
The History of Judson House as Property, 1899–1999

GRACE GOODMAN

The twentieth-century history of the property behind Judson Memorial Church divides itself into four somewhat overlapping periods, according to uses. These periods may be referred to by the names most commonly used during each era to refer to the property: “The Annex,” 1900–1921; the “Health Center” and “81 West Third,” 1922–1950; The “Student House” and backyard, 1950–1967; and “Judson House” and the Garden, 1968–1999. This chapter will deal with the property as property—its physical changes and its legal and financial shifts.

THE ANNEX PERIOD, 1900–1922

Acquisition of the Property, 1899

Edward Judson purchased the corner lot and the buildings known as 235, 237, and 239 Thompson Street in July 1899, in his own name, for \$30,000 (\$5,000 down and a mortgage for \$25,000 from Robert W. Tailer, the seller).¹ However, by November 1899 (if not from the start), he was thinking of conveying this property to the church:

I am inclined to think that it would not be unwise for us to take in the property at the corner of Thompson and Third Streets, in this way securing at least three advantages: (1) protection for our church edifice from that quarter;

1. NYC Register, land conveyances, Liber 74, p. 323.

(2) the safe and fruitful investment of money which cannot be now paid on our mortgage indebtedness; (3) the acquisition of a building admirably fitted for a parish house—both as regards site and interior equipment.²

Apparently the church's trustees approved; on January 12, 1900, the property was legally conveyed to the Corporation of the Memorial Baptist Church of Christ (the legal name) by Edward and Antoinette B. Judson, his wife, for \$30,000, with the church assuming the mortgage.³

In the meantime, Edward Judson had engaged the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White (the same architects who designed the church building) to renovate and expand the three small houses on this lot into one building, for \$14,000. This they did by filling in the façades into one continuous brick wall with a brownstone footing and a cornice at the roofline for the entire length of the building, closing up the three original front doors and constructing a new door in the center of the building, and repositioning windows to be evenly spaced. In the back of the building, the former three houses could still be detected, since the added connecting portions did not extend out to the lot line, as did the walls of the original houses.

According to the alteration application filed with the New York City Buildings Department in November 1899, the plan was to create a tenement or lodging house of thirty-eight rooms, described as "bachelor apartments," with twelve rooms on the first floor (street level) and thirteen rooms on each of the second and third floors. Each floor would have two toilet-rooms with windows opening onto ventilation shafts. A central staircase would connect the three residence floors and the below-street level basement, which the application said would be used for "stores" (unclear if that meant storage or business, probably the former). In addition, a subbasement would

2. Letter Nov. 23, 1899, from Edward Judson to the secretary of the congregation's Board of Trustees, George Welwood Murray (senior partner in a Wall Street law firm and long-time financial adviser to John D. Rockefeller, the church's principal benefactor at that time); American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) Archives, Rochester, NY; Group 1048, Box 2, Correspondence re: Judson Memorial Church, 1887-1914.

3. NYC Register, land conveyances, Liber 220, p. 47.

contain heating equipment (coal-furnaces and storage for the coal); the basement would be reached by exterior stairs down from the street level into a narrow trench extending along the entire front of the building. The work was completed as of May 26, 1900, and approved for occupancy at least by November 1900.⁴ This basic layout existed for the rest of the century, although some rooms were combined into larger apartments from time to time.⁵

Early in the twentieth century, the Judson Hotel, next door to the church on Washington Square South, arranged to lease the new Thompson Street building to house its staff.⁶ By 1912, documents show that some fifteen “servants” and two “clerks” lived there (possibly each using two small rooms?).⁷ The building became officially known as the Annex, meaning an annex to the Judson Hotel.

Transfer of the Property to the Baptist City Society, 1913

The Judson Hotel property itself was owned by the church corporation, with the intention that income from the hotel lease (which now included the Annex lease) would cover a large portion of the church’s capital expenses. Through a nationwide fundraising campaign, the church had previously raised a “Memorial Fund” to help pay off the costs of purchase and construction of the church build-

4. Municipal Archives, Folder on Block 541, Lot 26; Alteration 2568/1899 (undated).

5. The enlargement of rooms may have begun even before the proposed renovation was built: a Nov. 23, 1899, memo from the Department of Buildings disapproves the alteration application on a number of points, including the fact that some of the proposed rooms contained less than 600 cubic feet—a Building Code violation. However, by amendment to the application dated Dec. 6, 1899, the architects indicate that the objections will be taken care of (just how, not specified), and on Dec. 11, 1899, the Superintendent of Buildings approved the application. Municipal Archives, Folder on Block 541, Lot 26.

