
Foreword

There could be no more fitting eulogy for a building than *Remembering Judson House*, a collection of testimonies from living witnesses as to what this place meant to them. When I was asked to write this foreword, the first thing I thought of was the song “This Old House,” written by Stuart Hamblen. Its poignant lyrics are about the humanization of a physical structure, making it analogous to the infirmities and mortality of an aging human being. The refrain of the song goes:

Ain't gonna need this house no longer
Ain't gonna need this house no more
Ain't got time to fix the shingles
Ain't got time to fix the floor
Ain't got time to oil the hinges
Or to mend the window panes
Ain't gonna need this house no longer
He's getting ready to meet the saints.

It is true that buildings are always more than bricks and steel. They are living entities that harbor history and memories, and they are susceptible to deterioration and death just as we are.

Judson House has been a home to myriad ministries that would not have been possible without its structure: a health clinic where Italian-American women learned how to keep their babies healthy, an international dormitory where young students from Africa prepared to return to serve their decolonized countries after World War II, a gallery for avant-garde artists and a residence for would-be artists, a runaway house for wandering and displaced kids searching for their identity. Judson House was a living space, metamorphosing

in every generation to serve a new need that appeared on its doorstep.

Its attached garden was a shady refuge. Its towering trees looked down on noisy parties full of wine and song, antiwar protests and human rights rallies, the quietness of worship services, and acts of parting when the cremated remains of church members were mixed with the soil of the flower beds.

There were times when Judson House was neglected and sometimes abused, but “this old house,” with cracking walls and paint-peeling shabbiness, was always ready to shelter the lives of young and old and the work and ministry of its mother, Judson Memorial Church. In its checkered history, Judson House has been called many names, but it has primarily been a home, a landmark place for the lives of transients, wayfaring strangers, lost souls and pilgrims who stopped and stayed. In the following pages we will read ringing tributes and heartfelt confessions of what Judson House meant to some of its devotees.

Oh Judson House, love of our lives, this book is your warm and affectionate epitaph.

HOWARD MOODY

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