Chapter 2

Surgeon George Worgan’s Square Piano
(Frederick Beck, London, 1780/86?)

Stewart Symonds, the owner of a large private collection of keyboard instruments in Australia,¹ claims that one particular square piano in his collection was brought to Australia by surgeon George Worgan on board the flagship of the First Fleet, the Sirius (Plate 15). Although there is no single piece of evidence that definitively and unequivocally substantiates the claim, the instrument’s date, its campaign-furniture-style stand (which uniquely incorporates cabriole legs hinged to the bottom of the piano’s case) and hearsay strongly reinforce the validity of Symonds’ assertion; each of these factors is ‘reliant on a broad historical and colonial context for their relevance to be apparent’.²

Plate 15 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?).

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

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¹ Within Australia, Symonds’ collection (which currently comprises 131 instruments) is unrivalled in both its scope and its depth. In ca 1969, Symonds purchased his first piano from Albert George Briskie (1914–87), an eccentric antiques collector and dealer in Sydney. See ‘Tea, Cake, Convivial Company and a Proposed Provenance’ in Appendix B, Volume 2 of this publication. The instrument, a Broadwood & Sons square piano, dated 1837, was completed on Monday, 2 January 1837, exactly 100 years (to the day) before Symonds was born. The piano still forms a part of Symonds’ formidable keyboard instrument collection.

The First Fleet Piano: A Musician’s View

The First Fleet arrived at Sydney Cove on Saturday, 26 January 1788. During the two decades preceding 1788, there were several highly regarded piano makers in London. One of these makers was Frederick Beck. In late January 1788, as the *Sirius* lay anchored in the tranquil waters of Sydney Cove, it appears that part of the precious cargo that had been brought thousands of kilometres from England to the Antipodes was a square piano made by Frederick Beck.

**Frederick Beck**

Frederick Beck’s signature—‘Fk Beck London 1763’—appears on an English ‘guittar’.3 An inscription, handwritten in ink on the soundboard of a 1778 Beck square piano reads: *A F Beck, 1777*.4 Frederick Beck’s signature on his marriage bond, dated Tuesday, 7 September 1779 (Plate 16), takes the following form: *Arnold Frederick Beck* (Plate 16a).5 Furthermore, a handwritten inscription on the soundboard of one of the two extant Beck ‘tangent action’6 square pianos reads: *A. F. Beck. 1790. Patent* (Plate 16b).7 Beck is commonly referred to as ‘Frederick Beck’; the usual omission of Beck’s first name, ‘Arnold’, may be due to the fact that nameboard inscriptions on his extant square pianos usually include *Fredericus Beck*.8

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3 See P. Poulopoulos, ‘The Influence of Germans on the Development of “This Favourite Instrument the Guittar” in England’, in *Soundboard: The Journal of the Guitar Foundation of America* (2012), Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 72, fn. 59. The English guittar ‘is a plucked-stringed instrument which was popular in the British Isles during the second half of the eighteenth century. The instrument is characterized by a wide variety of design, construction, and decoration features; however, the majority of surviving guitars typically have a round or oval body with a flat back, a movable bridge, twelve or more metal frets fixed on an arched fingerboard, and a head equipped with wooden pegs or a watch-key tuning machine. The guittar, which usually had ten wire strings, with two single strings for the bass and four double for the treble courses, was normally tuned to an open major chord and plucked with fingers rather than a plectrum. During the second half of the eighteenth century, when the instrument was developed, it was usually called “guittar” (and more rarely “guitar”).’ Poulopoulos, p. 69, fn. 1.

4 The soundboard date denotes a late-year production. I am indebted to Thomas Strange, owner of this instrument, for this information. See also ‘Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck’, below.

5 I am indebted to Graham Walker for providing me with a copy of the marriage bond.

6 See ‘Tangent Action’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication.


8 See ‘b) The Absence of a Date’ in ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.
Plate 16 Marriage bond between Arnold Frederick Beck and Rose Ann Shudi, 7 September 1779.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the London Metropolitan Archives (Diocese of London Deposit).

Plate 16a Marriage bond between Arnold Frederick Beck and Rose Ann Shudi, 7 September 1779: Frederick Beck’s signature (detail).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the London Metropolitan Archives (Diocese of London Deposit).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Malcolm Rose. Photo by Malcolm Rose.

Plate 16c Frederick Beck’s address as recorded by the City of Westminster Coroner’s Court, 20 November 1765 (detail).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

Not much is known about Frederick Beck. Unfortunately, ‘little biographical detail is available even today about major’ late eighteenth-century London-based piano makers.9

Beck’s place and date of birth are unknown. Margaret Cranmer informs us that Frederick Beck was born in Württemburg, and baptised there on Friday 30 May 1738.10 Regrettably, Cranmer does not provide information concerning the source(s) upon which her remarks are based.

‘There is inferential evidence that … [Beck] was born in a German-speaking [culture] … because, along with Gabriel Buntebart, he was selected for a jury at

9 Clinkscale, Makers of the Piano 1700–1820, p. xi.
the Old Bailey which was composed of six “German” and six English members.'
On Wednesday, 26 February 1783, a certain Charles Bairnes appeared at the Old Bailey, charged with stealing. Records of Bairnes’ trial reveal that:

(The prisoner being a German, was asked by the Court, whether he chose to have one half of the jury composed of his own countrymen, to which he replied in the affirmative, and the following jury were sworn.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>James Manley</th>
<th>Gottfried Kleinert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Brewer</td>
<td>Andrew Schabner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Williams</td>
<td>Frederick Lang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Massey</td>
<td>Gabriel Buntebart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Grant</td>
<td>Frederick Beck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Bensley</td>
<td>Christian Burkard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the court record, the six jurors listed in the right-hand column were Bairnes’ ‘own countrymen’—that is, German. Frederick Beck is listed among them. The inclusion of Beck and his Germanic compatriots, however, may have been predicated on the fact that they all spoke German, not that they were all German by birth. Happily, Charles Bairnes was pronounced not guilty.

In 1741, in Lavenham, England, ‘there was a spinet maker’ with the surname Beck, ‘but it is most unlikely that this was’ Frederick Beck. Boalch posits that this artisan ‘may have been’ Frederick Beck’s forebear, but provides no information to substantiate his hypothesis.

Frederick Beck’s surname should not be confused with that of the harpsichord maker Nicholas Beckman (fl. ca 1775–78), who, according to a Sun Fire Office insurance policy dated ‘[Thursday,] 5 October 1775’ (policy no. 360046), lived at ‘9 Little Russell Street Drury Lane’. No harpsichords or spinets by Beckman are known to have survived.

Frederick Beck’s surname should also not be confused with that of the Bavarian-born London-based piano maker John Conrad Becker (fl. ca 1801–41). Johann Nikolaus Forkel, the German music theorist and organist at the University Church at Göttingen, reports (albeit two decades before John Conrad Becker flourished) in his Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland auf das Jahr 1782:

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14 Boalch, Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440 to 1840, p. 6.
16 See ibid., p. 27, fn. 30.
Becker … Klavierinstrumentmacher in London; geb. in Deutschland. Soll besonders gute Pianoforte machen.

[Becker … Keyboard instrument maker in London; born in Germany. He makes particularly good Pianofortes.]¹⁷

Becker worked in Princes Street, Soho, London,¹⁸ in about 1801. At some time during the first decades of the nineteenth century, Becker returned to Germany with his son Jacob (d. 1879). Subsequently, father and son moved to St Petersburg in Russia, where they established a renowned piano-making firm that bore their surname.¹⁹

There is no evidence that Becker and Beck were related. Furthermore, the period during which Becker made pianos in London lies outside the period during which Beck flourished in that city.

Cranmer states that Frederick Beck ‘left Germany for England some time after 1756’²⁰—that is, some time after his eighteenth year.²¹ Clinkscale, citing Adélaïde de Place,²² states that Beck ‘opened a dealership or perhaps even operated a workshop in Paris … at 364 rue Saint-Denis’.²³ De Place and Clinkscale give no evidence to support their assertion, and provide no time frame for the period during which Beck conducted his trade in Paris. If de Place, Clinkscale and Cranmer are correct, Beck may have: 1) interrupted his journey to England in order to establish a dealership/workshop in Paris; or (more plausibly) 2) after establishing a successful dealership/workshop in London, subsequently set up a sales outpost in Paris; or 3) moved to Paris from London in later life, continuing to make pianos between his 81st and 84th years. According to de Place, a piano maker named Beck worked in Paris between 1819 and 1822.²⁴ It has not been verified whether: a) this was Frederick Beck; or b) this maker was a relative of Frederick Beck. The unidentified Beck may have been Joseph Beck (1777–1848), maker of a miniature square piano dated ca 1820–1848 (estimate).²⁵

In Paris, the law dictated that Frederick Beck would have been allowed to open a dealership/workshop if he satisfied one of two requirements:

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¹⁷ Forkel, Musicalischer Almanach für Deutschland auf das Jahr 1782, p. 197.
²¹ This calculation is based on the date of Frederick Beck’s birth (1738) given in Cranmer, ‘Beck, Frederick’ (2007–13).
²³ Clinkscale, Makers of the Piano 1700–1820, p. 19.
²⁴ de Place, Le Piano-forte à Paris entre 1760 et 1822, p. 180.
1. acceptance into the guild of Tabletiers, Luthiers et Eventaillistes (fine cabinet makers, instrument makers and fan makers)

2. having a ‘brevet from the King or some noble family’.  

The Parisian guild of Tabletiers, Luthiers et Eventaillistes rarely admitted craftsmen under the age of 30 into their ranks. If de Place, Clinkscale and Cranmer are correct, Frederick Beck may have arrived in Paris some time after his eighteenth year—that is, some time after 1756. Evidence suggests that approximately six years later, in ca 1762—that is around his 24th year—Beck was resident in London. If Beck sojourned in Paris on his way to London, managing to obtain Parisian guild recognition some time between his 18th and 24th years, he must not only have ‘achieved master class skill’, but also ‘have had experience with making keyboard instruments, and certainly fine cabinet making before he came to Paris’. It is unlikely that Beck

1. possessed the skills of a master craftsman by his 24th year (let alone earlier)

2. was considered for guild membership at the tender age of 24 (let alone earlier).

It is doubtful that Beck—a relatively young and untested instrument maker during the late 1750s to early 1760s—would have been allowed to establish a dealership/workshop in Paris at that time.

The earliest written evidence of Beck’s business activities [in London] indicates that he was involved in the manufacture of [English guittars in] 1763, while ‘a Guittar by Beck’ was auctioned among other household objects in 1766. However, the earliest surviving instrument bearing Beck’s name is a guittar signed ‘Beck & Pinto/London 1764’ while there are five more surviving guittars by Beck alone, all produced between 1765 and 1766.  

‘The guittar dated 1764 and signed “Beck & Pinto” suggests that in the mid-1760s’ Frederick Beck was in partnership with Charles Pinto (fl. 1764–92).
Records of the City of Westminster Coroner’s Court show that a ‘Frederick Beck’ was a member of the jury at an inquest held on Wednesday, 20 November 1765—33 that is, 18 years before he served as a jury member at the Old Bailey on 26 February 1783.34 Court records give Frederick Beck’s address as ‘Gla.~ Court, Sw’35 (Plate 16c). Although the superscript squiggle following the period is undecipherable, ‘Gla.~ Court’ almost certainly refers to Glassonbury Court. ‘Sw’ refers to the Borough of Southwark. (Glassonbury Court was located off Rose Street, three blocks westward from Covent Garden Market, and was bordered by St Martin’s Lane on the west, Long Acre on the north, James Street on the east, and New Street/King Street on the south.)36 If the person listed in the court record of 20 November 1765 is Frederick Beck the piano maker, we must assume that he was officially regarded as a London resident by late November 1765.

Cranmer states that Beck, aged 32,37 ‘married Mary Coles on 23 September 1770’ in London.38

What is certain is that some time after 1756 and before his marriage, Frederick Beck left the Continent for England.

Barbara Broadwood’s39 account book (begun in 1769) contains a mention of ‘Mrs. Beck’.40 (The book contains entries made ‘by at least four … people, though Barbara was the first to use it,41 and she opened the book with the statement: this is the Book belongs to Barbara Broadwood’.)42 On page 71 of Barbara’s account book, a number of wives are listed together. The list

34 See ‘Frederick Beck’, above.
37 This calculation is based on the date of Frederick Beck’s birth (1738) given in Cranmer, ‘Beck, Frederick’ (2007–13).
39 Barbara Shudi married John Broadwood in 1769.
41 Barbara died, at the age of 27, on Monday, 8 July 1776.
is undated but … is almost certainly in Barbara’s writing … [and] is probably dated … [some time between late 1770\(^{43}\) and] 1773. [Under the heading] … Five pieces of Handkerch … there follow the names Mrs. Rector, Mrs. Wild, Mrs. Ruff, Mrs. Calwell, Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Hands, Mrs. Beck, Miss Shudi, Mrs. Motrey, Mrs. Patadergell, Mrs. Broadwood, Mrs. Jenny and Mrs. Newby … whatever was being paid for cost 3/6 per item … Mrs. Beck was probably [Mary (née Coles)] the wife of the piano maker Frederick Beck.\(^ {44}\)

The mention of Mrs Beck in Barbara Broadwood’s account book suggests that London piano makers and their families formed a closely knit and supportive community.

By 1771, Beck’s pianos were highly regarded (at least in Leipzig); according to Henkel, Leipzig newspapers from that year observe that Beck’s pianos were both ‘famous and popular’\(^ {45}\) (Henkel does not provide bibliographical information regarding the ‘Leipzig newspapers’). The Leipzig newspapers’ observation implies that Beck had been successfully making instruments prior to 1771. One can only wonder where, and for how long.

If ‘Beck left Germany for England some time after 1756’\(^ {46}\)—that is, some time after his 18th year—and by 1765 (at 27 years of age) resided at Glassonbury Court, London, then by 1771 he would have had approximately 15 years to develop his piano-making skills to the point where his instruments were both ‘famous and popular’.\(^ {47}\)

With such a scenario, it is reasonable to posit that Beck was making square pianos in London around 1765. Just what type of square piano is a mystery. Square pianos (tafelklaviere) had been made in Germany from as early as the 1740s. Zumpe’s earliest ‘English’ square pianos were made around 1766. With the exception of two ‘tangent action’ pianos,\(^ {48}\) extant Beck square pianos are closely modelled on those of Zumpe.

There is disagreement in relation to the year when Beck began selling his pianos in London. For example, Cranmer gives the date ‘from midsummer 1771’,\(^ {49}\) while Mould\(^ {50}\) and Heaton\(^ {51}\) suggest 1774. Scholars do agree, however, that by ca 1771–73, Beck’s premises were located on the north side of Broad Street’ (now

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\(^{45}\) H. Henkel, Lexicon Deutscher Klavierbauer (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Erwin Bochinsky, 2000), p. 45.


\(^{47}\) Henkel, Lexicon Deutscher Klavierbauer, p. 45.

\(^{48}\) See ‘Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck’ below. See also ‘Tangent Action’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication.


\(^{50}\) See Mould, ‘The Broadwood Books’, p. 9.

Broadwick Street), Carnaby Market, Golden Square (now Soho),\textsuperscript{52} at number 4 and at number 10.\textsuperscript{53} (In ca 1777, the house numbers in Broad Street were changed; number 4 became number 10.)

The second of Beck’s four Sun Fire Office insurance policies (policy no. 248579) is dated ‘[Thursday,] 17 December 1767’. The policy gives Beck’s address as ‘Mr Horncastle’s a Stationer in Broad Street Carnaby Market’\textsuperscript{54}. It is not known when Beck established his own atelier, but it is reasonable to assume that by mid-1771, he was living and working in a building on Broad Street. ‘The rate books of St. James, Westminster, show that … [Beck] lived at a house in Broad Street ... from midsummer 1771 until the end of 1798.’\textsuperscript{55} Peter Barfoot and John Wilkes erroneously place Jacob and Abraham Kirckman’s workshop at Frederick Beck’s address: ‘10, Broad-str. Golden-sq’\textsuperscript{56} (the Kirckman’s workshop was at 19 Broad Street).\textsuperscript{57}

The third of Beck’s four Sun Fire Office insurance policies (policy no. 301057) is dated ‘[Thursday,] 29 August 1771’. The policy gives Beck’s address as ‘Broad Street Carnaby Market’.\textsuperscript{58} This is consistent with data found in the rate books of St. James, Westminster, which shows that from midsummer 1771, Beck ‘lived at a house in Broad Street’.\textsuperscript{59}

A Beck square piano dated 1773 (Plate 43a) carries a nameboard inscription that reads: \textit{Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit 1773 / No 4 Broad Street, Golden Square}.\textsuperscript{60} This is the earliest of the 24 Beck piano nameboard inscriptions known to the author; of these, the inscription is the first that includes a street number. The inscription allows for speculation that by ca 1771–73, Beck’s premises were located at number 4 Broad Street.

