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New York Herald
Wednesday March 4,
1914

**NEGROES ADMITTED
TO CHURCHES WITH
WEALTHY FAMILIES**

Protestants in Riverdale Give
Welcome to Children from
Orphan Asylum.

**WHITE GIRLS WILL
BE THEIR TEACHERS**

Section of the City Long Has Fought
Incursions of Undesirable
Residents.

Riverdale, a section of New York city
containing many of its finest homes and
a society of wealthy families who for
years have fought unwelcome residents, is
assimilating the negro.

Such families as those of George W. Perkins, Cleveland H. Dodge and Fleming H. Revell have successfully fought the incursions of undesirables for years, purchasing their property wherever they obtained a holding and eventually driving them beyond the limits of that beautiful Hudson River colony that lies north of Spuyten Duyvil and south of Yonkers.

But the doors of their temples now have been thrown open to negroes, and at least three of the most exclusive Protestant churches have established Sunday school classes for the children of the Negro Orphan Asylum at Riverdale.

This action on the part of the clergymen, instead of being resented by their wealthy communicants, is expected to be followed by similar action by four other Protestant churches. One church has declined to accept the negro children on the ground that it has no room.

Christ Church, of which Bishop Charles Sumner Burch is a parishioner, has accepted fifty of the children, and has set aside a transept for their care. Teachers, who are white young women, have been assigned to instruct them for an hour each Sunday.

The Presbyterian Church, which is credited with the wealthiest congregation, including the Perkins, Revell and Dodge families, has set aside two pews and assigned young women of prominent families to teach the negro children their Sunday school lessons.

The Baptist Church in Valentine lane, Riverdale, has set aside its entire gallery for negroes and will provide teachers for them.

The Rev. Charles M. Arbuckle, pastor of the Baptist Church, and the other clergymen who already have accepted negroes were appealed to by Miss C. M. Wood, superintendent of the asylum, with requests that they establish Sunday school classes for negro children in her care. Miss Wood felt that if the children were permitted to attend such classes away from the asylum it would afford much needed diversion.

Mrs. Willard Parker, Jr., is president of the Board of Trustees of the asylum and on the Board are many of the wealthiest women in New York.

Article Indicates youth attended church at special time and in special location to receive Sunday school lessons and were not included in the church service.

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- Article from New York Times Saturday October 6 1917
Indicates the dissent within the vestry was very public

TOWNSMEN PROTEST IN RECTOR'S BEHALF

Kingsbridge Takes Part of Dr.
Carstensen in Row with
Vestrymen.

PETITION TO BISHOP GREER

Clergyman Resented Attempt to
Dictate Length of Service So
as to Please Golfers.

Vigorous protests against the cause which led to the resignation of the Rev. Dr. G. A. Carstensen, for fifteen years rector of Christ Episcopal Church, Riverdale, were voiced last night at a meeting of the Kingsbridge branch of the Home Defense League, held at the Kingsbridge Police Station. Dr. Carstensen gave up his charge because of the opposition of some vestrymen who objected to some of his policies and to the presence of children from a nearby negro orphan asylum at the church services.

A petition urging Bishop Greer to interest himself in keeping Dr. Carstensen in this vicinity was framed, and it will be circulated among the residents of every denomination in Kingsbridge and Riverdale. A similar protest meeting will be held next Tuesday night by the Riverdale branch of the Home Defense League, and it is expected that all the neighborhood organizations will combine and hold a mass meeting in Riverdale soon.

In a statement last night Dr. Carstensen said that one of the members of his vestry tried to dictate to him the proper length of the service so as "to accommodate golfers," and had interfered in various other ecclesiastical prerogatives.

Dr. Carstensen has received the assurances of George B. Cortelyou and Darwin P. Kingsley, two of the vestrymen, that they will do all in their power to aid him in his difficulties. Among the other vestrymen of the church are Edward C. Delafield, John Ross Delafield, Archibald Douglass, Frank S. Hackett, Nicholas Kelly, Edwin H. Strange, John M. High, and Thomas N. Cuthbert.

