
Seymour Hacker

Both Seymour and his brother Alan lived at Judson House in the 1930s. Seymour is the earliest living occupant represented in this book.

I found out about Judson House because my brother, Alan, moved there in 1932 or 1933 and immediately became part of the Judson community. When I started going to college, which was in 1933, I decided that I wanted to leave home and strike out on my own. In the next year, in 1934, I took a room at Judson House, right across the hall from my brother's. The rent of the room was \$2 a week. I stayed there for two years while I was going to City College.

The room was on the third floor overlooking the garden. My brother's room overlooked Thompson Street. The garden was pretty straggly. It was never cultivated much. It was not as large as it is now because the building at 81 West Third was still standing but the empty lot next to it still belonged to Judson.

We used 81 West Third as access to Judson House. That was our address. We went to our rooms through 81 West Third, up to the third floor, and then across to the third floor of Judson House. The lower two floors of Judson House were occupied by the Judson Health Center.

The lower floor of 81 West Third was divided into two apartments. The front apartment was occupied by our Cerberus, Susan Purdy, who was ever watchful. She was the housekeeper. The back room belonged to Iva Wasson, who was the church organist. She was a wonderful woman who was my brother's spiritual mentor. She gave me piano lessons, although I did not get very far.

On the second floor of 81 lived a couple of students from out of town who worked at the Judson Settlement House on Sullivan Street. One was Polly Grover, an apple-cheeked girl from Maine, and the other was Ruth Mabee, a sister of Carlton Mabee, a famous professor of history and sociology at Columbia. On the third floor, on the right side of the stairway, was the apartment of Laurence T.

Hosie, who was the minister of Judson. On the left side was the door to the third floor of Judson House. Larry Hosie was a great man, a Lion of Judah. He was a social action minister par excellence. Howard Moody was in his tradition.

The ladies of the house, along with the ladies who ran the settlement house, formed a cooperative, which we all paid into for groceries, about \$15 a month. We all took part in the cooking and washing up, and whatever was necessary. The cooking was done in the basement of 81 West Third. It worked very well. We ate well and it was very sociable and pleasant.

The other tenants were mostly unconnected to the church. They either came in by reference or had the good fortune to come in at the right time. They were usually year-round students. There were not more than ten or twelve tenants. As I recall, my brother and I were the only ones who lived there who participated in church affairs. We went to services and attended meetings of various committees that Larry Hosie was interested in, such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the War Resisters League.

Judson House was a lively place. Larry Hosie was the sparkplug, of course. Iva Wasson was a spiritual force, and just her presence was a thing you felt there. Some of the women who ran the Neighborhood House on Sullivan Street were great, too. Willie Wheeler was one of them. She was one of those people that were called settlement house angels at that time. It was a tough assignment working with Catholic Italian kids, whose parents were not friendly to begin with. The kids were not very well mannered. She managed somehow to bring a lot of them along into daylight. There was another woman from South Dakota. She was a gem. She ended up marrying an Italian Protestant boy and lived happily thereafter until the settlement house was disbanded, which was a great shame. The settlement house movement was of another era and could not survive into the disintegration of society that took place sometime back then. Most of the similar settlement houses met the same fate at that time. I used to go to one when I was a kid, the Christadora House.

My brother, who was nine years older than I, was much more profoundly involved in Judson than I. I was too young, really. Alan had been searching for some kind of spiritual home ever since he was a kid. He had gone through junior socialism and other fraternity groups like the Kiva and a few others that were social-minded

groups without a specific aim. How he found Judson I don't know, probably through one of the organizations he got into, like the War Resisters League.

Judson became his home, almost instantaneously. He lived there from 1932/3 until 1939. He was a photographer and at some point, about 1937, he got interested in the Southern Tenant Farmers Union through Claude Williams, whom he met. Claude Williams was another great inspirational figure of the time. He was a minister in Arkansas who helped organize the southern tenant farmers and inspired them for many years.

Alan got the idea of going to Arkansas to make a movie about these tenant farmers. He went with Lee Hays of the Weavers, who lived at Judson House for a while. The resulting film has been shown at Judson several times. Alan and Lee had a very hard time. The conditions were really primitive and they were not too well received by the locals. Alan picked up a malignant skin disease down there and he never recovered. It killed him in 1939.

SEYMOUR HACKER,

the oldest congregant at Judson, still runs his art books business on 57th Street in New York City.