



Newbury-Walden House 1401 Briar Creek Road

The Newbury-Walden House may have historical significance as part of Charlotte's LGBT history. Edward Newbury and Robert Walden were a gay couple who lived in Charlotte for nearly 40 years.

Edward Newbury attended Clemson, graduating with a degree in architecture in 1933. He moved to Charlotte in 1936-1937 to work as a draftsman for Cathey Lumber Company. He met Robert Walden, a graduate of The Citadel and bookkeeper with Charlotte National Bank, probably around 1938. By the following year, they lived at 1012 South Boulevard. Robert served in the military during World War II. After the war, Robert continued working for Wachovia (they bought CNB) while Edward worked for Walter W. Hook.

They purchased property on Briar Creek Road in 1950. Edward designed their modernist home, which was built in 1951.

While Robert was stationed in Columbus, Georgia, during the war, he met author Carson McCullers, who was from that town. McCullers had become famous with the publication of her novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* in 1940. Edward would come to visit Robert, and he also became friends with McCullers. After her husband died in 1954, she stayed with the couple in their Charlotte home. A biography by Virginia Spencer Carr describes the home:

Newberry (sic), an architect, has designed and built the new house they were in, and Carson was intrigued by it even before she saw it. She was afraid to see it—"it couldn't be true," she told them. It was almost a one-room house, large and sprawling, with a huge living room and stone fireplace, a bedroom alcove and library—which was not a separate room, but a part of the living room—a kitchen and eating area off in another alcove, and finally, the only single room with a

separate door on it, the bathroom. Radiant heat came up from slate floors to heat the house, an engineering feat that Carson found fascinating. When the house was first described to her, she decided almost on the spot that the young protagonist in her play, *The Square Root of Wonderful*, would be an architect and that the house he would design would have many of the characteristics that Newberry's (sic) house had.¹

McCullers gave Robert and Edward a purple leaf plum tree as a gift for allowing her to stay with them—in the Carr biography, McCullers is said to have been a notoriously difficult houseguest—but it is unknown whether the tree is extant.

Both men retired in 1970, Edward an associate and secretary of Freeman-White Associates and Robert a vice president at Wachovia. They moved to Asheville, where Robert died in 1978 and Edward ten years later. Both are buried in Sharon Memorial Park in Charlotte. In Robert's obituary, Edward is mentioned as "a close business associate."



A duplex next door at 1413-1415 Briar Creek Road may have been designed by Newbury as well. It was built for Eva Stedman around the same time as the Newbury-Walden House.

¹ Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter: A Biography of Carson McCullers* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976), 425-426.