Objected to Negro Worshipers.

The resignation of Dr. Carstensen was the climax of a series of trying experiences. The rector had consented to allow the colored children to visit the church at the request of the Superintendent of the orphan asylum. Prominent among those who objected to the presence of the children, according to those conversant with the situation, was Edward C. Delafield, President of the Franklin Trust Company, Treasurer of the church.

Dr. Carstensen is said to have called Mr. Delafield's attention to the inscription over the door of the church, which read, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people," and the Vestryman is said to have replied that it made no difference, as he did not want to "mingle" with negroes. Mr. Delafield said last night he had not heard of the inscription incident and that he had no statement to make.

Bishop Greer heard of the trouble about the children and wrote to the Vestrymen asking that no action be taken until consultation was had with him. He received a reply saying that the Vestrymen had already decided on action. The Bishop wrote again, and as soon as the letter was received it is said that the orphan asylum Superintendent was notified that his children were no longer welcome at the church, and Bishop Greer was notified that it was too late for an interview.

Bishop Burch yesterday declined to discuss the trouble, as he said it was strictly "a parochial matter." He admitted, however, that both he and Bishop Greer had not hesitated to declare that Dr. Carstensen was correct in allowing the colored children to enter the church.

"Bishop Greer and I upheld Dr. Carstensen in the controversy regarding the orphans," said Bishop Burch. "We believed he was right in permitting the children to enter the church. I know Dr. Carstensen is a loyal and faithful worker, a fine scholar and an unusual preacher."

Tells of Secret Vestry Meeting.

Dr. Carstensen was very reluctant yesterday to discuss his resignation, but he finally consented to make the following statement of his position:

"In October, 1915, a prominent member of the vestry organized a self-constituted committee of himself and two other Vestrymen, who, with their wives, waited on Bishop Greer and petitioned for my removal, a wholly irregular and unprecedented thing to do. They kept their action secret. No one knew of it until I discovered it in December. Then the leader of the trio attempted to get a meeting of the vestry without my presence, to which his colleagues would not consent. So I attended the vestry meeting and told them that I was willing and ready to resign. They refused to consider my resignation, and rebuked the three persons who had resorted to irregular procedure.

"Another thing that makes it unpleasant for me was that the same member introduced a resolution forbidding the rector to give the congregation the opportunity to contribute to the missionary work of the church. The gentleman has defiantly disregarded the authority of the Bishop. He has made disobedience to the Bishop the test of my loyalty to the vestry, one of his frequent adjurations to me being that I should 'stand by my vestry.'

"He has tried to dictate to me in the matter of the ritual the proper length of the service to accommodate golfers, and has interfered in various other prerogatives for which I was under no responsibility to any but my ecclesiastical superior.

"I was obliged to say to the gentleman before the vestry once that I could not fight him, because he could not fight unless he hit below the belt; I could not play with him, because he would not play unless he attacked the cards.

"It came to the point where I might stay in Riverdale and save my livelihood, but I would lose my manhood. I preferred to resign and save my manhood at the risk of losing my livelihood.

"It gives me positive grief to leave Riverdale. It has been the scene of my greatest sorrows, for my wife and only son died there. My greatest joys, however, have been experienced in Riverdale. I have made some enemies, for which I have no apologies to offer, but I have made some of the strongest and dearest friendships any man could have been blessed with. I bear no ill-will to any man, even those who have shown ill-will to me, but there is no church on God's footstool big enough to contain one member of the vestry and me at the same time."

- Vestry Members at the time
George B Cortelyou*
Darwin P Kingsley*
Edward Delafield
John Ross Delafield
Archibald Douglass
Frank S. Hackett
Nicholas Kelly
Edwin Strange
John M High
Thomas Cuthbert
* Expressed support for the rector

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- Rev. Gustav Cartensen New York Times Obituary June 27, 1941 page 1 of 2
- Wikipedia quote 5/9/2019:
- "Rev. Gustav Cartensen was Rector until 1919. He was the first to permit attendance of black children from a nearby "Negro orphan asylum".

