

The Philadelphia Evening Telegraph
(April 28, 1902)

MINISTER DENOUNCES THE LATE COL. M'KEE

The Rev. Dr. McGuire Declares "the Infidel Stands Higher with God Than Such."

At St. Thomas' Protestant Episcopal Church, Twelfth street, below Walnut, the Rev. G. Alexander McGuire, rector, preached from the text found in Timothy v. 8: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than the infidel." The sermon was suggested by the will Colonel John McKee, the negro millionaire, who left only an annuity of \$30 to his only daughter and eight grandchildren, the remainder going for a military academy.

"From the context," said Rev. Mr. McGuire, "it is clear that St. Paul was instructing Timothy concerning the duty of children towards a widowed mother. In passing, however, he gives general direction, that all Christians should provide for those dependent upon them. By this passage, St. Paul asserts the obligations that spring out of family relationship, especially the duty of supporting dependent relations. Our religion does not make this matter of choice, but a duty.

"You may have the greatest funeral pomp and ceremony over the dead body of such a man, yet if he has not provided for his own the text may well be an inscription on his tomb: 'He hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.' We were [sic] governed under the Jewish or Mosaic law, he could not [sic] have given his property to outside parties. When we see such a disposition of an estate as provided for in a recently published will we might well wish that these laws were in force.

"No self-respecting persons can become the executors, no religious body can consistently accept his gifts, when he denies a decent shelter to a child and cuts off dearest kind with a few paltry dollars. The infidel stands higher with God than such."

BARCLAY H. WARBURTON
PRESIDENT OF "THE EVENING TELEGRAPH."

Will you kindly permit me to say, in reply to Rev. McGuire's denunciation of the late Colonel McKee, that Mr. McGuire should have found a better excuse than the text of the fifth chapter, eighth verse of St. Paul's epistle to Timothy, for his exhibition of bigotry. If he will look over the chapter again, he will possibly see that St. Paul was not speaking of legacies of money, but of the serving of those in the household, in the fear and love of God.

Let me admonish Mr. McGuire to study St. Paul's epistle to Timothy, so that he may understand that the end of the commandment is charity, and from a pure heart and a good

conscience, and that, to be a teacher of the law, he should understand the law. The law is good if men use it lawfully.

The law of the land permits a man to do with his own as he pleases. The late Colonel, like the late Stephen Girard, chose to give his money for the purpose of educating boys, with this difference: The former makes no distinction of color, and provides for a Christian education; whilst the latter barred the blacks, and forbade the teaching of any religion. It is scarcely becoming to the character of a religious teacher to denounce Colonel McKee as an infidel because his will was that boys be trained in the knowledge and law of God, and to remain absolutely silent about the latter; who also cut off his relatives in order to establish a home where boys should be trained without any such advantage.

While it is to be regretted that Colonel McKee did not leave his child a larger share of his estate, it is, nevertheless, his act, and not that of his executors, who, as self-respecting and law-abiding citizens, have this duty thrust upon them, and will, as the law demands, fulfill its obligations. It seems to me a great pity that men of the character of Rev. Mr. McGuire should be so narrow and bigoted as to attempt to insinuate that the good and respected Archbishop of Philadelphia is not a self-respecting person. And why should not a religious body accept a gift which is proffered for the purpose of educating youth in mind and heart? Does Mr. McGuire think it would be consistent with religious principles to reject the gift intended for the best purposes for which money can be used, viz: the education of boys and the making of Christian, God-fearing citizens?

H.C. McD
(April 30, 1902)

It is related as a singular fact in connection with his property holdings that Colonel McKee made many thousands of dollars out of the city of Philadelphia in damages awarded him owing to the change of grade in front of his houses.

The most notable of these was a property on Callowhill Street, near Thirteenth, where Holmes, the arch-murderer killed his last victim, Benjamin Peitzel¹, and from which house he was run to earth by Philadelphia detectives.

The contest for his property may be a bitterly contested battle at law or it may be settled easily.

If Archbishop Ryan refuses to accept a trusteeship for reasons which will have been partially advanced, it will probably leave the matter in such shape that the will can be easily broken.

Colonel McKee's private office and "den" is the most curious place of its kind it is possible to conceive.

¹ At 1316 Callowhill Street, murderer H. H. Holmes, and his partner Ben Petizel set up a phony patent office.

He used it as his business headquarters for over half a century -- for fifty-two years, in fact. Back in the 30's it must have been the front basement as those sections of old Philadelphia houses are remembered.

It stands just as it did fifty-two years ago, when Colonel McKee first began to build up his fortune and plan his trades and deals from the plain-topped desk which stands under the small windows admitting the light from Lombard Street.

The walls were hidden by sets of shelves, upon which stand boxes of papers recording his transactions and documents of all sorts pertaining to them.

The negro financier had a system all his own in keeping track of his extensive interests. On every side in this den are to be seen evidences of the care he must have taken to keep everything in proper order.

He was strongly opposed to altering the office in any way, even when the demands of his business necessitated more room and the picture of the place to-day is an almost exact reproduction of its interior fifty years ago.