A square piano dated ca 1769–73 (a date towards the end of the range seems most likely—ca 1772–73) made for Longman, Lukey & Co., has been reasonably attributed to Frederick Beck (Plates 43u and 425b).\textsuperscript{61} The attribution to Beck is largely based on the absence of dampers after c\textsuperscript{3}. The undamped top five notes are

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{54} L. Whitehead and J. Nex, \textit{Sun insurance policies 1710–79, A to D}, p. 25.
\bibitem{56} Barfoot and Wilkes, \textit{The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce}, p. 203.
\bibitem{57} See Clinkscale, \textit{Makers of the Piano 1700–1820}, p. 165.
\bibitem{60} See ‘b) The Absence of a Date’, in ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.
\bibitem{61} See also photographs in D. Hackett, ‘(2) An Early London Square Piano Made for Longman, Lukey & Co. c. 1774’, in Restoration Diaries (n.d.). The instrument is currently owned by Albert Bil, Scotland. I am indebted to David Hackett for information regarding the current owner of this instrument. On Thursday, 11 November 2010, the piano was offered for sale at auction by Serrell’s of Malvern, UK. The instrument was described as a ‘square piano by Songman’. The sale price was estimated at between £150 and £200. The piano
\end{thebibliography}
characteristic of Beck’s instruments; no other maker of square pianos followed this damping pattern. Both the damping pattern and the nameboard inscription (Plate 425c) of this instrument suggest that in ca 1769–73, Beck was in business with Longman, Lukey & Co. It is not known what Beck’s obligations to Longman, Lukey & Co. were, nor is it known for how long the business relationship was maintained.

‘Contemporary estimates for the capital required to set up in business as a musical instrument maker’62 were quite high. In 1747, for example, R. Campbell suggests a lower limit of £100, with an upper limit of £500.63 Campbell’s estimate represents the normal earnings obtained by Beck from the London sale of between four and 21 of his square pianos (each instrument being sold at a price of approximately £20–25).64 Campbell informs his reader that the ‘hours of working’ for a musical instrument maker are six to eight a day.65 (For the time, these hours are somewhat on the low side, and may be explained by the fact that a piano maker’s productive working hours were in large part determined by light levels derived from the sun.) Campbell suggests that the prerequisites needed in order for a keyboard instrument maker to thrive are ‘a tolerable Genius and some Strength’.66

Nine years after his marriage to Mary Coles on 23 September 1770, and, following her death, on Tuesday, 7 September 1779 in London, Frederick Beck, aged 41 years,67 ‘married Rose Ann Shudi, daughter of Joshua Shudi [1739–74], the harpsichord maker (nephew of Burkat Shudi the elder)’.68 Because Rose Ann Shudi was a minor at the time, her mother, Mary (widow of Joshua Shudi), signed the marriage bond (Plate 16). Between 1782 and 1791, Frederick and Rose Ann ‘had six children including three boys’.69

On Friday, 9 March 1781, ‘Frederick Beck Instrument Maker’70 was a participant in the deliberations of the City of Westminster Coroner’s Court.71

sold for an astonishing £2700. Six months later, in May 2011, the instrument was again offered for sale. By April 2012, the piano had been sensitively restored by David Hackett. See D. Hackett, ‘Restoration Diary for Longman Lukey & Co Square Piano: November 2010–April 2012’, in Restoration Diaries (n.d.).

64 See ‘How Much Did George Worgan’s Piano Cost?’, in Chapter 4, this volume.
65 Ibid., pp. 325–6.
66 This calculation is based on the date of Frederick Beck’s birth (1738) given in Cranmer ‘Beck, Frederick’ (2007–13).
68 I am indebted to Graham Walker for information regarding Frederick Beck’s second marriage (Email from Graham Walker to the author, 3 March 2013).
70 See ibid., Image 111 of 525. On this occasion, Beck’s jury service took place 16 years after he had served as a jury member at the City of Westminster Coroner’s Court on Wednesday, 20 November 1765, and two
Several trade directories from 1784–94 mention Frederick Beck. These include: Bailey’s Directory (1784) and 1785; The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce (1790); Wakefield’s Directory (1790 and 1794); and A Musical Directory (1794). The relevant entry in each directory is quoted below (in chronological order):


6. Wakefield’s Directory (1790): ‘Beck Frederick, piano forte maker, 10, Broad street, Carnaby’


Plate 16d Broad Street (detail): Frederick Beck’s house is number 10 Broad Street.


Both Carnaby Market and Golden Square were close to the then highly respectable district of Soho.

Broad Street, three blocks south of Oxford Street, extended from number 86 Berwick Street to Marshall Street, Golden Square. According to Horwood’s Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, the north side of Broad Street was three blocks long, the south side four. House numbering began on the north side, at the Berwick Street (eastern) end (number 1), extending westward to Marshall Street (number 28). House numbers on the south side of Broad Street extended in the opposite direction, from Marshall Street (number 29) eastward to Berwick Street (number 54). Frederick Beck’s workshop was on the north side, in the first and largest block (comprising house numbers 1–13), at number 10 (Plate 16d).

85 See Horwood, Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster.
On Thursday, 1 January 1784, the rental value of Frederick Beck’s property was determined. The valuation document gives his address simply as ‘Broad St’. 

In ca 1790, Beck appears to have formed a business relationship with George Corrie (d. 1803?). In 1794, Doane’s *A Musical Directory* lists George Corrie as ‘Corrie, Pia Forte Maker. No. 41, Broad-St, Carnaby-M.’. Corrie’s workshop was on the opposite side of the street to Beck’s, westward, five houses away. Between 1767 and 1775, Beck’s average annual output is conjecturally estimated as being 250 pianos—that is, one instrument approximately every day-and-a-half. If his output was similar during the 1790s, Beck may have joined forces with Corrie in order to keep up with the demand for pianos. (Then again, data regarding Beck’s average yearly output are estimates only—and extremely generous ones at that. Perhaps, by ca 1790, Beck’s business was floundering, and he had need to establish a business connection with Corrie in order to survive. No documentary evidence has come to light concerning the catalyst for, or the nature of, Beck’s business arrangement with Corrie; as a consequence, any commentary is purely speculative.)

Beck’s business relationship with Corrie is confirmed by the nameboard inscription on piano number 2505 (Plates 17 and 43r): No 2505 / F Beck et G Corrie Londini Fecerunt / No 10 Broad Street Soho.

To the author’s knowledge, this is the only extant nameboard inscription that gives the abbreviation ‘F Beck’; it is also the only extant nameboard inscription that identifies Beck in conjunction with George Corrie.

Of the 32 extant Beck pianos, the author is aware of the wording of 25 nameboard inscriptions. All but one (piano number 2505) gives ‘Fredericus Beck’ as the maker. Assuming that the abbreviated ‘F Beck’ on the nameboard inscription of piano number 2505 represents Frederick Beck (and this is extremely likely), the inscription is inexplicably inconsistent with Beck’s usual practice. As with Frederick Beck’s Christian name, George Corrie’s Christian name has also been abbreviated using a single initial; in both instances, the abbreviation may have been an aesthetic and practical response to the limited space available within the

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87 See ‘Beck, Arnold Frederick’, in *The Early Piano*. See also Plate 17. I am indebted to Graham Walker for information regarding George Corrie’s date of death.
90 See ‘Serial Number in George Worgan’s Piano (Frederick Beck, London, 1780/86?)’ below.
91 See ibid.
92 For a list of the Beck square piano nameboard inscriptions known to the author, see ‘b) The Absence of a Date’ in ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.
elliptical boundary of the nameboard cartouche. ‘Sometime during the Victorian or Edwardian period, the case [of piano number 2505] was painted with neo-classical decoration’93 (Plate 43r). In the light of this decorative alteration, it is reasonable to entertain the notion that the nameboard inscription, cartouche and decoration may also have been altered.

Another line of investigation points to the supposition that ‘F Beck’ refers to the Francis Beck, who, in 1790, is listed in The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce: ‘Beck Francis Piano Forte-maker 10, Broad-str. Golden-sq.’94 Was this mysterious Francis one of Frederick’s sons? Between 1782 and 1791, six children were born to Frederick and Rose Ann; unfortunately, this time frame renders Beck’s children too young to have made piano number 2505 (ca 1790?). Moreover, none of Beck’s three sons was named Francis.95 It appears that the listing of Francis Beck in The Universal British Directory of Trade and Commerce is erroneous.

There was logic in Frederick Beck’s decision to locate his workshop in Broad Street:

The narrow surrounding streets sheltered a mixed population of foreigners and of artists and craftsmen, including a concentration of piano … and harpsichord makers. At the same time, [the] … area had become a serious threat to St. Martin’s Lane [near Covent Garden Market] as center for the workshops of top-flight cabinetmakers: Robert Campbell was in Little Marylebone Street, Chipchase and Lambert in Warwick Street. The carvers Sefferi Alken and Sefferin Nelson had workshops in Dufours Court, off Broad Street, while John Oakley (a cabinetmaker who had been apprenticed to David Roentgen in Germany) and William Ince and John Mayhew had premises right in Broad Street, within a few doors of Frederick Beck’s workshop. It would have been a simple matter [for subcontracted cabinetmakers to deliver completed piano cases and stands to Beck’s establishment].96

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93  Email from Graham Walker to the author, 15 March 2013.
95  I am indebted to Graham Walker for information regarding Frederick Beck’s children (Email from Graham Walker to the author, 15 March 2013).
At some stage during the late 1770s, the house numbers in Broad Street were changed. This has led some writers to imply (erroneously) that Beck worked from two separate locations. Numbers 4 and 10 Broad Street were in fact the same location. The inscription on the nameboard of George Worgan’s piano (Plate 17a) reads: Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit 1780 / No 4 and 10 Broad Street Soho.

Beck’s inclusion of two different street numbers is doubtless his response to confusion that may have arisen at the time (Plate 17b).

Plate 17 Square piano by Frederick Beck and George Corrie (London, ca 1790?; serial number 2505): nameboard inscription.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Graham Walker. Photo by Graham Walker.

Plate 17a Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): nameboard inscription.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

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97 The nameboard inscriptions on the two extant 1777 Beck pianos read: Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit 1777 / No. 4 Broad Street Golden Square (owner: Carleton University, Ottawa) (Plate 20d); and Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit 1777 / No. 4 and 10 Broad Street Golden Square (owner: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto). The two extant 1778 Beck pianos each have a nameboard inscription that reads: Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit 1778 / No. 4 and 10 Broad Street Golden Square (Plate 20e). The address given on these nameboards suggests that the renumbering of houses in Broad Street may have taken place sometime during 1777.

98 For example, Clinkscale, Makers of the Piano 1700–1820, p. 19.

99 See ‘Date’, below.
During the 1780s, Frederick Beck was one of six piano makers whose workshops were located within two blocks of one another—on Broad Street: Christopher Ganer (located on the opposite side of the street to Beck, at numbers 47 and 48);100 Jacob and Abraham Kirckman101 (located on the same side of the street as Beck, in the adjacent block, at number 19);102 and Charles Trute (whose workshop was on the same side of the street as Beck, close by at number 7);103 on Great Pulteney Street:104 John Broadwood, and George Froeschle (Fröschle)
‘The spirit of invention was in the air and it is tempting to think that the natural affinity of like-minded [piano makers] ... living and working at close quarters would have brought [them] ... into contact with [each other].’

Perhaps the London-based Belgian inventor and combination harpsichord-piano maker John Joseph Merlin (1735–1803) best exemplifies the ‘spirit of invention’ that permeated London’s keyboard instrument makers’ community during the second half of the eighteenth century. At one of the highly fashionable (yet scandalously indecorous) masquerades given in London during the 1760s and 1770s at Carlisle House by the notorious ‘Viennese adventuress’ Theresa Cornelys (1723–97), Merlin made a memorable appearance: ‘Merlin was a charmer, much in demand at parties and social events of all sorts. His witty, French-accented English appeared to have delighted the ladies, and his propensity for outrageous but essentially harmless behaviour only seemed to make him more endearing to London society.’

The English composer, musician and writer Thomas Busby (1755–1838), in his *Concert Room and Orchestra Anecdotes of Music and Musicians, Ancient and Modern*, tells the story:

One of [Merlin’s] ... ingenious novelties was a *pair of skaites* contrived to run on [small metallic] wheels. Supplied with a pair of these and a violin [*‘he was skating and playing at the same time’*], he mixed in the ... group of one of the celebrated Mrs. Corneily’s masquerades at Carlisle-house, Soho-square; when, not having provided the means of retarding his velocity, or commanding its direction, he impelled himself against a mirror of more than Five hundred pounds value, dashed it to atoms, broke his instrument to pieces and wounded himself most severely.

What could have been closer to Merlin’s spirit of invention and freedom ‘than literally gliding through the echelons of society, combining the use of one of his inventions, a pair of roller skates, with a performance on the violin, and breaking

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106 Goold, *Mr. Langshaw’s Square Piano*, p. 105.
107 ‘Two combined harpsichord-pianos built in their entirety by Merlin’ have survived: ‘one in private ownership in Switzerland [undated] and the other in the Deutsches Museum in Munich (1780).’ Latcham, ‘The Apotheosis of Merlin’, p. 293.
108 Ibid., p. 298.
110 Ibid., p. 379.
through a mirror, that decorated symbol of vanity’. The indefatigable Merlin also invented a ‘self-flicking buggy whip’, a Dutch oven with a spring jack to rotate meat’, ‘mechanical tea tables that poured a dozen cups at once’, a pocket-sized scale for weighing gold coins (in order to verify ‘that none of the precious metal had been shaved off’), and the wheelchair (an invention of lasting value).

Another of his gadgets was a music-desk table for eight performers, which could be raised or lowered, depending on whether the players were seated or standing ([Charles] Burney owned one of these ‘Merlin tables’).

Merlin’s instruments, be they grands, squares or whatever, were always expensive … in 1793 Charles Burney tried out a new square piano by Merlin. ‘The dog has just finished a small Piano Forte [that is, a square], so loud, sweet and beautiful that I could sit and devour myself upon it without food for 24 hours. Ma-ma the price is … 40 pounds!’

Unlike Merlin, Frederick Beck (it seems) was content simply to make square pianos. Beck sold his pianos not only to customers in England, but also to instrument makers in Paris. On 19 April 1777, for example, the eminent Parisian harpsichord maker Pascal Taskin noted that he owed 660 livres to ‘Mr. Beck in London’ for five square pianos that he had imported.

No records mention Frederick Beck after 1798. Cranmer posits that Frederick Beck died in London ca 1798.
Frederick Beck: A time line

1738? Beck is born in Württemburg(?)
1738 30 May: Beck is baptised in Württemburg
After 1756 Beck leaves Germany
Between 1756 and ca 1762 Beck establishes a dealership (and/or workshop) at 364 Rue Saint-Denis, Paris(?)
Between 1756 and ca 1762 Beck leaves the Continent for London
1763 Beck is involved in the manufacture of ‘English guittars’ in London
1763 2 August: Beck’s address is Glassonbury Court, near Covent Garden Market
Mid-1760s Beck is in partnership with Charles Pinto
1765 20 November: Beck is a juror at the Westminster Coroner’s Court
1765 20 November: Beck’s address is Glassonbury Court, near Covent Garden Market
ca 1769–73 Beck is in business with Longman, Lukey & Co
1770 23 September: Beck marries Mary Coles in London
1771 Midsummer: Beck moves into 4 Broad Street, Carnaby Market
ca 1771 Beck begins to sell pianos from his workshop, at 4 Broad Street, Carnaby Market
After ca 1771 Beck establishes a dealership (and/or workshop) at 364 Rue Saint-Denis, Paris(?)
During the late 1770s The street number of Beck’s Broad Street property is altered from 4 to 10
1779 7 September: Beck marries Rose Ann Shudi in London
1781 9 March: Beck is a juror at the Westminster Coroner’s Court
1782–91 Frederick and Rose Ann have six children, including three boys
1783 26 February: Beck is one of six German jurors at the Old Bailey
1784 1 January: the rental value of Beck’s Broad Street property is calculated
1780–89 Beck’s annual output averages 222 pianos(?)
ca 1790 Beck is in business with the piano maker George Corrie
1794 Beck is still making pianos at 10 Broad Street, Carnaby Market
ca 1798 Beck dies(?)
1819–22? Beck lives in Paris, and sells pianos from his dealership (and/or workshop) located at 364, Rue Saint-Denis(?)