DR. CARSTENSEN, 90, MINISTER 65 YEARS

Rector Emeritus of Holyrood
Episcopal Church, Foe of
Prohibition, Dies

CHAPLAIN IN SPANISH WAR

General Secretary of Church
Congress, 1905-20—Once
Served at Riverdale

The Rev. Dr. Gustav A. Carstensen, rector emeritus of Holyrood Protestant Episcopal Church, Fort Washington Avenue and 179th Street, died yesterday morning at St. John's Hospital, Brooklyn. He had been confined to the hospital for the last two months with a broken hip. His age was 90.



REV. DR. G. A. CARSTENSEN

Underwood & Underwood, 1936

Dr. Carstensen, who was ordained in 1876, had been an active and colorful figure in local Episcopal circles. An opponent of sensationalism within the church, he often clashed during his sixty-five years of service with the Rev. Dr. William Norman Guthrie, Dr. Percy Stickney Grant and other clergymen who represented the "Modernist" side of the church.

In many ways Dr. Carstensen was an extreme liberal and often came to the support of the younger generation when it was subjected to attacks for "wildness" during the Twenties and Thirties.

At a time when few ventured to criticize the Eighteenth Amendment and many churchmen were opposed to any modification of prohibition, Dr. Carstensen took the lead in the "wet" forces, denounced prohibition from his pulpit and deplored the passing of the saloon.

Condemned Prohibition in '26

He was elected president of the Church Temperance Society in 1926 but declined the office and in a sermon to his congregation in Holyrood Church said that prohibition was wrong ethically, unsound economically and impossible psychologically.

Dr. Carstensen was born in St. Croix, then one of the Danish West Indies, on June 15, 1851, a son of George Bernard and Mary Ann Carstensen. His father, who was one of the architects for the New York Crystal Palace in 1853, had built the famous Tivoli Gardens, a large amusement park in the center of Copenhagen.

After leaving the West Indies, the Carstensen family first moved to Lafayette, Ind., where he remembered that when a lad of 13 he carried a torch in a night demonstration for Abraham Lincoln.

Later the family moved to New York, where Dr. Carstensen attended high school and Hobart College, from which he was graduated in 1873. He received the degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology from the General Theological Seminary in 1876, and two years later took a master's degree at Hobart.

For a year after his ordination he served as a missionary at St. John's Church, Elkhart, Ind. Dr. Carstensen, who became a Doctor of Divinity in 1910, was successively rector of Grace Church in Toledo, Ohio; Christ Church, Meadville, Pa.; St. Paul's Church, Erie, Pa.; St. Paul's Church, Indianapolis; Christ Church, Riverdale, N. Y., and finally Holyrood Church. He was appointed rector of Holyrood in 1919, and retired to become rector emeritus in 1927.

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Article Continued

Resigned at Riverdale Church

Dr. Carstensen's liberal viewpoint was instrumental in causing his resignation from the Riverdale Church. He resigned when several Vestrymen of the church objected to his permitting members of a nearby Negro orphan asylum to attend the Sunday services. When the Vestrymen's objections became known, he immediately handed in his resignation as rector and soon was appointed rector of Holyrood Church, which under his direction became one of the leading churches of Washington Heights.

At Holyrood, his liberal tendencies were given widespread publicity. A moderate smoker himself—he limited himself to two cigars a day “with several pipefuls not counting”—he saw no harm in smoking and frequently told his congregation so. Likewise, when the younger post-war generation came in for criticism by its elders, Dr Carstensen rose to their defense, declaring that the youth of today were “at least twice as clean, twice as honest and twice as hard a worker” as the youth fifty years before that. He permitted the younger set of his congregation to hold dances in the Sunday School room of the church and encouraged all community activities.