6. The Hotel lease was with Margaret Knott of the Knott hotel family; a new lease, signed on Feb. 1, 1911, included the Hotel and the Annex. City Register, Liber 226, pp. 216–220. It appears that these leases may have had ten-year terms; another lease of the same properties was made Aug. 30, 1921, for a term to expire Oct. 31, 1931, according to recitals in contract of sale of the Hotel property to NYU in 1925. Judson Archives.

7. March 25, 1913, booklet published by New York Baptist City Society, describing the Judson properties. In Judson Archives.

ings. Another part of these costs was covered by selling annuities paying 6 percent for life, in the expectation that the church would benefit from what was left of the principal when the annuitants died. Besides covering construction costs, the Memorial Fund took care of 2 percent of the annual 6 percent annuity payments, with the hotel lease covering the other 4 percent.

But by 1909, that fund was used up; the annuitants were living far longer than expected, and the church had to assume the 2 percent (some \$4,000 a year).⁸ Also, by the end of the first decade of the new century, many of Judson's wealthy church members had moved uptown and joined other churches, leaving a congregation of relatively poor people from the neighborhood south of Washington Square, an Italian immigrant ghetto for the most part. Probably the most significant financial change, however, was the loss of several thousand dollars a year from John D. Rockefeller, a Baptist who had been Edward Judson's patron since they met in 1882. Mr. Rockefeller, then one of the wealthiest men in the United States, had concluded that "scientific philanthropy" required him to give "wholesale" instead of "retail," which meant that he stopped giving to individual churches—including, in 1910, Judson Church—in favor of giving to institutions such as mission societies that covered numerous church projects.⁹ The New York Baptist City Society was the local recipient that Rockefeller's fund manager recommended for his New York-area Baptist contributions.

In 1910, Edward Judson got himself elected to a four-year term as President of the City Society (of which his former seminary student and one-time assistant pastor, Charles H. Sears, was by then the executive director). When none of Edward Judson's funding appeals

8. Letter April 5, 1909, from Edward Judson to Dr. T.J. Harris, former church trustee, describing the church's financial plight and attaching a proposal to borrow money on the Annex. In Judson Archives. In the proposal, Judson referred to the Annex properties as "never an integral part of the church property" but instead just a place to invest some of the Memorial Fund at a better return than was available in bonds or mortgages. "The fact is that through our policy of regarding the Annex . . . as sacred funds which we wish to hand down intact to our descendants we are in danger of letting the vitality of the church sink so low that no amount of money used in the future, however wisely, will bring about its recovery." Despite this plea, the borrowing plan was not approved.

9. Brumberg, Joan Jacobs, *Mission for Life* (New York: Free Press, 1980).



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Judson House, 1926.

to individual wealthy donors proved sufficient, talks began with the City Society about making some kind of fiscal connection to the Memorial Church. Edward would have preferred to give an “ecclesiastical mortgage” that would have the City Society pay for everything except the “spiritual side,” which the congregation would cover, in hopes that this would induce Rockefeller to give to the City Society for Judson, but his advisers told him that such a plan would not be “irrevocable” enough for Rockefeller.¹⁰

After much anguish, Edward Judson and the Memorial Church’s trustees and congregation finally agreed to turn over all their properties (with both their revenues and their liabilities and obligations) to the City Society “for the purpose of its administration for mission-

10. Letter Nov. 13, 1912, from Edward Judson to “My dear kind friend” (not otherwise identified); ABHS Archives, Group 1048, Box 2, Correspondence re: Judson Memorial Church, 1887–1914.

ary work in the lower part of this city.” The City Society in turn agreed to administer them as a program of the Society, without interfering with the “spiritual autonomy” or existence of the Memorial Church.¹¹ In the spring of 1913, formal deeds were given and registered soon thereafter.¹² With the endorsement of the national Northern Baptist Convention at its 1913 annual meeting, the City Society embarked on another nationwide fundraising campaign to underwrite what it called the “Judson Memorial.” This became the overall term for a number of projects, not all located at the church site. About the same time, the church itself began to be called Judson Memorial instead of Memorial Baptist Church of Christ, its formal name up to that point.