* See ‘Serial Number: Frederick Beck’s estimated output—What five serial numbers suggest’ below.

**Beck’s House**

Plate 18 shows Beck’s Broad Street house as it appears today (it is the red brick building with the internally lit street-level shopfront window). Beck’s house is currently occupied at street level by a shop specialising in beauty products. Coincidentally, an audio-recording shop occupies the corner of the tiny street (Duck Lane) directly opposite; the shop has four colourful adjustable canvas awnings, upon two of which are written the following words: ‘Sounds of the Universe’ (Plate 19).

Even though Beck’s income from piano making may have ‘been earned at irregular intervals and in lump sums’,\(^{122}\) the apparent ongoing success of his piano-making business\(^{123}\) suggests that he probably did not have to bring in extra income through the letting of a part of his house. During the late eighteenth century, for a piano maker who was less successful than Beck, generating money through letting would have been in line with Adam Smith’s (1723–90) comments on the state of housing costs in London:


\(^{123}\) See ‘Serial Number: Frederick Beck’s estimated output—What five serial numbers suggest’, below.
Plate 18 Frederick Beck’s house.

Source: Photo by the author.

Plate 19 ‘Sounds of the Universe’ in Duck Lane, opposite Frederick Beck’s house.

Source: Photo by the author.
The dearness of house-rent in London arises, not only from those causes which render it dear in all great capitals ... but it arises in part from the peculiar manners and customs of the people, which oblige every master of a family to hire a whole house from top to bottom. A dwelling-house in England means every thing that is contained under the same roof.\textsuperscript{124}

Smith continues:

A tradesman in London is obliged to hire a whole house in that part of the town where his customers live. His shop is upon the ground-floor, and he and his family sleep in the garret; and he endeavours to pay a part of his house-rent by letting the two middle stories to lodgers. He expects to maintain his family by his trade, and not by his lodgers.\textsuperscript{125}

In late eighteenth-century London (as also in Vienna), ‘food constituted the largest proportion of living expenses, but ... unlike housing, it was abundant and relatively cheap’.\textsuperscript{126}

Very few people owned the freehold of their homes at this time ... According to information from the Public Record Office only the holders of British citizenship were entitled to buy or inherit land under English law ... Long term residents in England who lacked British citizenship could remedy this situation by applying for ‘Letters of Denization’ or, at a little extra expense, the full legal rights of a British citizen by Naturalization.\textsuperscript{127}

Perhaps the success of Beck’s piano-making business resulted in his becoming a wealthy man. If so, and as a long-term resident in England, he may have eventually bought a long lease on his house in Broad Street. If wealthy enough, he may also have obtained ‘naturalisation’ and, subsequently, purchased his house.

‘It is not possible to provide a ... vivid’ and yet generalised ‘description of the premises of’ London piano makers, as ‘no eighteenth century visitors seem to have thought them worthy of special comment’.\textsuperscript{128} A workshop making pianos in a dwelling-house was not necessarily noisy or intrusive. No power machinery was involved (obviously, there was no power). Typically for the time, a feeling of intimacy would have been the most salient feature of Beck’s street-level workshop, which, perhaps being of the standard three-man type, had three workbenches. Beck and his family would have lived on the first floor, while

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 117.
\item\textsuperscript{126} A. M. Hanson, \textit{Musical Life in Biedermeier Vienna} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 15–16.
\item\textsuperscript{127} Cole, ‘Adam Beyer, Pianoforte Maker’.
\item\textsuperscript{128} Hubbard, \textit{Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making}, p. 197.
\end{itemize}}
the attic rooms may have been occupied by journeymen or an apprentice. It is reasonable to imagine corridors and stairways being cluttered with instruments and wood (poor Mrs Beck may have found the task of keeping her house clean more than formidable).

Beck’s apprentice (if he had one) would have been contractually bound to him for a certain number of years (‘the usual period was seven years’).\textsuperscript{129} ‘It was usual for the parents or guardians of [an apprentice] … to pay the master a certain sum on signing the contract. The apprentice lived with his master’s family and was not paid for his work. At the end of his term, the apprentice became a journeyman, entitling him to work for any master he chose.’\textsuperscript{130} Traditionally, young journeymen travelled from city to city, working with various masters in order to perfect themselves in their trade.\textsuperscript{131} ‘The journeyman aspired to become a partner with his master or to establish his own shop.’\textsuperscript{132}

It is possible that the street-level front room of Beck’s house had a large window for displaying finished instruments that were kept for sale. In 1782, a visitor to London, Carl Philip Moritz,

found no need for elementary primers and prints for the education of children: you can take them about the street and show them all the things themselves … Paintings, machines, precious objects—all can be seen advantageously displayed behind great clear-glass windows … Such a street often resembles a well-arranged show-cabinet.\textsuperscript{133}

By the middle of the eighteenth century,

London was famous throughout Europe for the number and variety of its shops and for the crowds of people strolling about looking and buying from eight in the morning until darkness and beyond … In 1786, Sophie de la Roche, visiting from Frankfurt, described walking the length of Oxford Street by lamplight: ‘We strolled up and down lovely Oxford Street this evening, for some goods look more attractive by artificial light. Just imagine … a street taking half an hour to cover from end to end with double rows of brightly shining lamps … The pavement, inlaid with flagstones, can stand six people deep and allow one to gaze at the splendidly lit shop fronts in comfort. First one passes a watchmakers, then a silk or fan store, now a silversmith’s, a china or glass shop. Just as alluring are the confectioners and fruiterers, where, behind the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{129} Boalch, \textit{Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440 to 1840}, p. 149, fn. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Clarke, ‘The English Piano’, p. 242.
\item \textsuperscript{131} See Hubbard, \textit{Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making}, p. 194.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Hoover, ‘Pianos for Sale’, p. 36.
\end{itemize}
handsome glass windows, pyramids of pineapples, figs, grapes, oranges, and all manner of fruits are on show. Up to eleven o’clock at night there are as many people along this street as at Frankfurt during the fair, not to mention the constant stream of coaches.’

These transformations in shopping, advertising and marketing rendered ‘material acquisition and visible consumption highly eligible activities’. The wisdom of the ages had been reversed: boundless consumption was healthy both for individuals and for society. At the very least, window-shopping had arrived.

Frederick Beck’s house was very close to Oxford Street, and there is little doubt that some Oxford Street window-shoppers would have found themselves at Carnaby Market, from thence eventually looking through Beck’s shopfront window at the newly completed pianos on display.

Beck and Square Piano Production

The complexity of a grand piano required that it be almost completely produced within a single workshop. The process involved the application of many high-level specialist skills, resulting in an elaborate division of labour within a workshop. On the other hand, the relative ‘simplicity of the construction of [a] … square piano’ meant that ‘the majority of its components could [be] … made outside the workshop by skilled or semi-skilled men who did not have to be instrument makers’. These outsourced individuals were located in nearby houses, which, like Beck’s house, contained a workshop. Workers in distant premises may have produced, for example, a square piano’s case (‘which could have been made by any competent cabinet maker’), keyboard, hammer rails (‘complete with ready-mounted [leather] … covered hammers’), damper mechanisms, tuning pins, bridge-pins, strings, lid hinges and the component parts of (or completed) stands. The pianos could then have been assembled in-house, using parts made off-site as well as parts produced in the workshop by highly skilled specialists.

136 By the end of the eighteenth century, the eminent piano maker John Broadwood referred to people who walked into his showroom on Great Pulteney Street as the ‘chance trade’ (as distinct from ‘regular customers to whom the firm regularly sold instruments and for whom it regularly tuned’). Hoover, ‘Pianos for Sale’, p. 34.
138 Ibid., p. 260.
139 Ibid., p. 264.
(parts such as the soundboard). Subsequently, the remainder of the process leading to the completion of an instrument would have been undertaken in the workshop: stringing, setting up the action and voicing.\textsuperscript{140}

The making of a square piano in Frederick Beck’s workshop may have entailed the following construction process.

1. Off-site subcontractors deliver the case to the workshop as an empty box. Beck incorporates the wrest-plank, belly rail and hitch-pin block (the last ‘pierced through with accurately-placed holes determined by a template to receive the damper-lifters’).\textsuperscript{141}

2. Beck (or a specialised worker) makes the soundboard. The bridge is attached, string positions are marked and the bridge is pinned. The soundboard is glued into place.

3. Beck (or a journeyman/apprentice) drills holes for the wrest-pins.

4. Hitch-pins and nut-pins are inserted.

5. Beck strings the instrument.

6. Beck (or a specialised worker) finishes the keyboard with its action (prior to this, the keyboard, sets of hammers and the dampers have been delivered to the workshop).

7. The action is put into the instrument.

8. Beck voices the instrument.

That the entire production process was not housed under one roof had its advantages:

Since the basic processes required considerable manual skill, it was inevitable that the work would be carried out in workshops of traditional type. Supervision of the various branches of manufacture could have been more efficient if done under one roof, but this would have meant heavy commitments in buildings and labour. It was thus more convenient to call on skills on demand, according to its ebb and flow.\textsuperscript{142}

On one hand, the workshop’s structure and practice ‘could be run with low overheads and on the other enabled craftsmen to work at home’.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{140} See ibid., p. 260.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 260.
\textsuperscript{143} Clarke, ‘The English Piano’, p. 264.
In his *Cyclopædia of the Useful Arts*, Charles Tomlinson (1808–97) describes a mid-nineteenth-century piano-making context similar to that found in late eighteenth-century London:

Although in the London Directory there are only entered 6 piano-forte fret cutters, 2 hammer and damper-cloth manufacturers, 4 hammer-rail makers, 6 pianoforte key-makers, 2 piano-forte pin makers, 5 silkers, 1 stringer, and 29 tuners, yet there are a large number of persons occupied as small makers of parts of the instrument, and not being housekeepers are not entered. And even if it were possible to make this list complete, it would by no means represent the extensive subdivision of the trade.\(^{144}\)

**George Worgan’s Piano (Frederick Beck, London, 1780/86?)**

It is reasonable to hypothesise that the Frederick Beck square piano dated 1780/86?, currently housed in the Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney, is the instrument that was brought to Sydney Cove by George Worgan on board the *Sirius*. The hypothesis is reinforced by certain peculiarities, the most important of which is the piano’s campaign-furniture-inspired stand, which (uniquely) includes cabriole legs hinged to the bottom of the instrument’s case.

The dimensions of the piano’s case fit comfortably within the norm for Beck’s extant instruments.\(^{145}\) This piano, however, reveals certain distinctive characteristics.

**Date**

The calligraphic style of Beck’s nameboard inscriptions did not remain consistent throughout his output—note the difference, for example, between the ‘7’ on an instrument of 1786 (Plates 20a and 20b) and the ‘7’s on instruments dated 1774 (Plate 20c), 1776 (Plate 43t), 1777 (Plate 20d), 1778 (Plates 20e and 20f), 1780 (Plate 20), 1782\(^{146}\) and 1783 (Plate 20g). Note also the difference between the ‘8’ on an instrument of 1786 (Plates 20a and 20b) and the ‘8’s on instruments dated, respectively, 1778 (Plates 20e and 20f), 1780 (Plate 20) and 1783 (Plate 20g).


\(^{145}\) See ‘Average Dimensions of Frederick Beck’s Square Pianos’, in Appendix A, Volume 2 of this publication.

\(^{146}\) See photograph in A. Beurmann, *Das Buch vom Klavier: Die Sammlung Beurmann im Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg und auf Gut Hasselburg in Ostholstein [The Book of Keyboard Instruments: The Beurmann Collection in the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg and the Hasselburg Estate in East Holstein]* (Hildesheim: George Olms, 2007), Plate 110b Das Tafelklavier von Beck, p. 54. See also photographs in hammerfluegel.net.
Consistencies in calligraphic style, however, can also be found—note the similarity between the ‘7’s on Beck instruments dated 1774 (Plate 20c), 1776 (Plate 43t), 1777 (Plate 20d), 1780 (Plate 20), 1782\textsuperscript{147} and 1783 (Plate 20g). Note also the similarity between the ‘8’s on Beck instruments dated 1778 (Plate 20e and 20f), 1782\textsuperscript{148} and 1783 (Plate 20g).

Regardless of any variations in calligraphic style, Beck’s nameboard inscriptions reflect the characteristically serpentine freedom and balance of numerals written by accomplished eighteenth-century hands.\textsuperscript{149}

Initial inspection of George Worgan’s piano suggests the date of the instrument to be 1780 (Plate 20). It is tempting, however, to construe the small oblique line above the ‘0’ as a now-faded oblique line that once comprised the top of a ‘6’ (Plates 20 and 139). Given the degree of fading and the calligraphic style (which is full-bodied, rather than fine-lined), this may be the case.

Comparison between the ‘0’ (if viewed as a ‘6’) written on the nameboard of Worgan’s piano (Plate 20) and the ‘6’ written on the nameboards of two Beck pianos dated 1776 (Plate 43t) and 1786 (Plates 20a and 20b)\textsuperscript{150} reveals marked differences in proportion and form (especially in relation not only to the thickness and angle of the two thick pen strokes of the circular body of the ‘0’, but also to the thickness and angle of the curving top stroke of the ‘6’). Using the calligraphic style of the 1776 (Plate 43t) and 1786 (Plates 20a and 20b) instruments as a basis for supposition, had the ‘0’ on Worgan’s piano been a ‘6’, the body of the ‘6’ would have been more elliptical, and the angle of the two thick pen strokes of the circular body would have inclined markedly towards the right.

Although it seems likely that the date of Worgan’s piano is 1780, reasonable doubt remains; it might be 1786.

\textsuperscript{147} See photograph in Beurmann, Das Buch vom Klavier, p. 54. See also photographs in hammerfluegel.ne.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} See Cole, Broadwood Square Pianos, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{150} The Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum, inv. no. N61230.
Plate 20 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): nameboard—‘1780’ (detail).

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Plate 20a Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1786): nameboard inscription.


Plate 20c Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1774): nameboard inscription.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Bachhaus, Eisenach/Neue Bachgesellschaft e.V, Inv. no. 1. 4. 1. 12., I 86.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Carleton University, School for Studies in Art and Culture (Music), Ottawa, Ontario. Photo by James Park.


Source: Reproduced with permission of Thomas Strange. Photo by Thomas Strange.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Thomas Strange. Photo by Thomas Strange.

Plate 20g Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1783): nameboard inscription.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland.
Plate 20h Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1782/87?).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA.

Plate 20i Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1782/87?): nameboard inscription.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA.
Serial Number: Frederick Beck’s estimated output—What five serial numbers suggest

It is not known how many instruments Beck made. Given the relentless demand for square pianos in late eighteenth-century London, and Frederick Beck’s reputation as one of the finest instrument makers, it is possible that he produced an average of 30 to 50 pianos a year—that is, assuming continuous output, an average of one instrument every seven to 12 days. This figure is derived from comparison between the known output of other successful, representative contemporaneous piano makers.

1. Adam Beyer: Between 1773 and 1788, Beyer made an average of 50 square pianos a year—that is, one instrument every seven days.\(^\text{151}\) (During his lifetime, the prolific Beyer manufactured in excess of 900 square pianos.)