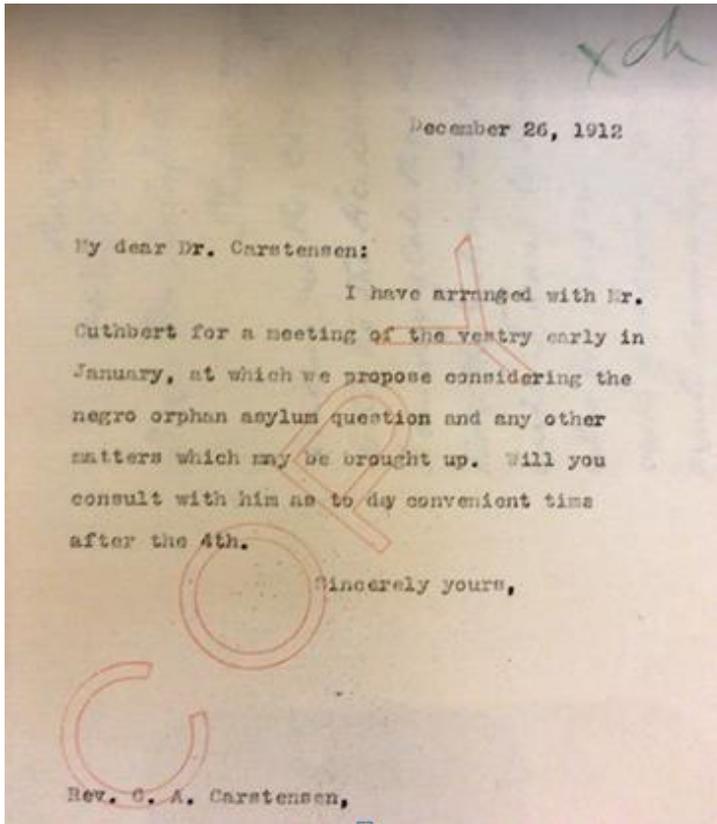
Dr. Carstensen served as general secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Church Congress in the United States from 1905 to 1920. During the Spanish-American War he served as chaplain of the 158th Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, and was chaplain also of the New York Commandery, Military Order of Foreign Wars.

In 1877 he married Miss Mary Rutherford Thomas of Rutherford, N. J. Surviving is a daughter, Miss Grace Carstensen of 142-02 Franklin Avenue, Flushing, Queens, with whom he resided.

CCR Vestry Correspondence page 1 of 3

Copies of communication on this topic in from Christ Church Archives in chronological order

This appeared to be a problem from 1912 to 1917 when the rector resigned . The following slides provide insight to the vestry's position.



December 26, 1912

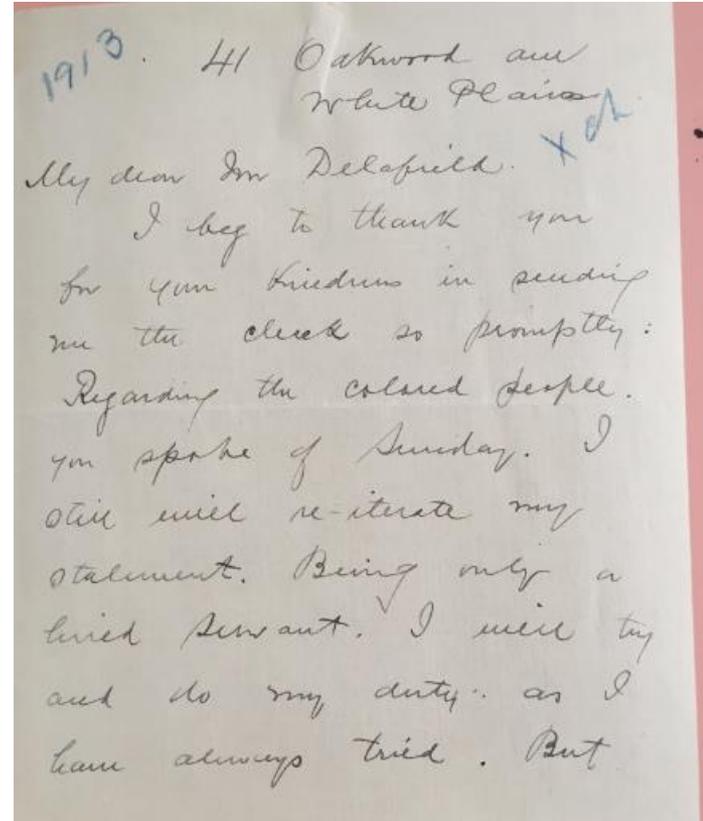
My dear Dr. Carstensen:

I have arranged with Mr. Guthbert for a meeting of the vestry early in January, at which we propose considering the negro orphan asylum question and any other matters which may be brought up. Will you consult with him as to any convenient time after the 4th.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. G. A. Carstensen,

Correspondence to the Rector
believe clerk of the vestry



1913. 41 Oakwood and
White Plains.

My dear Mr. Delafield.

I beg to thank you
for your kindness in sending
me the check so promptly.

Regarding the colored people
you spoke of Sunday. I
still will re-iterate my
statement. Being only a
hired servant, I will try
and do my duty, as I
have always tried. But

Communication to Mr. Edward Delafield one of the
stronger voices against having the children attend service
From a member of the congregation that suggest the
youth could assist the choir

CCR Vestry Correspondence page 2 of 3

Is there any reason why they cannot
have a place of their own?
Undoubtedly they would help a great
deal in the singing, but would
that compensate for the ill-feeling
that will surely rise if they are
allotted a place in our church.
For themselves, I may be wrong,
but that's how I feel.
Again thanking you,
Truly, J. Strang

Continuation of letter from previous slide.

My dear Mr. Delafield.
As you think it
would be a splendid
idea to have the
colored orphans come
to church, we could
have a colored choir,
& that would do away
with the expense
of having the
children come from

Letter to vestry member Delafield from vestry member
Strange suggesting a "colored choir"

CCR Vestry Correspondence page 3 of 3

the Ladies & Watts, it would
also become the work of
the Sunday school
too. The Ladies & Watts
children have Sunday
school every Sunday afternoon
so ours is really an open-
door. Perhaps you have
heard, Burleigh (the colored
town) sing at St. George's, &
know what a delightful
voice he has. This is
nearly a suggestion on my
part, & one way in which
the approach can be
cut down. Sincerely yours
Edw. M. Strayer
Jan 28 - '14

Continuation of letter from previous
slide

April 4, 1914.

Edmund D. Randolph, Esq.,
Mount St. Vincent,
New York City.

My dear Mr. Randolph:-

I have your nice note about the church and I feel that you have not been kept properly informed of the actual conditions and hope that when you hear you will continue a pew holder and not merely a contributor to the church's activities.

I feel just as you do that if we must have a mixed congregation of this sort, I would rather worship where I can do so without such disagreeable surroundings, but I want you to know that at the vestry meeting a month ago the vestry, with only one vote in opposition, voted that admission be refused to the negroes of the Negro Orphan Asylum at the morning service and that they be invited to attend a special service which the Rector was given permission to inaugurate for their benefit. The Rector was requested to so inform them and he failed to do so and allowed them to continue coming, contrary to the resolution of the vestry. The vestry met again on Thursday of this week and repassed a similar resolution and the clerk of the vestry, Mr. Outhbert, is now to inform the Negro Orphan Asylum of the vestry's determination.

At the last meeting, or at the former meeting, every one of the vestry but one was present and we are all unanimous excepting one member, Mr. Backett, who does not consider the practical questions involved or the experience of the South and of other communities along these lines. I appreciate very strongly your feelings, and especially that you should take the trouble to send me a letter explaining them, but hope that the matter will now be satisfactorily solved. The real difficulty lies in the obstinate attitude of the Rector which the vestry must overcome.

With best wishes to Mrs. Randolph, I am
Very sincerely yours,

Letter indicating the vestry voted to refuse Negroes to attend morning service only special service led by the Rev