The property transfer made no operational difference to the use of the Annex; the City Society simply took over the existing leases with the Knott family, who ran the hotel.

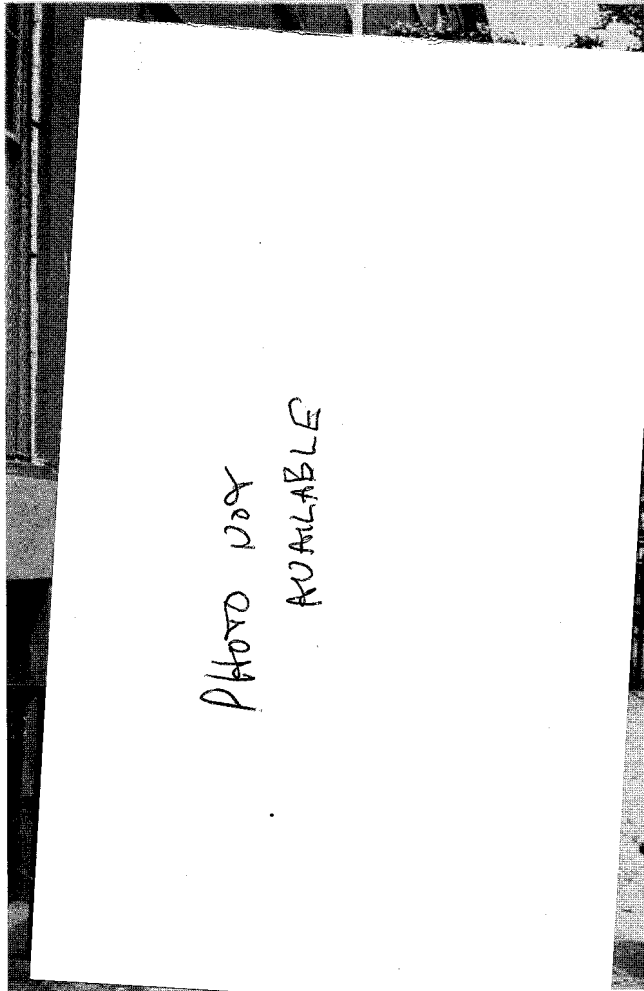
Edward Judson died shortly thereafter, on October 23, 1914. About a year later, the church called Alonzo Ray Petty, a well-reputed preacher from Los Angeles, as its new senior pastor. He served from 1915 to 1926, cooperating closely with the City Society on all fiscal and property matters and serving as chief staff for all the City Society’s Judson Memorial programs, which expanded over the next several years.

City Society Acquires 81 West Third Street, 1917

The other lot behind the church building, next to the Annex property, was occupied by a single three-story house, some 40 feet deep, covering about one-third of the lot, whose address was 81 West Third Street. (Some insurance maps from the mid-1800s show a small structure in the middle of the yard behind this house, possibly a cooking shack, but apparently it did not survive long into the new century.) In October 1917, under terms of a bequest, a family named

11. City Society booklet March 25, 1913, pp. 19–21.

12. City Register of Conveyances, Liber 226, pp. 216–218 (recorded Nov. 28, 1913); includes conveyance of the church’s interest in its lease with Margaret Knott on the Hotel and the Annex, and its interest in the underlying property of the church, the Hotel, and the Annex.



Judson House façade, 1999. Photo by Alice Garrard.

Malony conveyed the lot and house to the City Society, for a token amount of \$5,601, mostly to buy out a minor's interest.¹³

The City Society treated this new acquisition as part of its Judson Memorial properties and used it principally as rental housing from then on, although it appears that many of the rentals were more for the purpose of providing housing for City Society staff than purely for income. This included some staff assigned to the

13. Register of Conveyances, Liber 3035, pp. 14–16, Liber 3039, p. 387.

Judson Neighborhood House that the City Society began to operate around this time at 179 Sullivan Street. There are also some references in the Judson Archives to rentals to various New York University-connected persons, and a bill, dated May 7, 1919, from the church to NYU for \$7.50 for NYU's share in removing dirt in the yard, so there must have been some shared use with the University at that time.¹⁴

There is also a reference to 81 West Third Street as being the "home" for a few years prior to 1921 of the Nokomis and the Cherokees, a couple of boys' athletic clubs that the Judson Memorial sponsored, which used the church gymnasium for part of their activities.¹⁵

