The Gilmer House was built in 1929 for John L. and Emma J. Gilmer as a replacement for their ca. 1903 home on the same site. This home serves as an embodiment of the life accomplishments of local entrepreneur John L. Gilmer. Serving as president alongside his brother, Powell Gilmer, the two established the Gilmer Brothers company. Initially conceived in 1905 as a mill shipments and commissions business, the Gilmer Brothers company eventually expanded to other entrepreneurial endeavors. These endeavors included the early development of automobile sales in Winston-Salem, with their opening of the first Buick agency in 1907, as well as the establishment of the Camel Coach Company in 1926, which eventually merged with Atlantic Greyhound lines in the mid-1930s. The Gilmer brothers’ numerous accomplishments established them as pillars of Winston-Salem’s commercial development during the early 20th century.

Although the home was built in the Colonial Revivalist-style, it also contains multiple features of the Georgian and Federal-styles. Some notable interior architectural elements include a grand staircase that serves as the focal point for the center of the home, rising from entrance hall to the attic. Many of the home’s exterior features remain unchanged, including its resilient cast-iron fountain located on the western end of the property. Although automobiles were not commonplace around the time of its 1929 construction, the home features a two-car garage beneath the home’s north-end porch. This facet of the home serves as a testament to John Gilmer’s forward-looking investment in Winston-Salem’s automobile industry at the beginning of the 20th century.