

The English Bentside Spinet 1660 to 1730  
A Detailed Look At 4 Major Makers

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Introduction.

For many years now since the revival of interest in the harpsichord and other instruments of its type and especially since Charles Mould wrote his thesis on the English Harpsichord, there have been calls for a study of spinets. These small, all too often unnoticed, domestic keyboard instruments are in plentiful supply in this country and there is much information around on them. This makes it surprising that no one has tried to bring it together before.

This dissertation is a beginning to the very long task of collecting information on all the surviving English bent-side spinets, which will take the form of an information bank, much as Charles Mould is doing at the Bodleian Library at Oxford, where he is now editor of Donald H. Boalch's book "The Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440-1840."

Here I deal with four of the major makers of the period 1660-1730, with an additional brief section of other makers of interest on whom I had details. Illustrations have been included wherever possible as they speak louder than words when it comes to describing the appearance of an instrument. Of course, there were large quantities of spinets made in the period 1730 to 1800, many from large production workshops such as Baker Harris ran. These later spinets will be dealt with in their turn.

I end this introduction with a challenge for anyone to take up the subject of the English Virginals, which were made in such large numbers up to the 1660's, when the 'continental' spinet replaced them in popularity. I also invite anyone to send me details of spinets they come across, or to write to me asking about spinets I have information on. I will be happy to send anything I can.