What use, if any, was made at that period of the yard in back of the lot is not clear. Correspondence from January 1922 states that the church had agreed with the hotel to construct a covered passageway between the hotel and the 81 West Third Street building, and further to connect the top floor of that building with the Annex—all this presumably to allow indoor travel from the hotel to the Annex for its staff. The City Society's attorney, Edward Clinch (later a judge and also later a president of the Northern Baptist Convention), recommended that this obligation be fulfilled, especially since the hotel had effectively surrendered the use of the yard at 81 West Third without any abatement of rent. This suggests that the hotel lease actually covered the back of that lot at that time. There is, however, no record that such a passageway was ever built.

THE HEALTH CENTER PERIOD, 1922-1950

The Health Center Is Established, 1921

In 1920, Dr. Petty had met a young physician, Dr. Eleanor Campbell, who had a dream of providing clinic services to children and families in lower Manhattan, but she did not have a good location for this dream. Ray Petty convinced the City Society that a health center would be a far better use for the Annex, and in 1922, the property changed tenants and names.

14. Judson Archives; Folder "A Ray Petty Correspondence 1918-20 (1 of ...)"

15. The 1922 Judson Annual Report, p. 29. In Judson Archives.

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The "Health Roof" of the Judson Health Center in the 1920s.

As of January 21, 1922, the City Society entered a new lease with Dr. Campbell, covering the basement; first, second, and third floors; and roof at 235-237-239 Thompson Street for a period of almost ten years (February 1, 1922, to October 31, 1931), at a rent of \$250 per month, for the purpose of operating a health center "for preventive and therapeutic health work to include a hospital, dispensary, and nursery."¹⁶ The tenant was to arrange and pay for all alterations necessary to bring the facility up to code for such uses; the landlord would continue to do exterior maintenance and repairs as needed. Dr. Campbell entered a separate lease for the same time period with the Judson Hotel Company to buy steam heat and electric light from the plants belonging to the hotel (but actually located, for the most part, in the subbasement of the church) for \$2,000 a year.¹⁷

Dr. Campbell engaged architects Raymond M. Hood and J. André Fouilhoux to do interior renovations on the Thompson Street property, which involved extensive plumbing additions and some moving of walls, as well as fitting out the roof for use. Rooms were remodeled to serve as offices and also as examining and waiting

16. Indenture dated Jan. 21, 1922. In Judson Archives, Box C.14.

17. Draft indenture (unsigned) in Judson Archives.

rooms, a dentist's office, an X-ray room, a kitchen, and an apartment for the superintendent (location not specified, but possibly the basement apartment at the corner of Thompson and West Third streets).¹⁸

At some point, possibly in 1925, a connecting door was broken through the party wall between the top floor of 81 West Third Street and the third floor of the Health Center building. After that change, the top floor of the Thompson Street building was blocked off from that building's central stairs and could be entered only from 81 West Third. Despite the lease to the Health Center of the entire building, the Health Center had apparently agreed from the beginning that the top floor, with thirteen rooms, would continue to be used for housing, either of hotel staff or of City Society tenants.¹⁹ The Health Center used the rest of the building, including the roof.

There is also a report dated July 28, 1921, from the City Society's committee on Judson, which states that after negotiations, the hotel had agreed to give up its lease on the Annex so that the new Health Center could use that building but that the hotel wanted to have the use of an equal number of rooms at 81 West Third Street, at the same rental. Since it appears that the Health Center did not use the top floor of the Thompson Street building after all, it seems likely that at least some of the hotel staff stayed there; perhaps others received rooms at 81 West Third Street. To cover necessary alterations to make 81 West Third suitable for rental housing, and also

18. Letter dated April 11, 1950, from F. J. Coppinger of Triangle Painting Co. to Albert B. Ashforth, Inc., proposing prices to paint 26 named rooms and hallways. Judson Archives, Box on Judson Health Center. The letter contains a room-by-room description of the clinics not found in earlier documents.