2. John Broadwood: In 1783, Broadwood made 45 pianos—that is, on average, one instrument every eight days.\(^\text{152}\)

3. Thomas Haxby (1729–96): Between 1772 and 1786, the York-based Haxby made an average of 19 square pianos a year—that is, one instrument every 19 days.\(^\text{153}\) From 1787, Haxby’s annual production increased to 24 instruments—

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that is, averaging one piano every 15 days.\textsuperscript{154} By 1790, Haxby's yearly output was 36 instruments—that is, on average, one piano every 10 days.\textsuperscript{155}

The truth of Beck's output may, however, be more astounding. Cranmer records the following piano nameboard inscription: \textit{No. 1941 Fredericus Beck Londini fecit 1788 / No. 10 Broad Street Soho}.\textsuperscript{156} To the author's knowledge, there is only one extant Beck square piano dated 1788;\textsuperscript{157} presumably, this is the 1788 instrument of which Cranmer speaks. Regrettably, Cranmer gives no further information regarding this piano. Oddly, Clinkscale's description of this piano's nameboard inscription\textsuperscript{158} does not include 'No. 1941'. Assuming that Cranmer and Clinkscale are referring to the same instrument, if Beck gave the piano the serial number '1941' (at the same time giving the piano a date of 1788), the instrument must be regarded as the product of Beck's 'prolific output in earlier years'.\textsuperscript{159}

Cranmer observes that until '1780 at least, Beck's square pianos were not numbered'.\textsuperscript{160} Unfortunately, Cranmer provides no supporting data to substantiate her assertion. If, however, Frederick Beck did not number his instruments until \textit{after} 1780, the 1788 piano's serial number (1941) as documented by Cranmer\textsuperscript{161} suggests that within eight years, Beck made an average of 242.6 pianos a year—that is, one instrument every day-and-a-half.

Further data assist in the formation of a speculative estimate of Beck's annual output. James mentions a Beck 'piano dated 1789 bear[ing] ... the number 2000'.\textsuperscript{162} James does not reveal the instrument's location. (Unfortunately, no piano dated 1789 can be found among the 32 extant square pianos by Frederick Beck.)\textsuperscript{163} James then refers his readers to a photograph of one of two extant Frederick Beck instruments made in conjunction with the Swedish-born Paris-trained cabinet-maker and marquetry master Christopher Fuhrloh (ca 1737–1800);\textsuperscript{164} this instrument is dated 1775, not 1789. If Beck's square pianos

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{155} See ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Cranmer, 'Beck, Frederick' (2007–13).
\item \textsuperscript{157} Owner(s): unknown. See 'Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck', below.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Watson, \textit{Clinkscale Online}.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Cranmer, 'Beck, Frederick' (2007–13).
\item \textsuperscript{160} Cranmer, 'Beck, Frederick' (1980), p. 334.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Cranmer, 'Beck, Frederick' (2007–13).
\item \textsuperscript{162} P. James, \textit{Early Keyboard Instruments: From their Beginnings to the Year 1820} (London: The Tabard Press, 1970), p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{163} See 'Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck' below.
\item \textsuperscript{164} James, \textit{Early Keyboard Instruments}, pp. 64, 138, 'Plate LVIII Square Pianoforte by Frederick Beck English, 1775'. This exquisitely beautiful instrument is owned by the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Wirral, UK. See 'Frederick Beck and Christopher Fuhrloh', below. See also the photograph in 'English Square Piano', in \textit{Lady Lever Art Gallery}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
were not numbered until at least 1780,\textsuperscript{165} the 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument: 1) cannot form part of the data used to create an estimate of Beck’s annual output; and 2) disproves Cranmer’s notion that until 1780 Beck’s square pianos were not numbered.\textsuperscript{166} Given that the 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument bears the serial number 2000,\textsuperscript{167} two paths of inquiry may be taken in order to create a speculative estimate of Beck’s average annual output.

1. Beck’s square pianos were not numbered until 1780\textsuperscript{168} and James’ unidentified 1789 piano has the serial number 2000: If the number 2000 on James’ mysterious 1789 piano is a serial number, and if Beck assigned a number sequentially to every instrument that he made from 1780,\textsuperscript{169} the serial number 2000 indicates that between 1780 and 1789 Beck produced a remarkable yearly average of 222.2 pianos—that is, one instrument every day-and-a-half. This estimated average annual output is on the impressive side, and most probably represents an overestimation.

2. Beck’s square pianos were numbered prior to 1780, and the 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument has the serial number 2000: Given that the 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument has a serial number of 2000, determination of the date when Beck first began to make and number his pianos (assuming that he assigned a number sequentially to every instrument that he made, and that his output was uninterrupted) enables an estimate of his average annual production to be created. Unfortunately, it is not known exactly when Beck began to make pianos. It is also not known if Beck made German tafelklaviere prior to his making English Zumpe-style pianos, and, if so, whether or not he assigned serial numbers to these tafelklaviere.\textsuperscript{170} Assuming that Beck only began to number his English Zumpe-style pianos in London in about 1767—that is, shortly after Zumpe’s initial experiments—the serial number 2000 for the 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument suggests that between 1767 and 1775 Beck produced an astonishing yearly average of 250 pianos (that is, one instrument every day-and-a-half).

In London during the late 1760s, the demand for square pianos was high, and the demand continued to rise throughout the next few decades. For example, between 1773 and 1788, the prolific Adam Beyer made an average of 50 square pianos a year—that is, one instrument approximately every seven days).\textsuperscript{171}

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\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Ord-Hume, ‘Beck, Frederick (fl. 1756–1798)’, p. 44. Regrettably, Ord-Hume does not provide information regarding the location on the instrument of the serial number, nor associated details.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} See ‘Frederick Beck’, above.
In 1786, Longman & Broderip undertook to obtain ‘at least £5000 worth of instruments annually, that is, somewhere between 200 and 300 keyboard instruments—harpsichords and pianos—per year’.\textsuperscript{172} Furthermore, taking known serial numbers as our guide, [during the early 1790s] it would appear that in only four years [John Broadwood sold] one thousand three hundred square pianos … an annual rate of almost three hundred and fifty. This far exceeds any year’s production seemingly reported in the firm’s books up to that time—or in the years immediately afterwards. So caution is necessary when interpreting such data.\textsuperscript{173}

A similar caution should be exercised when establishing estimates of Frederick Beck’s average annual output. Because it is not known when Beck began to make and number his pianos (pianos made either in the German \textit{tafelklavier} or in the English style),\textsuperscript{174} any estimation of his output remains within the realm of pure conjecture. All that may be said with certainty is that Beck’s production in England appears to have been both consistent and considerable.

In order to achieve an annual average production rate of between 222.2 and 250 pianos, Beck would have had to employ a considerably large workforce (several hundred people). Because contemporaneous commentary and documentation do not support this conjecture, such a large number is extremely unlikely. The exact number of Beck’s employees has not been established.

Around 1790, Beck was in business with the piano maker George Corrie.\textsuperscript{175} A square piano made during the (unknown) period of this business relationship has the serial number ‘2505’ (Plates 17 and 43r). If Beck produced an average of 250 pianos a year between 1767 and 1775, and if Beck’s output after 1775 remained consistent and unchanged, piano number 2505 should be dated 1777. That a period of approximately 13 years exists between 1777 and Beck’s association with Corrie in ca 1790 highlights the difficulties associated with attempting to ascertain Beck’s average annual output.

Of the 27 Beck pianos listed in Clinkscale,\textsuperscript{176} only one has a serial number: number 5008, dated 1782/87? (Plates 20h and 20i).\textsuperscript{177} Piano number 5008 is owned by the Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA. The Trust’s ‘museum records give

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{173} Cole, \textit{Broadwood Square Pianos}, p. 61.
\bibitem{174} See ‘Frederick Beck’, above.
\bibitem{175} ‘Beck, Arnold Frederick’, in \textit{The Early Piano}.
\bibitem{176} Watson, \textit{Clinkscale Online}.
\bibitem{177} See ‘Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck’ below. See also ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.
\end{thebibliography}
a date of 1782, but without explanation’. Clinkscale also dates piano number 5008 as 1782. Inconsistencies in the calligraphic style of this instrument’s nameboard inscription suggest that the nameboard inscription cartouche, if not perhaps the entire nameboard, may have been replaced (Plate 20i). If Beck produced an average of 250 pianos a year between 1767 and 1775, and if Beck’s output after 1775 remained consistent and unchanged, piano number 5008 should be dated 1787.

Of the six Beck pianos not listed in Clinkscale, three have serial numbers:

1. number 2505 (by Beck and Corrie, described above)
2. number 2580, with an estimated date of ca 1790
3. number 3091, with an estimated date of 1778

In relation to piano number 2580 (ca 1790), if Beck produced an average of 250 pianos a year between 1767 and 1775, and if Beck’s output after 1775 remained consistent and unchanged, piano number 2580 should be dated 1777. Once again, a discrepancy of approximately 13 years between 1777 and the instrument’s estimated date (ca 1790) emphasises the difficulties associated with attempting to ascertain Beck’s average annual output.

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178 ‘English Square Pianoforte by Frederick Beck, London, circa 1782’, in Norfolk Charitable Trust Records. I am indebted to Elisabeth McGregor, Curator/Archivist of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, for this information. See ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.

179 See Watson, Clinkscale Online.

180 See ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.

181 1) A piano dated ca 1769–73 (a date towards the end of the range seems most likely: ca 1772–73), made for Longman, Lukey & Co., reasonably attributed to Frederick Beck; owner: Albert Bil, Scotland (Plate 43u). 2) A piano dated 1773; owner: Pelham Galleries, London, UK (Plate 43a). 3) A piano dated 1778? (estimate); owner(s): unknown; serial number 3091. 4) A piano dated 1782; owner: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany. 5) A piano dated ca 1790? (the nameboard inscription reads: No 2505 / F Beck et G Corrie Londini Fecerunt / No 10 Broad Street Soho); owner(s): unknown, in Germany; serial number 2505 (Plate 43r). 6) A piano dated ca 1790; owner(s): unknown; serial number 2580.

182 On Thursday, 12 December 2013, this square piano was offered for sale in Conway Hall, Holborn, London, by Piano Auctions Limited, with an estimate of £2000–3000. The reserve was too high, and the instrument did not sell. The provenance of this square piano is unknown. The instrument currently requires significant restoration, especially the front right corner, which is badly cracked and requires gluing and clamping. I am indebted to Andrew Snedden, York, UK, for this information (Email from Andrew Snedden to the author, 12 December 2013).

183 On Wednesday, 9 March 1994, this square piano was offered for sale at auction (Sale 6414) in South Kensington, London, by Christie’s. The instrument was described as a ‘line-inlaid square piano by Frederick Beck No. 3091, 10, Broad Street, Soho [presumably an accurate quotation of the complete nameboard inscription], on square tapering legs joined by an undertier, early 19th century, mechanism now broken’. The piano was offered as Lot 277, and sold for £352. See ‘Sale 6414 Lot 277’, in Christie’s The Art People [n.d.]. If Beck produced an average of 250 pianos a year between 1767 and 1775, and if Beck’s output after 1775 remained consistent and unchanged, piano number 3091 should be dated 1778.
Because the ‘relentless march of time clouds the truth in theory and speculation’,\textsuperscript{184} the extent of Frederick Beck’s output currently remains, alas, a tantalising mystery.

**Serial Number: George Worgan’s square piano**

On George Worgan’s 1780/86? Beck square piano, the top dovetail joint at the spine’s bass-end corner is impressed with the stamp ‘I’ (Plate 21). This stamped figure is not a serial number. Rather, it is either:

1. associated with case assembly (ensuring that the case’s component parts were correctly matched with each other); or
2. a batch number (square piano cases were commonly made in a run, not one by one).

![Plate 21 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): five lapped dovetail joints at the bass corner of the spine (visible from behind)—the top joint is impressed with the stamp ‘I’.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

The stamped figure suggests that someone other than Beck may have assembled the case, as one instrument’s case among many, in a location other than Beck’s workshop. The assembled case would have been brought into Beck’s workshop in order for him to complete the instrument. This scenario was not an unusual one for late eighteenth-century London piano makers.185

George Worgan’s piano of 1780/86? does not have a serial number. If the date on the instrument’s original and unaltered nameboard is 1780 (as the date appears, at first glance, to be),186 the absence of a serial number is consistent with Beck’s practice (at least according to Cranmer—with no substantiating evidence—that until ‘1780 at least, Beck’s square pianos were not numbered’).187 In the light of Cranmer’s observation, if the date on the nameboard is 1786, the absence of a serial number is perplexing.

Why did Beck not give George Worgan’s square piano a serial number? Until 1780 at least,188 it may have been his usual practice. Perchance he thought that the instrument would not survive its journey to Botany Bay, or that, having arrived safely, it would never return to London (in both of these instances, Beck may have regarded a serial number as being unnecessary). On the other hand, Beck’s prominent inclusion of unique design elements in the instrument (that is, the instrument’s legs and stand) may have offended his aesthetic sensibilities (see ‘Stand’ below). Although it is unlikely, hypothetically the presence of these elements may have caused Beck to ‘disown’ the instrument by leaving it unnumbered.

A Unique Stand

Some of Beck’s square pianos have been criticised in modern times for ‘rushed cabinet-work, poor key-carving, and even in one case an adze-mark on the wrestplank’.189 If George Worgan’s piano of 1780/86? is representative of the many instruments that Frederick Beck must have made (only 32 are extant) then, not to gratuitously disparage Beck, such criticism is justified; it seems that ‘quality, precision or even “flawlessness”’ were … extremes between which’ Beck found, according to his taste and (perhaps) whim, ‘the best position’.190 The combination of marked care in the critical areas of an instrument (for example, the action) with relatively slapdash work elsewhere is typical of many piano

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185 See ‘Beck and Square Piano Production’ above.
186 See ‘Date’, above.
188 Ibid., p. 334.
189 Ibid., p. 335.
makers; for a maker to pay close attention to the making of every component part of an instrument was unusual (exceptions to the norm are John Broadwood and Robert Stodart).

Worgan’s 1780/86? Beck piano reveals some surprisingly crude and careless work, and yet the care taken over certain elements of the instrument constitutes a curious inconsistency. One such element reinforces the hypothesis that the instrument was brought to Sydney Cove by George Worgan on board the flagship of the First Fleet, the *Sirius*: the instrument’s stand.

The stand of Worgan’s piano is not only unique among the surviving instruments made by Beck, it is also unique within the context of English square pianos of its time.

Until ca 1780, square pianos were supported by a trestle stand—that is, four legs connected by stretchers. At each end of the instrument, two square-section untapered legs (sometimes with a moulding cut into the outer arris) formed archaic Jacobean-style ‘H’ end frames (the Jacobean trestle style was already old-fashioned by 1725). The ‘H’ end frames were formed by joining each of the two legs at each end of the instrument with a single (or two) crossbar(s). The two ‘H’ end frames were connected with one another by a single (or two) long stretcher(s).

With many English square piano trestle stands, each end of a long stretcher was joined to an ‘H’ end frame with an iron bolt. Representative examples are found on the following pianos (to list but a few):

1. Johann Zumpe 1766
2. Johann Zumpe 1767
3. Johann Zumpe, 1769
4. Johann Pohlman 1769
5. Johann Zumpe and Gabriel Buntebart 1770

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191 See Appendix A, Volume 2 of this publication.
193 See ibid., p. 184.
194 In some instances, the long stretchers are glued, rather than bolted to the ‘H’ end frames.
195 Images referenced in relation to the listed pianos show bolted (rather than glued) cross stretchers.
197 See photograph in ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 123, 230. See also photograph in James, *Early Keyboard Instruments*, p. 137, Plate LVII.
199 See Beurmann, *Das Buch vom Klavier*, p. 21, Plate 102c.
6. Longman, Lukey & Co. 1770
7. Longman, Lukey & Co., ca 1772–73 (reasonably attributed to Frederick Beck)
8. John Broadwood 1774
9. Johann Pohlman 1774
10. Fredrick Beck 1775
11. Johann Zumpe and Gabriel Buntebart 1775
12. George Froeschle 1776
13. Frederick Beck 1777
14. Christopher Ganer ca 1777
15. John Geib ca 1777
16. Adam Beyer 1778
17. Adam Beyer 1780
18. Johann Pohlman ca 1780–84
19. Longman & Broderip ca 1782
20. John Broadwood 1783
21. Christopher Ganer 1785

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201 See photograph in ibid., p. 120.
202 See Plate 43u.
203 See photograph in Cole, Broadwood Square Pianos, p. 166.
205 See photographs in ‘Cité de la musique, Paris, France/Musée de la musique/Collection Catalogue/Recherchez dans le catalogue/Facteur, auteur ou sujet/Piano carré/Frederick Beck, LONDRES/1775/E.1530′, in MIMO: Musical Instrument Museums Online (n.d.). Inconsistencies in the calligraphic style between the date’s ‘177’ and ‘5’ subtly suggest that the date may have been altered.
22. Christopher Ganer, ca 1785\textsuperscript{217}

23. John Broadwood 1786\textsuperscript{218}

24. Adam Beyer 1788\textsuperscript{219}

25. James Houston (made for John Bland) early 1790s\textsuperscript{220}

26. John Broadwood 1791\textsuperscript{221}

27. John Broadwood 1795.\textsuperscript{222}

When the trestle stand included bolts, the two ‘H’ end frames could be dismounted from the long stretcher(s) for transport.\textsuperscript{223} Characteristically, the trestle stand was considerably shorter than the length of the piano that was placed upon it (Plate 22).\textsuperscript{224} Some stands were mounted on castors.

