

HALE FAMILY PIANO IS THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

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Dr. J. D. Hale, formerly of Hale's Mills, Tenn., afterwards Gen. Thomas' chief of scouts during the war, and now residing at Bowie, Md., tells a remarkable story of the experiences of a piano, which is still in the possession of the family and in good condition. It is exceedingly doubtful if any other piano in the country has such a stirring and romantic history.



Dr. J.D. Hale

In the year 1857 the instrument was brought to Hale's Mills, Tenn., from Albany, N. Y., and when placed in position and tried by Miss Ackerman, the children's teacher, she declared, "There is an angel in the house." The sentiment was echoed by the entire family. The piano remained, and also the angel, until the Hale retreat in July, 1861, when hale's neighbors, fearing the rebels would burn the hamlet, as they were threatening, waded the river, carried it across and concealed it in a corn field, whence other neighbors conveyed it to Mr. John Wells' residence, near the Kentucky line, where it remained several months, and was then removed to Albany, Clinton County, Ky.

In April, 1862, when Mrs. Hale's experiences had taught her that she must remove herself in order to retain any means to live on or even decent clothing to cover the children, she went to Creesboro, on the Cumberland River, leaving the piano, minus the legs, packed in a box with clothing and a United States flag, the one hoisted over the mills July 4, 1861, in Maj. Brent's house, where she had been living.

The next news the Hale family heard of the piano, clothing, flag and cover, they had been captured by a Confederate force and taken in a ox wagon to the town of Sparta, white County, Tenn. The flag was fastened to a horse's tail and dragged through the streets of the town, amid shouts and jeers; the clothing was disposed of, the rubber piano cover cut in the middle and corn by the Captain, and the piano, after being fitted on pieces of bedstead legs, was sold to a Mr. Anderson, of White County, Tenn., in whose possession it was found by a company of Federal soldiers the latter part of 1865 and conveyed to Livingston, Overton County, Tenn., where it remained some months, and was then removed to the Hale's Mill site in the year 1866, and placed upon its old legs again, the same "angel," though battered and rather out of tune.

The flag that was so maltreated at Sparta was replaced by an old garrison flag from the United States Ordinance Department, by order of Gen. George H. Thomas, in 1866, but is only displayed on special occasions.

The piano remained at the Mills site until some time in the year 1870, when it was shipped to the manufacturers in Albany, N. Y., for repairs, and then to Stoddard, N. H., where it remained until 1885, and was then shipped to Bowie, Prince George County, Md., where it now is in possession of the Hale family, and remains, the “angel in the house.”

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