19. The Oct. 1, 1925, Indenture of Sale from the City Society to NYU of the Judson Hotel property recites that a lease was entered Aug. 30, 1921, between the City Society and the Hotel to rent the Hotel and the top floor of the Annex for \$18,012.68 per year. A memo dated Oct. 17, 1950 (unsigned, unaddressed) concerning "Interview of Oct. 11, 1950 with Joel Cohen" states that City building records then showed "a certificate of occupancy as of 1925 for the use of a hotel on the Third floor and the rest of the building as the Health Center." Judson Archives. A memo May 9, 1949, from Deputy Comm. of Housing Division to Superintendent, Department of Buildings, in Municipal Archives Folder on Block 541, Lot 27, mentions the long-standing use of the top floor for housing (by 1949, reported as for students of religion).

to cover some unrelated heating upgrades, insurance, and new carpeting for the church, the City Society voted to take a three-year \$20,000 mortgage on the Thompson Street property at 6 percent interest, with the right to pay off \$1,500 of principal each year. The plan was to amortize the loan over ten years out of the hotel income, plus church income. Apparently, the City Society ultimately took only a \$15,000 loan against the Thompson Street property, and in 1930 extended the remaining \$8,000 another three years at 5½ percent; in 1934, some \$3,500 was still outstanding.²⁰

The Rest of the Judson Memorial Properties During the 1920s–1940s

In October 1925, the City Society sold the hotel (including the church tower) to New York University for use as a dormitory. The agreement included provisions for NYU to assume the City Society's lease with the Judson Hotel, which included the use of the top floor of the Health Center building and 81 West Third Street. NYU agreed to pay \$3,500 a year for use of the latter properties, which were still owned by the City Society.²¹ The sale brought \$225 to the City Society's Judson Memorial Fund; this sum is reputed to have been set aside at least in part to start an endowment to maintain the Church in perpetuity.

Dr. Petty resigned as pastor at Judson in March 1926 to accept the pastorate of Grace Temple Baptist Church in Philadelphia, one of the most prestigious pulpits in the nation. The City Society thereupon named the Rev. Laurence T. Hosie (who had previously been assigned to the struggling Second Avenue Baptist Church and had also worked at the Presbyterian Labor Temple) as Judson's pastor.

20. Letters dated May 16, 1930, and Feb. 17, 1934, from the Mutual Life Insurance Company to the City Society; ABHS Archives, Box "Includes Judson Church Ca 1916–1944" folder "No. 79 West Third Street Judson."

21. Judson Archives, Box C.14, Lease; Indenture of Sale dated Oct. 1, 1925. The sale also included a provision that if NYU acquired the Hotel lease, it could cancel the lease, but if that occurred, the top floor of the old Annex would become available to the Health Center for its use, and new arrangements would be made to rent 81 West Third Street. It appears that this term was not carried out, and the top floor continued to be used by the City Society during the entire time that the Health Center occupied the building.

He served from April 1926 to September 1937, focusing much of his work on social programs responsive to the economic depression.

In July 1926, the City Society also acquired the lot immediately to the west of these properties, 83 West Third Street, which also contained a three-story house of about the same size as that at 81 West Third, but with a one-story addition in the rear. That building deteriorated sharply, and by 1933 it had to be demolished, leaving a lot that stayed vacant for the rest of the century.²² The Judson Memorial staff used this house, while it lasted, for more rental housing. Subsequently, the church let a Public Works “play project” use the vacant lot to let the boys in the project try making a garden; they planted a glorious flower garden on the entire lot, outlining plots with used brick from the demolished structure. Apparently, they also pulled a lot of loose bricks out of the remains of the party wall with 81, to the distress of the City Society’s property administrator, who pointed out that when 83 was demolished, they had deliberately left about 18 inches of wall “to give some support to the poor west wall of 81.”²³ In light of the fact that 81 West Third itself collapsed some seventeen years later, this demolition and weakening of the remaining supporting wall appears, in hindsight, to have been doubly unfortunate.

In September 1939, the City Society sold the lot at 83 West Third Street to the Bertolotti family, who lived next door, for \$10,500 in cash.²⁴

22. Register of Conveyances, Liber 3559, p. 292; Municipal Archives Folder on Block 541, Lot 28, and ABHS Archives, Box “Includes Judson Church Correspondence 1933-42,” folder “Judson Apartment House.” The property had been owned by a Joseph West since 1853; his heirs conveyed it to the City Society by deed July 29, 1926; letter dated Sept. 15, 1939, from Charles Sears to Elmer Sanborn; ABHS Archives, Box “Includes Judson Church Ca 1916-1944” in folder without tab or identification.