Trestle stands were rarely made in a piano maker’s workshop, commonly being supplied instead by East End furniture workers. By ca 1780, the trestle stand was rejected for all but the cheapest class of piano, and was replaced with the so-called ‘French frame’\textsuperscript{225} (Plates 23, 23a, 441, 444 and 453) (the term ‘French frame’ was first coined by John Broadwood).\textsuperscript{226}

A French frame fits closely with the lower edge of a square piano’s case.\textsuperscript{227} When the instrument is placed onto the stand, the illusion is created that the piano, legs and the stand’s top stretcher are one piece of furniture.\textsuperscript{228}

With a French frame, four slender straight square-tapering legs matching the colour of the piano’s case—sometimes fitted at their terminations with brass cup castors (Plate 24)—or with spade feet (Plate 43r), are joined by stretchers at the top.\textsuperscript{229}

The stretchers are secured with dry mortice and tenon sockets (traditionally used to joint wood with grain at right angles to each
other), and tightened by hidden [cheese-head] iron [coach] bolts … at the top of each leg. [Each of] the visible bolt heads holding the frame together [is] … usually covered by [a] brass oval [or sometimes round] patera (often with classical motifs) to conceal them [Plates 25, 26 and 452]. The entire frame can be dismantled.

Because of the time it takes to unscrew the bolts that hold the frame together, dismantling the frame can be a protracted process.

In the French frame’s most simple form, each pair of legs at either end of the instrument is joined by a cross member; this creates an ‘H’ end frame at either end of the instrument (Plate 446). In many instances, a long horizontal stretcher extends between the ‘H’ end frames (Plates 23 and 446). Sometimes, a mahogany under-tier (or shelf) is fitted between the ‘H’ end frames, ‘extending between the cross members’ that join each pair of legs at either end of the instrument (Plates 23b and 27). The front of the shelf is usually serpentine, ‘in order to make enough space to prevent players from hitting their shins’. Sometimes, the shelf has a vertical wooden back approximately 2.5 centimetres high, the purpose of which is not only to prevent sheet music and books from falling off, but also to reinforce the long, thin shelf (thereby preventing the shelf from bending under the weight of heavy music books and/or piles of sheet music) (Plate 27).

The earliest French frame for a square piano is found on an instrument by Christopher Ganer, dated 1778. ‘If you had been visiting someone’s home in 1780 and seen’ a square piano resting on a French frame, ‘there would have been nothing in its appearance to cause a moment’s regard or scrutiny’. The French frame remained in vogue until ca 1805, when it began to be replaced with ‘lathe-turned legs terminating in brass cup castors … Each leg had a wooden screw thread at the top. The screw tightened up into a socket penetrating into the base of the instrument’ (Plate 28).
Plate 22 Square-legged trestle frame: the frame belongs to a square piano by John (?) Simpson (fl. 1767–95) (London, ca 1770s).

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.


Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, Inv. no. 0171.

Source: Australian National University School of Music, Keyboard Institute Collection, Canberra. Photo by the author.

Plate 23b Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1782/87?): French frame with under-tier.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA.
Plate 24 French frame, Muzio Clementi & Co. (London, ca 1805): treble-end front; a slender, straight square-tapering leg, fitted at its termination with a brass cup castor (detail).

Source: Australian National University School of Music, Keyboard Institute Collection, Canberra. Photo by the author.

Left: Plate 25 French frame, Muzio Clementi & Co. (London, ca 1805): treble-front corner; the bolt head holding the frame together is visible because a brass patera has not been rotated into its rest position (detail).

Right: Plate 26 French frame, Muzio Clementi & Co. (London, ca 1805): treble-front corner; the bolt head holding the frame together is concealed by a brass patera (detail).

Source: Australian National University School of Music, Keyboard Institute Collection, Canberra. Photos by the author.
Plate 27 French frame, Muzio Clementi & Co. (London, ca 1805):
mahogany under-tier (shelf) with a serpentine front, fitted between the
cross members in the end trestles.

Source: Australian National University School of Music, Keyboard Institute Collection, Canberra. Photo by the author.

Plate 28 Square piano by John Broadwood & Sons (London, ca 1817):
lathe-turned legs terminating in brass cup castors.

Source: Australian National University School of Music, Keyboard Institute Collection, Canberra. Photo by the author.

Early nineteenth-century changes in French decorative fashion resulted in a correspondingly alteration of English aesthetic sensibilities, and what the English called ‘French corners’ became à la mode. On a new and fashionable square piano ca 1810, for example, each front corner at the treble and bass end of the piano’s case was rounded (rather than right-angled, as had been the English tradition). Fine lathe-turned legs now supported the instrument: two at each of the front corners, and one for each back corner. Unfortunately, a piano’s rounded front
corners usually represented a fall in engineering standards. ‘The new fashion for rounded front corners was achieved by dispensing with the hidden dovetail joints, hand cut by skilled men. Instead the joints were merely lapped.’  

In London, James Shudi Broadwood (1772–1851), writing in January 1807 to a Mr Harmon of Philadelphia, comments on the contemporaneous craze for lathe-turned legs: ‘6 legs are so much in vogue here that we cannot scarce sell any instrument without them.’  

Elaboration in the appearance of these legs—or the want of it—was the chief visual reminder of the quality that the owners had paid for … [By the 1820s, the] more pricey examples had decorative brass collars around the top, and the smartest models also had reeded decoration [Plate 28].  

Such brass collars were not purely decorative; they also functioned to subtly strengthen the leg top. Because the bottom boards of square pianos were made almost exclusively from Scotch pine (Pinus sylvestris)—a wood that is very rigid and strong compared with other species of pine, but also a wood that is softer than mahogany—screwing the legs into holes drilled into the bottom of the instrument sometimes caused the bottom boards to split. Initially, a solution to this problem was attempted by gluing and screwing a wooden block onto the bottom boards; a hole was drilled into the wooden block and tapped so that the top of the leg could be screwed into it.  

After 1820 square pianos were constantly redesigned for a more powerful tone … the keyboard was extended upwards … to six octaves, and afterwards in both directions to reach seven octaves. To achieve this stronger tone string gauges were progressively increased, until the strain was almost four times greater than on eighteenth-century pianos … In an effort to prevent structural collapse these later pianos were fitted with an iron hitch plate (from around 1825) and afterwards, on American pianos, full metal framing (from around 1840).  

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237 Cole, Broadwood Square Pianos, p. 94. See ‘Lap Joint’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication.  
238 Letter from James Broadwood to Mr Harmon, January 1807. Quoted in Goold, Mr. Langshaw’s Square Piano, p. 248.  
239 Cole, Broadwood Square Pianos, p. 93.  
240 A problem associated with Scotch pine bottom boards is their ‘tendency to shrink with time. Most of the shrinkage is in the tangential direction, and restorers frequently encounter early square piano bottoms … with substantial shrinkage’. For example, restoration reports for two Broadwood square pianos dated 1793 and 1795, as well as for a Longman & Broderip square piano dated 1785, ‘describe baseboard shrinkage of as much as 3/8 inch in width out of a total width of approximately 18 inches’. T. Strange, ‘Reading the Historical Record from an Early Broadwood Grand Piano’, in Square Piano Tech: A Resource for the Restoration of 18th and early 19th Century Square Pianos (n.d.), p. 16, fn. 11.  
As pianos became larger and heavier, their lathe-turned legs became thicker and more sturdy.

Frederick Beck created a unique stand for George Worgan’s square piano. This unique stand reveals an inspired and practically motivated fusion of design elements. Beck’s innovative design excludes elements that would normally have been found in a French frame:

1. slender, straight square-tapering legs
2. brass cup castors on the leg terminations
3. hidden iron bolts and plates at the top of each leg
4. paterae at the top of each leg to hide bolt heads
5. the ‘lip with recess’ on the top of the frame
6. wooden or metal pegs protruding from the top of the frame fitting into small holes in the bottom of the piano to hold the instrument in place.

Instead of the French frame’s slender, square-tapered straight legs, Beck provided four square-tapered cabriole legs (Plate 29). Within the context of extant late eighteenth-century English square pianos, cabriole legs are unique.

Plate 29 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): four square-tapered cabriole legs.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

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243 Each patera had a small rounded protrusion at the top through which a hole was drilled; the patera was fixed to the instrument by a brass screw passing through this hole into the body of the stand, in such a way that the patera hung loosely over the bolt hole and could be swung aside to access the bolt head.
The delicate appearance of these cabriole legs is deceptive. Arguably, they are marginally stronger (given their thickness) and more stable (especially at the leg terminations) than the slender straight square-tapering legs of a French frame.

Cabriole legs (as one of the most distinctive features of the rococo style)\(^{245}\) were commonly associated with France. They instantly create an effect of elegance, sensuality, delicacy and a relaxed, whimsical ease. An observation made by the English painter and printmaker William Hogarth (1697–1764) is appropriate: ‘The serpentine line, or line of grace, by its waving and winding at the same time in different ways, leads the eye in a pleasing manner along the continuity of its variety.’\(^{246}\) If Beck operated a dealership and/or workshop in Paris,\(^{247}\) this may explain his incorporation of cabriole legs into Worgan’s piano; the French would certainly have regarded cabriole legs as a familiar, acceptable element of furniture design. Cabriole legs also reflected the contemporaneous ‘hegemony of France in matters of taste’.\(^{248}\)

Another line of inquiry leads to the notion that George Worgan’s piano of 1780/86 was an instrument that Frederick Beck exported from his London workshop to Paris; once in Paris, hinged cabriole legs were added to the instrument for whatever reason. This is, however, an unlikely scenario. In Paris, when legs under imported pianos were changed, the result was nearly always screw-in lathe-turned legs in conical form;\(^{249}\) encountering such legs indicates that such an alteration took place some considerable time after 1780–86. There then remains the unanswerable question of how a Beck square piano exported to Paris came into the hands of George Bouchier Worgan.

Beck’s mixture of furniture styles in Worgan’s piano includes the aesthetic of his important contemporary George Hepplewhite (1727–86), who, along with Thomas Sheraton and Thomas Chippendale (1718–79), was one of the most influential eighteenth-century English furniture makers. ‘Inlay in coloured woods, very sparingly used’,\(^{250}\) was one of the features of the Hepplewhite style, and this feature can be seen in Worgan’s piano.

The elegant linearity of the neo-classical lines of the piano’s case, as well as the ‘Englishness’ of its restrained and sober appearance (at least when compared with the excesses of French rococo furniture) are skillfully combined with the curvaceous rococo lines of the instrument’s cabriole legs. During the late


\(^{247}\) According to Adélaïde de Place (*Le Piano-forte à Paris entre 1760 et 1822*), Beck’s workshop was at 364 rue Saint-Denis. See Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano 1700–1820*, p. 19.

\(^{248}\) Morley, *Furniture*, p. 190.

\(^{249}\) I am indebted to Michael Cole for this information.

eighteenth century in England, French rococo flamboyance was equated with meaningless frippery, and 'resistance to triviality was regarded as a vindication of English good taste over the shallow [posturing] … of continental neighbours'.251 Within the context of the neo-classical style, cabriole legs were the 'last Rococo feature to be ousted in favour of vertical types'.252 The English vernacular style comprised 'conservative lines, emphasized by overall veneers … small areas might be decorated by chaste carving; and metalwork was confined to simple mouldings, functional handles, and keyhole escutcheons'.253 'Restrained in its Neoclassicism and practical in its design, [English] furniture' made during the 1770s and 1780s 'was, generally speaking, more graceful and refined than at any other time in the history of English cabinetmaking'.254 (During the late eighteenth century, the graceful elegance of English neo-classical furniture was, perhaps, best revealed in the design of chairs. 'Ladies' hoops were gradually disappearing; a woman no longer occupied “the space of six men,” and the old wide seats were accordingly superseded by smaller and neater shapes.')255

In England, the poised simplicity of neoclassicism was not confined to furniture design. The coin minter, industrialist, and silver-plate and ormolu maker Matthew Boulton, as well as the pottery maker Josiah Wedgwood, ‘articulated an anti-French design strategy to simplify, to move away from excessive ornament and glitter; the [aesthetic] … shift was ideal for a technology based on dies, stamps, moulds, and cast and polished steel’.256

The austere rigour of Neoclassicism was well suited to the cult of reason, discipline and calculability typical of the rising bourgeoisie.

… [T]he beauty of Neoclassicism was [not only] a refreshing reaction to the [flamboyant Rococo] tastes of the [French] ancien régime, but was also a search for rules that were certain, and therefore rigid and binding.257

The luxuriant French rococo lines of the cabriole legs supporting Worgan’s piano are far removed from the serene austerity of English neoclassicism.

The leg terminations of Worgan’s piano are not fitted with brass cup castors. This is contrary to the norm for an instrument of such quality made during the 1780s. The surface area of each of the bare-wood leg terminations, when they contact the ground, is larger than that of a cup castor. Also, the ‘roughness’ of the bare-wood terminations ‘grips’ wooden floorboards more effectively than a

254 Riley, World Furniture, p. 133.
255 Simon, English Furniture Designers of the Eighteenth Century, p. 126.
smooth wheel. It appears that the bare-wood leg terminations are intentional, their purpose being to enhance the instrument’s physical stability within the context of a shipboard environment that is constantly moving. Furthermore, brass cup castors at the termination of cabriole legs are unusual, simply because such an addition to cabriole legs compromises the flowing, graceful aesthetic.

At each end of the instrument, the lower part of each pair of legs is fixed by a horizontal stretcher let into each leg (Plates 30 and 31).

When the piano is standing on its feet, each horizontal stretcher let into the legs (and therefore, each pair of legs at each end of the instrument) is held apart by a detachable lower stretcher running the length of the case (Plate 32).

At each end of this detachable lower stretcher, there is a protruding dovetail. Plates 31 and 33 show the protruding dovetail at the treble end inserted into its dry mortice and tenon socket. Plate 33 reveals that the treble-end socket has increased in depth because of wear; as a consequence, the top surface of the protruding dovetail sits slightly beneath the top surface of the stretcher that fixes the lower part of the legs.

The cabriole legs are joined at the top by a bar at the top edge, the hand-carved ends of which are curved into the legs (Plate 34).

Left: Plate 30 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): treble end of the instrument—stretcher let into the lower part of each leg.

Right: Plate 31 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): treble end of the instrument—stretcher let into each leg.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photos by the author.
Plate 32 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): detachable lower stretcher, running the length of the case, which holds the pair of legs at each end of the instrument apart.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Plate 33 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): treble end of the instrument—the protruding dovetail at the end of the detachable lower stretcher has sunk into a socket that has increased in depth because of wear.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Chapter 2

Plate 34 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): treble end of the instrument—the legs are joined at the top edge by a bar, the ends of which curve into the legs.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

‘Standard works on British furniture history are virtually unanimous on the structural irrelevance of … stretchers, and their absence on fine [eighteenth-century] London furniture with cabriole legs. … Stretchers marred the appearance of the [bold, elegantly] … shaped cabriole leg and were unnecessary for strengthening purposes.’

‘On the Continent … unbraced cabriole stands’—that is, stands comprising cabriole legs with no stretchers—‘could be found under large and heavy keyboard instruments, including grand pianos’.

