate was used for a family wedding in 2006. The Gray heirs sold the house to the developers of Brookberry Farm subdivision in 2014. Berkley and Heribert von Feilitzsch applied for designation of the house and eleven surrounding acres.

William Roy Wallace designed the estate house with refined Georgian Revival features, a grand manifestation of the ever-popular Colonial Revival aesthetic. Frank L. Blum Construction Co. began work on the house in 1949, completing construction in 1950. The brick walls, slate roof, concave cornice, classical entrance surround, paneled wood doors, multi-pane double-hung wooden windows, and
Operable louvered wooden shutters are all typical Georgian Revival features used by Wallace at the Gray House. His design copies features of colonial Tidewater plantations and the asymmetrical tripartite plan of Graylyn.

The interior features of the house are as refined as the exterior. The formal rooms have molded classical cornices, door and window surrounds, baseboards, and mantels. Raised panel doors have original brass hardware; some rooms feature raised panel wainscoting. The walls and ceilings are finished with smooth plaster, and the floors are oak. Salvaged architectural elements removed from Graylyn in the 1940s were installed, including a marble and malachite mantel, gold-plated bathroom fixtures, and an antique mirror and console table. A wooden mantel from Brookbury in Virginia is featured in the dining room.

The estate grounds retain several features from the 1950s. The original circle drive and parking area with its brick enclosure walls survives, as do some of the plantings specified by landscape architect Robert G. Campbell. At the driveway, a brick gas pump shelter and gas pump from 1950 remain intact. A brick utility building and a board-and-batten shed, both also dating to 1950, survive. The Colonial Revival east garden designed by H. Stuart Ortloff and Henry Bond Raymore in 1958 is also extant, including a fountain terrace surrounded by holly trees.

Modernist architect A.G. Odell Jr. and his firm designed the pool house addition, which was intended to provide Bowman Jr. with a facility in which he could complete low-impact exercise. The 1960 addition is one-story high with a shallow gable roof and brick walls interrupted by large aluminum-framed sliding glass doors and windows. A stone tile deck surrounds the pool, over which large v-shaped arches support the roof.

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This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission’s web site: http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org