23. Letter Aug. 15, 1935, from Edward C. Sanborn to Stanley B. Hazzard (executive of the City Society); letter Sept. 12, 1935, from Laurence T. Hosie (minister at Judson) to Hazzard; in ABHS Archives, Rochester, NY, Box “Includes Judson Church Correspondence 1928-39,” folder “Judson Memorial 1933-1937.”

24. Letter dated Sept. 26, 1939, from T. Raymond St. John of the firm of Hays, St. John, Abramson & Schulman, to Rev. Charles H. Sears of the City Society. ABHS Archives, Box “Includes Judson Church Ca 1916-1944,” folder with broken tab, no identification.

According to an article in *The Villager* of Oct. 9, 1939, the Bertolottis had operated a well-known restaurant since around 1900 in the ground floor of their resi-

As the depression deepened, the Judson Church congregation continued to shrink. Its income declined to the point where the church could no longer pay for housing for their minister, Rev. Hosie, and his family. Therefore, when one of the tenants at 81 West Third Street vacated an apartment there, the Judson Board offered the apartment to the Hosies, who lived there the rest of their time at Judson.²⁵

By 1937, the English-speaking congregation at Judson Church had dwindled to almost nothing. However, the Italian-speaking congregation (which had been started during Edward Judson's era and had operated continuously with an Italian-speaking pastor, with services on Sunday evenings) was holding its own. The City Society decided to merge the two congregations under the leadership of the Italian pastor, Rev. Renato Alden, and so asked Rev. Hosie to resign, which he did, effective September 30, 1937.²⁶

For the next ten years, the City Society hired a series of clergy and lay executive directors for the Judson Memorial work, which included leading services at the church after Rev. Alden moved on to other work. The last of these executive directors was Rev. Elbert R. Tingley, who came in 1946 and resigned, apparently in frustration over his inability to make any headway on any major program, as of April 24, 1948.²⁷

THE STUDENT HOUSE, 1949 – 1968

The Health Center Becomes the Student House, 1949 – 1951

In 1948, the City Society appointed the Rev. Dean Wright as director of the Judson Memorial's Student Program, and a year later, the Rev. Robert W. Spike became the senior minister at Judson Church. These staff members and their families lived at 81 West Third Street.

dence at 85 West Third Street—a house where, in the nineteenth century, Edgar Allen Poe lived for two years while writing “The Fall of the House of Usher” and other works. “Papa” Bertolotti had been trying to buy the lot at 83 West Third from the City Society since 1931, to build a matching house for all his children and their families.

25. Unpublished manuscript by Laurence T. Hosie, in Judson Archives, Box C.09.

26. Judson Archives, Box C.09.1936.Hosie; folder “Hosie ‘Dismissal’ Correspondence.

27. Judson Archives, Box C.08.1946–48 Tingley.

After a period of persuasion and negotiations, the Thompson Street building took on a new incarnation and became known for the next two decades as the Student House. In 1950 Dr. Campbell agreed to move the Health Center to a new location, and the City Society agreed to underwrite renovations and alterations to the building to make it suitable to house students and some staff.

These renovations were done in 1951 by the J. B. Snook architectural firm. They restored the central stairs to the third floor, cleared out the Health Center equipment, and built an apartment on the north end of the second floor for use of various church staff. The bulk of the building remained very small residence rooms, with one toilet and a shower room on each of the second and third floors, a kitchen and dining area in the south end of the basement, and an all-purpose meeting/recreation/lounge room at the north end. The north end of the first floor was turned into a second staff apartment for use by the house parents for the students.

From 1950 to 1965, Judson organized the Church in Urban Life program, which involved about twenty students who lived at Judson house from June through August. In addition, Judson House always rented rooms to year-round students from NYU and other colleges in New York City. The last of these lived at Judson House in the mid-1960s.

Building Problems

In the spring of 1950, the City Society had a thorough inspection made of both the Health Center and the 81 West Third Street building. This revealed several structural problems that required immediate attention. The Health Center had some sagging floors and a bulge in its western exterior wall, which were not an imminent danger. At 81 West Third Street, the north and west walls showed new cracks, and the inspectors suggested that the normal settling of the foundation might be aggravated by the pile driving at the site of NYU's new law center a half-block away. The inspectors advised keeping close watch on this condition.²⁸

28. Letter dated April 26, 1950, from Daniel E. Merrill, Architect, to Rev. Robert V. Russell, City Society. Judson Archives, Box C.10.1950s Health Center.