For example,

the 1776 … [Jean-Henri] Silbermann [1727–99] grand piano in Berlin, the Gottlieb Rosenau [ca 1720 – ca 1790] 1786 harpsichord in Copenhagen, the 1782 Carl [August] Gräbner [1749–96] harpsichord in Nuremberg, the 1779 … [Johann Ludwig] Hellen combination harpsichord and grand piano in Berlin, several Silbermann bentside spinets … many German and Scandinavian clavichords, a large Späth and [Christoph Friedrich Schmahl

258  Germann, ‘Stands’, p. 89, fn. 63.
259  Ibid., p. 85.
260  See, for example: 1) the photograph of a 1764/90? keyboard pantalon by Franz Ignatz Seuffert (organ and instrument maker to the court in Würzburg, Northern Bavaria, during the 1760s), in M. Cole, ‘Franz Ignatz Seuffert, 1764’, in The Invention of the Square Piano: A Review of Some Claimed Early German Tafelklaviere (n.d.). The stand of this instrument comprises cabriole legs without stretchers. This instrument is currently exhibited at the Schloss Benrath, Düsseldorf, Germany. 2) The photograph of a 1794 unfretted clavichord by Johann Bohak (ca 1754–1805; a Bohemian maker based in Vienna) in Brauchli, The Clavichord, p. 227; and I. Kipnis (ed.), The Harpsichord and Clavichord: An Encyclopedia (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 239. This instrument was used by Joseph Haydn, and is currently housed at the Royal College of Music, London (inv. no. 177). Although the stand is not original, it comprises cabriole legs without stretchers. 3) The photograph of an unfretted clavichord by Johann Adolph Hass (1713–71) in E. Winternitz, Musical Instruments of the Western World (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), p. 223. The instrument is currently housed in the Musik Historiske Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark (inv. no. 462). 4) The photograph of a fretted clavichord by Christian Gottlob Hubert (1714–93), dated 1784, in G. Haase and D. Krickeberg, Tasteninstrumente des Museums Keilklaviere.
(1739–1814) … *Tangentenflügel*\(^{261}\) in Boston, the Louis Bas [fl. 1778–86] 1781 grand piano in Vermillion [South Dakota], the two [Carl Fredrick] Laeske [1732–81] harpsichord stands in New Jersey (private collection) and The Hague, almost all the Albert Delin [1712–71] clavicytheria and spinets, many Italian and most French eighteenth-century harpsichords and spinets. All these and many more from all regions are on full-height, unbraced cabriole stands, un-deterred by considerations of weight.\(^{262}\)

It is tempting to associate Frederick Beck’s combination of stretchers and cabriole legs with concerns for weight, mobility and convenience; however, the legs on many extant examples of heavy English furniture designed for mobility (that is, legs with castors) have no stretchers. Moreover, the need for strength does not provide reasonable cause for Beck to have combined stretchers and cabriole legs; after all, the structure of trestle and French frame stands is far more given to distortion than unbraced cabriole legs.

To Beck’s discriminating and fashion-conscious contemporaries, his combination of stretchers and cabriole legs would not only have represented a visual anachronism, it would also have seemed very odd, if not bizarre.\(^{263}\) In fact, it is ‘rare to find cabriole legs with stretchers … in any … period’.\(^{264}\)

The author has seen many square pianos dating from the late eighteenth century. Uniquely within the context of late eighteenth-century English square piano stand design, George Worgan’s 1780/86? Beck piano not only has cabriole legs, but also the top of each leg is attached to the bottom of the case by a relatively large (yet inconspicuous) iron butt hinge (Plate 35).

To the author’s knowledge, there are only four other extant late eighteenth-century English square pianos with folding legs:

1. an instrument by Charles Trute, dated ca 1771?, with four straight square-tapering legs braced by a removable shelf.\(^{265}\) This piano has a compass of

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261 See ‘*Tangentenflügel*’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication. ‘It seems that the word *Tangentenflügel* came into use about 1791 when an instrument made by Franz Jacob Spath and Christoph Friederich Schmahl of Regensburg, was described using this name in the *Musikalischer Korrespondenz der deutschen Filarmonischen Gesellschaft*.’ di Stefano, ‘The *Tangentenflügel* and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, p. 80.

262 Germann, ‘Stands’, p. 87.

263 See ibid., pp. 86–7.


265 On Wednesday and Thursday, 18 and 19 September 2013, this square piano was offered for sale (Sale 1186) in London—within the context of the auctioning of the Collection of Professor Sir Albert Richardson, PRA—by Christie’s. The instrument was offered as Lot 128, with a possible attribution to Joseph Merlin, and sold for £5250. See also photographs in ‘A Magical Mystery Piano’, in ‘Update October 28th’, *Friends of Square Pianos* (n.d.).
four octaves (54 notes, C–f³ chromatic)—a compass perhaps inspired by that
found on some seventeenth and eighteenth-century organs and clavichords.266

2. an instrument by Ferdinand Weber (1715–84), dated 1772, with a folding
‘picnic table’ stand. This piano has a compass of two keys less than five
octaves (59 notes, GG–f³)267

3. an instrument by Ferdinand Weber, date unknown, with a folding ‘picnic
table’ stand. This piano has a compass of two keys less than five octaves (59
notes, GG–f³)268

4. an instrument by Longman & Broderip (ca 1790), with four somewhat
unattractive straight square-tapered legs that fold underneath the case.269

At first, this instrument appears to support the notion that Longman &
Broderip manufactured campaign-furniture-style pianos as a matter of course.
It is not known, however, how many instruments with folding legs Longman
& Broderip either commissioned or sold. Significantly, this decoratively plain
instrument (whose unadorned nature precludes it from association with the
campaign furniture aesthetic) has a keyboard compass of only three octaves
(37 notes, F–f² chromatic). This suggests that the piano may have been designed
to function as a choirmaster’s or dancing teacher’s instrument, or as a portable
piano made for a church organist (the so-called ‘shipboard’ piano, an especially
narrow instrument in upright form, is a nineteenth-century invention).

George Worgan’s 1780/86? Beck piano is the only extant late eighteenth-
century English square piano with hinged legs whose case dimensions and
fully chromatic five-octave keyboard compass reflect contemporaneous norms.
That the instrument has cabriole legs and a unique stand designed to be quickly
disassembled, packed away, transported and (most importantly) reassembled
without using nails, tacks or tools270 further reinforces its distinctiveness.

The design of the butt hinge at the top of each cabriole leg on George Worgan’s
piano originated in England during the early eighteenth century. That each
hinge leaf is slightly tapered (from the hinge barrel outward) not only saves
material and enhances the look, it is also typical of many eighteenth-century
English butt hinges.271

266 A strikingly beautiful example of a square piano with an identical compass to that of the ca 1771? Trute
instrument may be seen in ‘Restored Instrument Archive: Square Piano by John Bland, London c.1790’, in
The Music Room Workshop (n.d.).
267 This piano is housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Accession Number: 2003.300).
268 On Wednesday 11 March 2015, this square piano was offered for sale in Stansted, UK, by Sworders Fine
Art Auctioneers. The instrument was offered as Lot 1395, and sold for £4200.
269 See Watson, Clinkscale Online, EP# 2139. See also photographs in ‘Square Piano (Portable Model
Accession Number: 89.4.2849’, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art—Collections (n.d.).
270 See P. R. McDonald, ‘Campaign Furniture—And a ‘New’ Acquisition for Old Government House’, in
Reflections: The National Trust Quarterly. The National Trust’s Diamond Anniversary Issue: A Celebration of
'Throughout ... the 18th [century] ... the typical butt hinge was meant to do its job without drawing attention to itself, functional items such as hinges ... were not in competition with the designed elements for the viewers' attention.' Typically plain English eighteenth-century butt hinges blend in with the woodwork as much as possible.272

The plain iron hinges for the legs on Worgan’s piano reflect this eighteenth-century English aesthetic.

If the hinges were added by someone other than Frederick Beck after the completed piano had left Beck’s workshop, it is reasonable to assume that the mortices into which the hinge leaves are recessed would have been close to perfectly (if not perfectly) matched to the hinge leaves’ edges. That the mortices cut into the wood are imperfect and rough (Plate 35) conforms with Beck’s characteristically ‘rushed cabinet-work’273 and poor-quality carving style, suggesting that Beck himself was responsible for incorporating the hinges into the instrument at the time of its making. (The carving imperfections shown in Plate 35 are representative of each hinge.) The discolouration (oxidisation) of the wood visible at the vertical edges of the mortices suggests that the cavities are not recent, giving further credence to the notion that Beck may have made them.

Plate 35 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—iron butt hinge attaching the top of the rear leg to the case.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

The 1780/86? Beck piano’s unique hinged cabriole legs are an integrated part of the campaign-furniture-inspired stand. Instead of having the French frame’s ‘lip with recess’ at the top of the frame, the top front of the stand has a detachable stretcher (Plate 36). The ends of this front detachable stretcher are inserted into slots at the top of both front legs (Plate 37). This detachable front stretcher tapers off at each end into the curve of the leg (Plate 38), and is held aloft by two brass swivel hooks mounted at either end on the back (Plates 39 and 40). Each hook catches in a square brass catch that protrudes from underneath the case (Plate 41). The front stretcher creates the illusion that the instrument, legs and front stretcher are one article (thereby alluding to the French frame) (Plate 42).

When the instrument is standing, both the detachable lower stretcher running the length of the case and the detachable front stretcher prevent the hinged legs from accidentally folding inwards.

When the detachable stretchers are removed (a quick and easy process), the hinged legs at each end can be quickly folded under the case (Plate 43). When the legs are folded underneath the instrument, the entire article takes up very little space (the fact that space on board ship was limited may have inspired Beck’s design).

Plate 36 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): top front of the ‘frame’—detachable stretcher running between the top of each front leg.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Plate 37 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—slot in the top of the front leg for the detachable front stretcher.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Plate 38 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—the detachable front stretcher tapers off into the curve of the front leg.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Plate 39 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—brass swivel hook on the back of the detachable front stretcher.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Right: Plate 41 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—square brass catch (for the swivel hook) protruding from underneath the case.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Plate 42 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): the front stretcher creates the illusion that the instrument, legs and detachable front stretcher are one article.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Plate 43 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument—legs folded underneath.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
The Advantages of Beck’s Unique Folding Stand

Trestle Stand

The hinged folding legs and stand of Worgan’s piano have several distinct advantages over a trestle stand.

1. When the legs are folded underneath the instrument, only two elements of the stand remain separate from the entire article
   a) the detachable lower stretcher (running the length of the case when the stand is assembled) the detachable top front stretcher (the ends of which are inserted into slots at the top of both front legs when the stand is assembled).

By way of comparison, when a trestle stand is disassembled, five or eight elements remain separate from the piano
   a) two ‘H’ end frames
   b) a single (or two) long stretcher(s)
   c) two (or four) iron bolts.

2. The risk of losing the several parts that make up a trestle stand is reduced.

3. The entire instrument can be quickly and easily dismantled and packed away without having to be lifted off its stand first (this is because the legs of Worgan’s piano are permanently hinged to the bottom of the instrument’s case).

4. The inconvenience of having to move a separate (assembled or disassembled) trestle stand is minimised.

5. The stand is more easily and quickly dismantled than a trestle stand.

6. The hinges of the folding legs on Worgan’s piano are more resistant to wear and tear than the wooden hole in the single (or two) crossbar(s) in each of the trestle stand’s two ‘H’ end frames (an iron bolt passes through each wooden hole, joining the crossbars with a long stretcher). Each time a trestle stand is assembled or disassembled, the wooden hole may be slightly damaged by the abrasive action of the iron bolt passing through it. As a consequence, the hole may increase in diameter. Eventually, the hole may become so wide that the trestle’s structural integrity is compromised.
French Frame

The hinged folding legs and stand of Worgan’s piano have several distinct advantages over a French frame.

1. When the legs are folded underneath the instrument, only two elements of the stand remain separate from the entire article
   a) the detachable lower stretcher (running the length of the case when the stand is assembled)
   b) the detachable top front stretcher (the ends of which are inserted into slots at the top of both front legs when the stand is assembled).

By way of comparison, when a French frame is disassembled, eight to 13 elements remain separate from the piano (the exact number of elements depends upon the design of the legs and the presence or absence of an under-tier)
   a) either two stretchers (if the legs at either end are permanently joined by a stretcher) or four stretchers
   b) either two pairs of legs (if the legs at either end are permanently joined by a stretcher) or four separate legs
   c) an under-tier (if there is one)
   d) four iron bolts.

2. The risk of losing the several parts that make up a French frame is reduced.

3. The entire instrument can be quickly and easily dismantled and packed away without having to be lifted off its stand first (this is because the legs of Worgan’s piano are permanently hinged to the bottom of the instrument’s case).

4. The inconvenience of having to move a separate (assembled or disassembled) French frame is minimised.

5. The stand is more easily and quickly dismantled than a French frame.

6. The hinges of the folding legs on Worgan’s piano are more resistant to wear and tear than the wooden hole at the top of each leg in a French frame (an iron bolt passes through the wooden hole, joining the leg with the stretchers at the top). Each time a French frame is assembled or disassembled, the wooden hole may be slightly damaged by the abrasive action of the iron bolt passing through it. As a consequence, the hole may increase in diameter. Eventually, the hole may become so wide that the French frame’s structural integrity is compromised.
7. Beck’s unique inclusion of hinged, folding legs may have been his response to the knowledge that Worgan intended not only to store the piano on board ship, but also (when occasion dictated) to play it. In order to protect the instrument from storm-at-sea-induced movement, Beck
   a) used cabriole legs because of their inherent strength and stability
   b) excluded brass cup castors in order to prevent the instrument sliding around on the floor
   c) hinged the legs permanently to the underside of the case (if a storm at sea suddenly arose, the piano’s stand could be quickly and easily dismantled for safe and protectively immobilised storage).

8. The stand weighs significantly less than a French frame. This has ramifications not only in relation to the ease with which the piano may be moved with its stand assembled, but also in relation to the ease with which the stand may be assembled or disassembled.

   It appears that Beck’s creative thinking was brought into play because he knew that on board the *Sirius*—as remarked by the soldier, composer, music publisher and ‘self-styled expert in the growing market for handbooks of practical tips for the oriental traveller’

   274 Captain Thomas Williamson (1758–1817) in his *East India Vade-Mecum*—the instrument ran the risk of being ‘tumbled about, and shivered to atoms, by the vessel’s motion’. 275 During a storm, a rampaging piano would have been a distinct liability.

**Campaign Furniture**

The design principle of hinged, folding legs has its precedent in military ‘camp’ or ‘campaign’ furniture.

   Campaign (or travelling) furniture was not only durable and practical, but elegant, being designed in the most fashionable contemporary taste... Examples include... chairs, tables, desks, writing slopes, bookcases, chests, sofas, trunks, ecclesiastical rostrums, bedsteads, cots, dressing table sets, showers, washstands, bidets, reading lamps and even razor cases.

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The essential difference between elegant household furniture and campaign furniture was that the latter could be quickly disassembled, packed away, transported and (most importantly) reassembled without using nails, tacks or tools.276

Campaign furniture was designed for use by officers on campaign.277 Its innate elegance and superb design

‘reflected the strong sense of superiority of the gentleman-officer class, its rank in both society and in the army, and its attitudes towards travel, camp and battle’. Moreover, it was precisely because issues of class and respectability were taken so seriously that makers of campaign furniture flourished.278

Campaign furniture was ‘suitable for the fitting up of ships’ cabins … An advertisement for the auction of eighteen packages of … “camp furniture” by Thompson & Co, Launceston [Tasmania], as late as 1856, suggests that there was a strong and continuing demand for such pieces’.279

Assuming that Beck contrived Worgan’s piano for shipboard use, he would have been aware that Worgan and his piano were destined for Botany Bay. Knowing that the navy and the military were associated both with the First Fleet and with the proposed colony, campaign furniture (long associated with the armed forces) may have inspired Beck’s design for the stand of Worgan’s piano. Beck’s lateral thinking suggests that he may have approached instrument making with an attitude similar to that espoused by George Hepplewhite in 1788: ‘To unite elegance and utility, and blend the useful with the agreeable, has ever been considered a difficult, but an honourable task.’280 Beck’s thinking reflects the wisdom and experience of a mature craftsman (Beck was 48 years old when he completed Worgan’s piano).

