

OLD VIOLIN TAKEN OUT OF THE STATE

One that "Belongs to the Devil"
Carried to Massachu-
setts.

LONG IN THE WELLS FAMILY

WESTERLY Jan. 8.—On his return home to Boston, Mass., from a recent visit to his birthplace in Hopkinton City, Dr. A. L. Wells took with him an old violin left by his late father, Augustus L. Wells, which may or may not be a genuine Stradivarius. This instrument has passed down through the family to the fifth Edward Sheffield Wells, then to the late A. L. Wells, now to Dr. Wells and next will go to his sons, Russell and Elliot Wells, if they survive their father, they being the only male descendants of the family to perpetuate the family name.

In the days of the great-grandfather of Dr. Wells the religious opinion of a violin was that it was an instrument of the devil, a sentiment which had not fully died out in the days of Dr. Wells' grandfather. To illustrate, Hon. Ebenezer C. Silliman, cashier of the Ashaway Savings Bank told the doctor while in Ashaway waiting for the trolley car on his way home with the instrument in his hand, that the worst threatening he ever received in his life was given him by his father, when as a small boy he ran away from home to attend a musicale at a neighbors where Edward Sheffield Wells, the fourth played this very same violin and his daughter played a bass viol. Mr. Silliman is willing to take oath that the religious sentiment condemning the violin had not died out in the time of his father.

In the days of Edward Sheffield Wells, third great-grandfather of Dr. Wells, a great revival of religion spread over the vicinity of Ashaway and Hopkinton City, and the old gentleman got it into his head that it was really a sin to play upon the violin so he took it down to the river near his home and at Wellstown bridge and buried it in the river weighted down with stones and charged a neighbor never to reveal its hiding place even after he was dead. Some time after Dr. Wells passed away, and his family instituted an inquiry as to the whereabouts of the old violin. The neighbor at length told what he knew and on the strength of his testimony, Edward S. Wells the fourth, went to the river and after a long wet search, found it under the water and mud and stones collapsed but all there except the bridge of the instrument. He took it home to the old gate house on the brow of the hill at Hopkinton City for a long time the family home—repaired and used it at many musical entertainments during his day.

The late Augustus L. Wells amused himself during many lonely hours endeavoring to draw harmony from the old instrument as his neighbors can testify. We cannot trace its history farther back but it has now found a home in the principal city of the state from which it probably came to Rhode Island, an Ipswich Mass. is where the family originated in this country. Now we learn that every evening it is taken from its case and the sons of Dr. Wells—Russell and Elliot—students in Harvard College, following the example of Dr. Lyman Beecher quiet their tired nerves by the use of the fiddle as tradition says he did after a tedious day of preaching.