Later that year, 81 West Third Street suddenly developed a noticeable bulge in its front wall, causing it to be immediately evacuated. The building was razed soon after.

The Judson Gallery

Initially engaged by Robert Spike as a seminary student doing his internship work and later hired by Howard Moody as an associate minister, Bernard “Bud” Scott lived at the Student House from 1957 to 1960. Under his leadership, the church in 1958 opened an art gallery in a pair of basement rooms at the north end of the House. The gallery rooms were walled off from the rest of the House and were entered by an exterior iron stairway, under the fire escape. This area remained a separate space until about 1975, when it was returned to residence use by connecting it to the first-floor staff apartment via a spiral staircase.

Changes in the Student House Program

After 1965, the Church and Urban Life program at the Student House faded, and the space was used to take in a variety of persons who needed housing; for a period there was an effort to provide housing for students at the City’s art schools that had no dormitories of their own.

In 1961, to house Al Carmines, the new assistant minister, another apartment was created on the south end of the first floor. Later Al moved into the larger apartment on the north end of the first floor that had been occupied by the Student House house parents.

“JUDSON HOUSE” AND THE GARDEN, 1968–1999

The Runaway House

The last residence program to occupy the Thompson Street building was a short-lived program for runaway teens during the height of the hippie culture in the Village in the late 1960s. The hard wear given to the premises by these youngsters, on top of the hard use given by all the other occupants over the years, effectively destroyed the building’s suitability for lodging, other than the few apartments that continued to be occupied by Judson staff.

The Center for Medical Consumers

The apartment on the south corner of the first floor, used by Howard and Lorry Moody in 1975–1976 while Grace House, the parsonage on 18th Street, was being renovated, in 1978 became the home of the Center for Medical Consumers. The center continued to occupy this site until 2000.

The Garden

Sometime in the late 1960s, Art Levin, together with Lee Guillatt and others, organized a work party to lay a brick floor over the old backyard portion of the 81 West Third Street lot. Thereafter, this “garden” was used by the church for its summer worship services when the church building was stiflingly hot and for many other activities. The site of the old house on this lot remained unpaved and served as a staff parking lot, accommodating up to four cars.

Judson Church Regains Title to Its Real Estate, 1979

Curiously, the process of transferring all Judson properties—the church, Judson House, and Grace House—from the New York Baptist City Society back to Judson Memorial Church took several years. In a letter dated June 14, 1977, Allen Hinand of the City Society informed Judson Memorial Church of “last night’s vote” to return the properties to Judson. The actual transfer of the deed did not take place until November 28, 1979, and the congregation observed a Celebration of the Return of the Property in a festive service on Sunday, December 2, 1979. This marked the end of a dependent relationship with the NYBCS that began in 1913.

Uses of Judson House, 1970s–1990s

The top floor remained unused except for some archival storage and a two-room office, constructed there in the late 1990s for use by the minister emeritus when he was in town.

The south half of the second floor was similarly unusable and essentially unused until 1995, when an office suite was created out of several rooms at the West Third Street end for use of the Employment Project begun by Paul Chapman.

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The roof of Judson House in 1999. Photo by Alice Garrard.

The rest of the second floor (aside from a staff apartment at the north end) was occupied variously by overflow offices from the first-floor Center for Medical Consumers and by a workroom for assembling the church's archives.

In 1992, the church voted to allocate the first-floor apartment at the north end of the building to Howard Moody, who retired after thirty-five years as senior minister. In the interim between Moody's departure to his home in California and the church's calling the Rev. Peter Laarman in January 1994, this apartment was used by the interim minister, Rev. Bill Malcomson, and his wife, Laurie. Thereafter, the Moodys returned to take up residence for six to eight months every year.

The south-end basement apartment was allocated to the church sexton, Roland Wiggins, in 1982. The bare-bones meeting room (formerly the dining room) was used for Sunday School classes and overflow meetings as needed; the north-end lounge (periodically re-decorated with used furniture and some new accessories) served as the church's preferred location for small meetings throughout the week.

On December 16, 1999, Edward A. Powers, moderator of Judson Memorial Church, signed the document that turned the deed to Judson House over to the New York University School of Law.