276 See McDonald, ‘Campaign Furniture’, p. 22.
278 McDonald, ‘Campaign Furniture’, p. 22. McDonald takes the quotation from: N. A. Brawer, British Campaign Furniture. Elegance under Canvas, 1740–1914 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001). The straight square-tapered legs that fold underneath the case of the four-octave (54 notes, C–f3 chromatic) English square piano by Charles Trute (ca 1771?) are quite elegant, and therefore representative of the campaign furniture aesthetic. The straight square-tapered legs that fold underneath the case of the three-octave (37 notes, F–f2 chromatic) English square piano by Longman & Broderip (ca 1790) are not representative of the campaign furniture aesthetic; they are not elegant, nor are they designed in the most fashionable contemporary taste. See photographs in ‘Square Piano (Portable Model Accession Number: 89.4.2849’.
Extant Pianos by Frederick Beck

Clinkscale\textsuperscript{281} lists 27 Beck pianos. The dates of these instruments (as provided by Clinkscale) are

\begin{tabular}{ll}
ca 1770 & Owner: Michael Günther Collection, Homburg am Main, Germany\textsuperscript{a} \\
1772 & Owner: Mr Tidstrom, Netherlands; formerly housed at the Rien Hasselaar Collection, Amsterdam, Netherlands \\
1772 & Owner(s): unknown\textsuperscript{b} \\
1774 & Owner: Bachhaus, Eisenach, Germany (Plate 43b)\textsuperscript{c} \\
1774 & Owner(s): unknown \\
1775 & One of two instruments with exquisitely beautiful casework of astonishing quality, made by Beck in conjunction with Christopher Fuhrlohg. Owner: Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Wirral, UK\textsuperscript{d} \\
1775 & Owner: Musée de la Musique, Cité de la Musique—formerly Musée Institut du Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique), Paris, France\textsuperscript{e} \\
1776 & Owner: Michael Borgstede, Germany (Plates 43s, 43t, 428b and 428c).\textsuperscript{f} Clinkscale identifies the owner of this instrument as the Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, Germany. The only Beck square piano in that museum’s collection, however, is dated 1780 (see 1780 below) \\
1777 & Recently restored to playing condition. Owner: Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada (Plates 43d, 43e and 249)\textsuperscript{g} \\
1777 & One of two instruments with exquisitely beautiful casework of astonishing quality, made by Beck in conjunction with Christopher Fuhrlohg. Owner: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada\textsuperscript{b} \\
1778 & Owner: Musée instrumental de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium\textsuperscript{i} \\
1778 & The soundboard is dated 1777, denoting a late-year production.\textsuperscript{j} Owner: Thomas Strange, Easley, SC, USA (Plate 43f)\textsuperscript{k} \\
1780 & Owner: Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, Germany\textsuperscript{l} \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{281} Watson, Clinkscale Online.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1780/86</td>
<td>Owner: Stewart Symonds, Sydney, Australia (Plate 43g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Owner(s): unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782/87</td>
<td>Owner: Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA; serial number 5008</td>
<td>Plates 43h, 438 and 440</td>
<td>(Plates 43h, 438 and 440)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782/90</td>
<td>Owner: Osaka College of Music Museum, Osaka, Japan.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This instrument has a 'tangent action', rather than pivoted hammers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1783</td>
<td>Owner: Sibeliummuseet, Turku, Finland (Plate 43i)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Owner: Eberhard Brünger, Bielefeld, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>Owner: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, USA (Plate 43j)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1786</td>
<td>Owner: The Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum, Sweden (Plate 43k)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Owner(s): unknown; serial number 1941</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca 1790</td>
<td>Owner(s): private collection, England. This instrument has a 'tangent action’, rather than pivoted hammers (Plate 43m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca 1795</td>
<td>Owner(s): unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>ca 1795</td>
<td>Owner(s): unknown</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ca 1790–98</td>
<td>Owner: Musée de la Musique, Cité de la Musique—formerly Musée Institut du Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, Paris, France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date unknown</td>
<td>Owner: Halton Henderson, Dallas, TX, USA</td>
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</table>

* See photograph in 'Tafelklavier Fredericus Beck (Friedrich A. Becker) London, ca. 1770 Sammlung Michael Günther, Schloss Homburg a.M., Inv. Nr. 8', in Clavier am Main Tasteninstrumente der Sammlung Michael Günther (n.d.). There is no date visible on the nameboard of this instrument.


c Inv. no. 1. 4. 1. 12., 186.d

d See 'Frederick Beck and Christopher Fuhrlohg' below. See also photograph in 'English Square Piano', in Lady Lever Art Gallery.

e Inv. no. E.1530. See photographs in 'Cité de la musique, Paris, France'.

f See also photograph in C. Sachs, Das Klavier (Berlin: Verlag Julius Bard, 1923), photos on p. 13. The distinguished fortepiano dealer and aficionado Andrew Lancaster restored this square piano 'a few years ago' (Email from Andrew Lancaster to the author, 22 December 2013). The instrument eventually passed into the hands of Graham Walker, who acquired it in the United Kingdom at 'a provincial auction a couple of weeks ago. Against an estimate of £200 (no reserve) it was knocked down for £4,000 (+ premium) to … Graham Walker.' I am indebted to David Hackett for this information (Email from David Hackett to the
Chapter 2

author, 24 November 2013). Graham Walker subsequently sold the instrument to Luke Bradley, Lausanne, Switzerland. In ca March 2014, Bradley offered the instrument for sale for £7000. The piano was purchased by its current owner, Michael Borgstede, Germany. The instrument is in excellent condition.

See P. Gessell, *Artful Blogger: On July 25, You, Too, Can Hear the 1777 Piano that was Once 'Fit for a Queen'*, in Ottawa Magazine (15 February 2012).


I am indebted to Thomas Strange for this information.


Inv. no. 2174, Tafel 13. See photographs in hammerfluegel.net/.

‘Museum records give a date of 1782, but without explanation.’ (‘English Square Pianoforte by Frederick Beck, London, circa 1782’ in Norfolk Charitable Trust Records.) I am indebted to Elisabeth McGregor, Curator/Archivist of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, for providing me with this information. See ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’, in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.

A ‘tangent action’ has non-pivoting vertical rebounding hammers (rather than pivoted rebounding hammers). ‘The distinguishing feature of the so-called tangent action is that the vertical hammers are not attached to any other part of the action but move up and down in a guide similar to the jack guide of the harpsichord … The non-pivoting vertical hammers are propelled towards the strings from below, either by the keys on which they rest or by intermediate levers interposed between the keys and the hammers.’ di Stefano, ‘The *Tangentenflügel* and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, p. 80. Beck was granted a patent for his tangent action instruments; this is revealed by the inscription on the nameboard of the ca 1790 (private collection, England) instrument, which reads: *By the King's Fredericus Beck Londini Fecit Patent No. 10 Broad Street Soho*. Moreover, a handwritten inscription on the soundboard, near the bridge, states: *A. F. Beck. 1790 Patent*. See Plate 16b.

This instrument can be heard at www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7DsOxDR6c (retrieved 15 June 2013); and www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Z2xie6dIGY (retrieved 15 June 2013).

Inv. no. 0171.

Inv. no. N61230.


See Appendix M, Volume 2 of this publication.

Because of this instrument’s extended keyboard compass (FF–c’), Kenneth Mobbs proposes a date of 1795. See Watson, *Clinkscale Online*.

Clinkscale erroneously attributes the ca 1790–98 piano to Frederick Beck. The instrument was made by Joseph Beck.282

Six known Beck instruments are not listed by Clinkscale

1. a piano dated ca 1769–73 (a date towards the end of the range seems most likely: ca 1772–73), made for Longman, Lukey & Co., and reasonably attributed to Frederick Beck;283 owner: Albert Bil, Scotland (Plate 43u and 425b)284

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282 This instrument is a miniature piano, with a keyboard compass of only two octaves. See text and photographs in ‘Cité de la musique, Paris, France’.

283 See photographs in Hackett, ‘(2) An Early London Square Piano Made for Longman, Lukey & Co. c. 1774’. The attribution to Beck is based largely on the absence of dampers after c3; the undamped top five notes are characteristic of Beck’s instruments (no other maker of square pianos followed this damping pattern).

284 I am indebted to David Hackett for information regarding the current owner of this instrument.
2. a piano dated 1773; owner: Pelham Galleries, London, UK (Plate 43a)\textsuperscript{285}
3. a piano dated 1778? (estimate); owner(s): unknown; serial number 309\textsuperscript{286}
4. a piano dated 1782; owner: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany\textsuperscript{287}
5. a piano dated ca 1790? (the nameboard inscription reads: No 2505 / F Beck et G Corrie Londini Fecerunt / No 10 Broad Street Soho; owner(s): unknown, in Germany; serial number 2505 (Plate 43r)\textsuperscript{288}
6. a piano dated ca 1790; owner(s): unknown; serial number 2580.\textsuperscript{289}

When the 26 instruments made by Frederick Beck in Clinkscale’s list—that is, excluding the instrument by Joseph Beck—are combined with the six Beck instruments not recorded in Clinkscale (including both the ca 1769–73/probably ca 1772–73 instrument made for Longman, Lukey & Co. and the ca 1790? instrument, serial number 2505, made by Beck & Corrie)—32 extant square pianos by Frederick Beck can be identified.

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{ca 1770} & Owner: Michael Günther Collection, Homburg am Main, Germany \\
\textbf{ca 1769–73/p} & Owner: Albert Bil, Scotland \\
\textbf{roably} & \\
\textbf{ca 1772–73} & Owner: Mr Tidstrom, Netherlands \\
\textbf{(attribute} & Owner(s): unknown \\
\textbf{tion)} & Owner: Pelham Galleries, London, UK \\
\textbf{1774} & Owner: Bachhaus, Eisenach, Germany \\
\textbf{1774} & Owner(s): unknown
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{285} The 1773 Beck square piano can be heard on Claviers mozartiens (Lyrinx, 2006), CD, Lyr 2251, tracks 11–13 (inclusive); the instrument is played by the virtuoso scholar-musician Pierre Goy. Alan Rubin, of Pelham Galleries, London, UK, acquired this instrument from the widow of the eminent musicologist H. C. Robbins Landon (1926–2009). The instrument is in fine condition, and currently plays very nicely. I am indebted to Alan Rubin for this information (Email from Alan Rubin to the author, 9 April 2013). See photograph in ‘An Early George III Square Piano by Frederick Beck, London 1773’, in Pelham Galleries (London, n.d.). See also photograph in ‘Dating Pianos’.

\textsuperscript{286} See ‘Sale 6414 Lot 277’, in Christie’s The Art People (n.d.).

\textsuperscript{287} See photograph in Beurmann, Das Buch vom Klavier, Plate 110a ‘Das Tafelklavier von Beck’, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{288} I am indebted to Graham Walker for photographs of and information regarding this instrument.

\textsuperscript{289} On Thursday, 12 December 2013, this square piano was offered for sale in Conway Hall, Holborn, London, by Piano Auctions Limited, with an estimate of £2000–3000. The reserve was too high, and the instrument did not sell. The provenance of this square piano is unknown. The instrument currently requires significant restoration, especially the front right corner, which is badly cracked and requires gluing and clamping. I am indebted to Andrew Snedden, York, UK, for this information (Email from Andrew Snedden to the author, 12 December 2013).
1775 One of two instruments with exquisitely beautiful casework of astonishing quality, made by Beck in conjunction with Christopher Fuhrlohg. Owner: Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight Village, Wirral, UK
1775 Owner: Musée de la Musique, Cité de la Musique, Paris, France
1776 Owner: Michael Borgstede, Germany
1777 Owner: Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
1777 One of two instruments with exquisitely beautiful casework of astonishing quality, made by Beck in conjunction with Christopher Fuhrlohg. Owner: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada
1778 Owner: Musée instrumental de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium
1778 The soundboard is dated 1777, denoting a late-year production. Owner: Thomas Strange, Easley, SC, USA
1778? Owner(s): unknown; serial number 3091 (estimate)
1780 Owner: Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, Germany
1780/86? George Worgan’s piano. Owner: Stewart Symonds, Sydney, Australia
1782 Owner: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany
1782 Owner(s): unknown
1782/87? Owner: Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA; serial number 5008
1782/90? ‘Tangent action’ instrument. Owner: Osaka College of Music Museum, Osaka, Japan
1783 Owner: Sibeliummuseet, Turku, Finland
1784 Owner: Eberhard Brünger, Bielefeld, Germany
1785 Owner: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, USA
1786 Owner: The Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum, Sweden
1788 Owner(s): unknown; serial number 1941
ca 1790 ‘Tangent action’ instrument. Owner(s): private collection, England
Of these 32 extant Beck instruments, the owners of nine are unknown to the author.

On Saturday, 4 April 2009, a Beck square piano was offered for sale at auction by Canterbury Auction Galleries—40 Station Street West, Canterbury, Kent, UK. The instrument was described as a ‘late 18th/early 19th Century mahogany square piano by Frederick Beck of London, now converted to a dressing table, inlaid with satinwood bandings and boxwood stringings, fitted three drawers, on square tapered legs and brass caps and casters’. The piano was offered as Lot 562, and sold for £100. The unfortunate conversion of this instrument into a dressing table precludes its inclusion in data regarding extant Beck pianos.

Although the extant pianos made by Frederick Beck are of the square type, there is no reason to suppose that he did not also make grand pianos. An advertisement published in The Whitehall Evening Post of Thursday 14 – Saturday 16 August 1794 suggests that Beck made a grand piano: ‘Sales by Auction … a Capital Grand Piano Forte by Beck’ (late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements were consistently specific when identifying a grand piano for sale; when appropriate, the word ‘grand’ was included). To the author’s knowledge, this is the only contemporaneous evidence that links Beck with the manufacture of a grand piano.

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291 The Whitehall Evening Post, 14–16 August 1794, No. 7449, p. 1. See ‘1794’ in Appendix N, Volume 2 of this publication.
The Stands of Extant Beck Instruments

Eight of the 27 Beck instruments listed in Clinkscale have a trestle stand (pianos dated ca 1770, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1777, 1778 and 1780). Clinkscale does not describe the stands of 11 instruments included in her list; furthermore, her description of the stands of three instruments is not specific enough to allow for certainty.

Of the six Beck pianos not listed in Clinkscale, two have a trestle stand (pianos dated ca 1769–73/probably ca 1772–73 and 1773).

Nine pianos in Clinkscale’s list have a French frame (pianos dated 1782/87?, serial number 5008; 1782/90?; 1783; 1785; 1786; 1788, serial number 1941; ca 1790 [estimate]; ca 1795 [estimate]; and ca 1795 [estimate]).

Four of the six Beck pianos not listed in Clinkscale have a French frame (pianos dated 1778? [estimate], serial number 3091; 1782; ca 1790?, serial number 2505; and ca 1790, serial number 2580).

In relation to the 32 extant Frederick Beck square pianos, the author is aware of the following types of stand on 29 instruments:

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294 See photographs in ‘Cité de la musique, Paris, France; specifically, 194.250.19.151/media/CM/IMAGE/CMIM000030107.jpg. See also photograph in Cole, ‘Square Pianos (newly revised April 2012)’, 2nd image.
295 See Plate 43s below. See also photograph in Sachs, Das Klavier, photos on p. 13.
296 See Plate 43c below. See also photograph in Gessell, ‘Artful Blogger’.
297 See Plate 43f below.
298 See Plate 43u below. See also photograph in Hackett, ‘(2) An Early London Square Piano made for Longman, Lukey & Co. c. 1774’.
299 See Plate 43a below. See also photograph in ‘An Early George III Square Piano by Frederick Beck, London 1773’. See also photograph in ‘Dating Pianos’, first image.
300 Owner: Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA. See Plate 43h below.
301 See photograph in di Stefano, ‘The Tangenterflügel and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, p. 90.
302 See Plates 43i and 43n.
303 See Plate 43j below. ‘The stand was updated when the piano was about fifteen years old. The amateur effort approximates … [a] French frame design but without an apron.’ Watson, Changing Keys, p. 51. See also photograph in Watson, Clinkscale Online, ‘Photos: EP# 408 Square Beck, Frederick’. See also Clinkscale, Makers of the Piano 1700–1820, p. 20.
304 I am indebted to Dan Johannson, Curator of the Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum, for this information.
305 See Plate 43m. See also photograph in di Stefano, ‘The Tangenterflügel and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, p. 101, Figure 17.
306 Owner(s): unknown.
308 Owner(s): unknown, in Germany. See Plate 43r.
309 I am indebted to Andrew Snedden for this information (Email from Andrew Snedden to the author, 12 December 2013).
The First Fleet Piano: A Musician’s View

c. 1770 Trestle

* Owner: Albert Bil, Scotland—trestle (Plate 43u)

1769–73 (probably c. 1772–73)

1772 Owner: Mr Tidstrom, Netherlands—the original stand is missing

1772 Owner(s): unknown—trestle

1773 Trestle

1774 Owner: Bachhaus, Eisenach, Germany—four freestanding, apron-less, round-tapered, fluted screw-in legs (Plates 43b and 43c)

1775 Owner: Beck/Fuhrlohg—no legs

1776 Owner: Michael Borgstede, Germany—trestle

1777 Owner: Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada—trestle

1778 Owner: Musée de la Musique, Cité de la Musique, Paris, France—trestle

1778 Owner: Thomas Strange, Easley, SC, USA—trestle

1778? Owner(s): unknown; serial number 3091—French frame

1780 Owner: Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, Germany—trestle

1780/86? George Worgan’s piano. Owner: Stewart Symonds, Sydney, Australia—hinged, folding cabriole legs

1782 Owner: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany—French frame

1782/87? Owner: Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA; serial number 5008—French frame

1782/90? Owner: Osaka College of Music Museum, Osaka, Japan. ‘Tangent action’ instrument—French frame

1783 French frame—the legs are original, the apron is not (Plates 43i and 43n)

1785 Owner: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, USA—French frame (the stand was updated when the instrument was approximately 15 years old) (Plate 43j)
1786 Owner: Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum, Sweden—French frame
1788 Serial number 1941—French frame
c. 1790 ‘Tangent action’ instrument—French frame (Plate 43m)
(c. 1790?) Serial number 2505—French frame (Plate 43r)
c. 1790 Serial number 2580—French frame
c. 1795 French frame
c. 1795 French frame

a Of the two extant Beck square pianos dated 1772, this is the instrument currently owned by Mr Tidstrom, Netherlands. I am indebted to Stanley Hoogland for this information.
b I am indebted to Inger Jakobsson-Wärn, Director and Curator of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, for this information.

These data suggest that at some stage during the early 1780s, Beck ceased providing trestle stands for his pianos, providing instead French frames, which is consistent with the changing fashion of the time.

Plate 43a Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. c. 1756 – c. 1798) (London, 1773).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Pelham Galleries, London.
Plate 43b Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1774).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Bachhaus, Eisenach/Neue Bachgesellschaft e.V., Inv. no. 1. 4. 12, I 86.

Plate 43c Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1774): round-tapered, fluted screw-in leg—the moulded circular boss lends a touch of ornament to the round capitals (a variant of the French style).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Bachhaus, Eisenach/Neue Bachgesellschaft e.V., Inv. no. 1. 4. 12, I 86.
Plate 43d Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1777).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Carleton University, School for Studies in Art and Culture (Music), Ottawa. Photo by James Park.


Source: Reproduced with permission of Carleton University, School for Studies in Art and Culture (Music), Ottawa. Photo by James Park.
Plate 43f Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1778).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Thomas Strange.

Plate 43g Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?).

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Plate 43h Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1782/87?, serial number 5008).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Norfolk Charitable Trust, Sharon, MA, USA.

Plate 43i Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1783).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, Inv. no. 0171.
Plate 43j Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1785).

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, VA, USA. Photo by John R. Watson.

Plate 43k Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1786).

Plate 43m Tangent action square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, ca 1790 – estimate).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Malcolm Rose. Photo by Malcolm Rose.

Plate 43n Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1783): French frame—the square-tapered legs are original; the apron is not.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, Inv. no. 0171.
Plate 43o Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1783): nameboard decoration—exquisite handpainted swags on either side of and around the inscription cartouche.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, Inv. no. 0171.


Source: Reproduced with permission of the Sibelius Museum, Turku, Finland, Inv. no. 0171.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Malcolm Rose. Photo by Malcolm Rose.

Plate 43r Square piano by Frederick Beck and George Corrie (London, ca 1790?, serial number 2505): sometime during the Victorian or Edwardian period, the case was painted with neo-classical decoration.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Graham Walker. Photo by Graham Walker.
Plate 43s Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1776).

Source: Reproduced with permission of Michael Borgstede.

Plate 43t Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1776): nameboard.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Michael Borgstede.

Source: Reproduced with permission of Albert Bil. Photo by David Hackett.

The beautiful Beck/Fuhrlohg piano of 1775 has no legs.310 Being ‘a decorative piece of furniture’ (a commode)311 as well as ‘a useful musical instrument’,312 this piano takes the form of a rectangular box that extends to the ground. ‘There are cupboard doors at either end which open sets of shelves. The lid, decorated with a bouquet of roses, is hinged at the back and lifts to reveal the piano, while the front frieze panel is removable to allow access to the keyboard.’313 James erroneously observes that there is ‘no recess for the legs of a player seated before it’;314 however, the ‘recessed section of the front plinth was … removable [in order] to make room for the player’s feet, but this is now screwed in place’.315 Nevertheless, the instrument was never player-friendly. There is no music stand nor, it would seem, has there ever been one. Also, although the central panel in

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310 See James, Early Keyboard Instruments, Plate LVIII Square Pianoforte by Frederick Beck English, 1775’, p. 138. See also ‘Frederick Beck and Christopher Fuhrlohg’, below. See also photograph in ‘English Square Piano’, in Lady Lever Art Gallery.
311 See ‘Commode’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 this publication.
312 James, Early Keyboard Instruments, p. 138.
313 ‘English Square Piano’, in Lady Lever Art Gallery.
314 James, Early Keyboard Instruments, Plate LVIII Square Pianoforte by Frederick Beck English, 1775’, p. 138.
the [front] plinth was originally removable to accommodate the player’s feet, no similar provision was made for the seated player’s knees … [the] keyboard is too low to be played comfortably from a standing position.316

The cabriole legs of Worgan’s 1780/86? piano are unique for an English square piano of the time. The fact that these legs are hinged (in order that they can be folded underneath the instrument) enhances their uniqueness.

The hinged cabriole legs of Worgan’s piano represent a design element that strengthens the hypothesis that this was the instrument brought to Australia by Worgan on board the *Sirius*—this is because the piano’s hinged legs

1. are expedient for safe and protectively immobilised storage within the context of a shipboard journey
2. are inspired by campaign furniture—that is, predicated on the principle that the article can be ‘quickly folded up … without the use of nails, tacks or tools’317—thereby having practical advantages in relation to moving and storing the instrument.

That Frederick Beck may have incorporated the unique folding legs into Worgan’s piano at the time of its making is suggested by the fact that

1. the iron butt hinges are typical of those used in late eighteenth-century England
2. the imperfect and rough mortices within which the hinges sit are typical of Frederick Beck’s ‘rushed cabinet-work’318 and poor-quality carving style.

**Storage Box**

There is no documentary evidence suggesting that Worgan took the step of having a storage box made to protect his piano. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, storage boxes specifically made for keyboard instruments were usually accurately described as such by commentators. This is because piano storage boxes were not commonly part of either a household’s or an individual’s chattels; such boxes were expensive and complex pieces of furniture. In 1798, for example, the cost of the storage box provided by Longman & Broderip for Lord Edward Clive’s (1754–1839) piano was one-fifth of the cost of the piano itself:319

316 Ibid.
317 McDonald, ‘Campaign Furniture’, p. 22.
A new patent piano forte £31 10s. 0d.
A packing case 14s. 0d.
Tuning and regulating a grand piano 7s. 6d.
A deal chest of drawer with locks and handles and lifting 
handles with case for piano and other instruments £6 12s 1d.
a smooth case for piano frame [that is, piano stand] 14s. 6d.

Not all piano storage boxes were as expensive as Lord Edward Clive’s, and it 
appears that his storage box was made for a grand piano, not a square piano, but 
the design of such items ensured that they were never inexpensive.

Captain Thomas Williamson describes the complex design of keyboard 
instrument storage boxes. While providing advice for the traveller at sea, 
Williamson states in his *East India Vade-Mecum*:

> Ladies will derive considerable convenience and gratification from 
> having an exterior case made to enclose the piano-forte, leaving a 
> space of about an inch all around. This outward safeguard should be 
> of planed deal, stained of a mahogany color, or painted; and it should 
> open in front, so as to admit of playing the instrument, while its lid 
> should be fixed upon hinges, that it may be thrown back at pleasure. 
> The lower part of the frame [that is, stand] may be packed, and laid 
> by; a spare frame of deal being substituted during the voyage, with 
> a set of shelves below to contain music, books, &c.; all locked up by 
> means of folding doors. Both the exterior case, and the frame, ought 
> to be furnished with lacquered iron handles, whereby to lift them 
> occasionally; but particularly intended to secure them to the side of 
> the ship, and to the deck.320

The sales pitch was that a storage box would not only provide easy access to 
the instrument while on board, but also afford a degree of protection in stormy 
seas. Of course, recommended ‘extras’ raised the storage box’s selling price.321

For those oceanic travellers who were unable to enjoy the virtues and complexities 
of a purpose-made piano storage box, a comparatively simple alternative was 
available. Judge Advocate Ellis Bent322 (1783–1815), writing to his mother in 
England from Sydney on Friday, 27 April 1810, states:

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322 ‘Ellis Bent … was appointed deputy judge advocate in New South Wales as from 1 January 1809 … 
He sailed with his wife and son in H.M.S. Dromedary, the ship carrying [Governor] Lachlan Macquarie to 
My first spare money should be appropriated to the purchase of a small pianoforte [that is, a square piano] by Broadwood, with pedals and additional keys, as good of its kind as can be.—To come safe it ought first to be packed in tin, soldiered down, & then put in a strong iron bound, wooden case.323

This style of piano storage box was not particularly cheap. The use of tin, however, had a surprising financial benefit for those shipping a piano to Sydney. Ellis Bent (writing from Sydney) remarks: ‘Do not be deterred by the expense of packing & shipping for the tin will sell here for treble that expence.’324

The advantage of this type of packing system lay in the airtight environment that existed within the soldered tin box. A disadvantage, however, lay in the fact that the instrument could not be accessed until the conclusion of the voyage.

Square and grand pianos benefited from the reliable protective strengths of this type of storage box. Ellis Bent observes:

Broadwood will take upon himself the whole trouble of packing and shipping, for he did so with Mrs. Macquarie, who brought out a charming grand piano, packed in this manner, without sustaining the slightest Injury, while one of Mrs. Carter’s packed in a different manner was quite spoiled.325

No documentary evidence suggests that on his voyage to Botany Bay, George Bouchier Worgan did (or did not) place his square piano in a protective storage box.

**Mahogany Veneer**

That Frederick Beck (and his piano-making English contemporaries) made lavish use of mahogany veneer for the cases of even the cheapest form of square piano seems inexplicably indulgent. In 1780 or 1786?, however, when Beck was veneering Worgan’s piano, not only was mahogany ‘the fashionable wood of choice’326 (mahogany was ‘chosen for the beauty of its grain’),327 but also good-quality mahogany was easily available in London.
English furniture makers had enjoyed unhindered access to mahogany since the early eighteenth century. From ca 1715, mahogany was shipped to England from Jamaica and the Caribbean. (During the early eighteenth century, mahogany was known as ‘right Jamaica wood’.)  

In this respect, ‘Jamaica’s importance continued until 1790’.  

Mahogany from Spanish-controlled San Domingo was regarded as being of very good quality. This mahogany was referred to at the time as ‘Spanish mahogany’.  

The next grade was mahogany from Cuba. Adam Bowett dispels the myth that the mahogany used for eighteenth-century English furniture was mainly from Cuba. In 1768—and as a representative example—‘the Lancaster furniture makers Gillows ordered timber from one of their Liverpool suppliers. Gillows told their supplier that on no account should they send Cuban mahogany, because “it won’t do at all”’. It was not until the 1850s that ‘a greater share of the British market’ was taken by Cuban mahogany.  

By the time Beck was making Worgan’s square piano, mahogany from Honduras was greatly sought after by London cabinet-makers. Not only was it stable, it was also easily available in very wide boards (between 610 millimetres and 660 millimetres) and was therefore suitable for case furniture—for example, bureaus, bookcases and chests of drawers.  

The quality of the mahogany veneer on the 1780/86? Beck piano suggests that the wood may have come from Jamaica, San Domingo or Honduras. Beck, as with contemporaneous London furniture makers, ‘either bought his veneer ready sawed from his timber merchant or sawed it out … himself’. Beck would have been aware of the increase in costs associated with acquiring his veneers ready sawed. As the French cabinetmaker André Jacob Roubo (1739–91) observed in 1774:  

It is not the cabinet-makers who resaw their own wood, but workmen who specialize in this trade and who resaw not only for the cabinetmakers...

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329 Ibid., p. 11, col. 2.  
330 Ibid., p. 13, col. 3.  
333 Ibid., p. 12, col. 1.  
334 Ibid., p. 13, col. 1.  
336 Hubbard, Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making, p. 217.
but also for the luthiers and in general all those who employ thin wood. These workmen or sawyers are paid by the pound, that is to say, by the weight of wood which is brought to them, which with the loss of wood in sawdust renders the wood nearly two-thirds more expensive, an important consideration.  

Typically for late eighteenth-century square pianos, the mahogany-veneered case of George Worgan’s Beck square piano is wax polished. The nameboard and interior are varnished ‘using the standard spirit varnish of the [contemporaneous] furniture trade’. (It was not until after 1830 that “French polishing” was introduced’ in relation to the cabinetwork of English pianos, ‘applying layer after layer of shellac dissolved in alcohol to produce a brilliantly shining surface, with a translucent body, which revealed every bit of lustre in the timber beneath’.)

From 1770, the plain surfaces of English pianos were commonly divided visually with lines of a contrasting colour. These lines were usually created using inlay, and formed rectangular panels. Inlaid lines were also used to follow and emphasise the form of elaborately shaped furniture. This characteristically English inlay is a feature of the cabinetwork on Worgan’s Beck square piano.

**Beck’s Inlay**

The beautiful inlaid casework (as well as the inclusion of elegant square-tapered cabriole legs) of Worgan’s piano may help to explain why Arthur Bowes Smyth (1750–90), surgeon on the First Fleet’s women’s convict ship, the *Lady Penrhyn*, described the instrument as being ‘very fine’. Some years later, in 1815 (and doubtless for the same reasons), the instrument was described as ‘very handsome’.

The outside of the mahogany-veneered lid and case of Worgan’s piano is decorated with inlaid lines comprising a simplified form of Tunbridgeware (Plates 44–6). On Worgan’s piano, the inlaid lines seamlessly progress from the instrument’s case to the stand. The inlaid lines then follow the curved inside edge of each leg down to the leg termination (Plate 47), not only emphasizing

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the sensuous form of each leg, but also providing a ravishingly beautiful and rarely encountered decorative unity. That the inlaid decoration is so perfectly and aesthetically integrated suggests not only that the stand derives from Beck’s workshop, but also that the piano and its stand may have been made together.

Beck’s use of simplified Tunbridgeware inlay is a recurring decorative characteristic of his work, and is not unique to Worgan’s 1780/86? piano. As representative examples, the cases of extant square pianos that Beck made in 1772,343 1773 (Plate 43a),344 1774 (Plate 43b), 1775,345 1776 (Plate 43s),346 1777 (Plates 43d, 43e and 429),347 1778 (Plate 43f), 1782348 and 1786 (Plate 43k) all contain simplified Tunbridgeware inlay. When compared with the inlaid decorative lines commonly encountered on square pianos made by late eighteenth-century English makers, Beck’s simplified Tunbridgeware design is (to say the least) both opulent and ravishing.

Plate 44 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): lockboard, decorated with a simplified form of Tunbridgeware inlay.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

344 See also photograph in ‘An Early George III Square Piano by Frederick Beck, London 1773’. See also photograph in ‘Dating Pianos’.
345 See photographs in ‘Cité de la musique, Paris, France. See also photograph in Cole, ‘A Brief History’.
346 See also Sachs, Das Klavier, photos on p. 13.
347 See also photograph in Gessell, ‘Artful Blogger’. See also photographs in ‘Making One of Canada’s Oldest Pianos Playable’, in Columns: The Link—Culture Corner (Radio Canada International, n.d.). The case and lid decoration shown in Plate 429 are particularly opulent.
Plate 45 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): outside of the lid, decorated with a simplified form of Tunbridgeware inlay running parallel with the edge—this inlay is identical to that found on the outside of the case.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

Plate 46 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): front of the case—decorated with a simplified form of Tunbridgeware inlay running parallel with the edge.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.
Plate 47 Square piano by Frederick Beck (fl. ca 1756 – ca 1798) (London, 1780/86?): bass end of the instrument, front leg—a simplified form of Tunbridgeware inlay follows the curved inside of the leg, down to the leg termination.

Source: Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney. Photo by the author.

The comparatively bland decorative lines on the cases of the 1783, 1785, ca 1790 (estimate) and ca 1790? Beck square pianos do not feature a simplified Tunbridgeware design (respectively: Plates 43i, 43j, 43m and 43r); however, the nameboard decoration on these instruments compensates for any lack of ornamental character.

1. The nameboard of the 1783 instrument is embellished with handpainted swags on either side of and around the inscription cartouche (Plates 43o and 43p).
2. The nameboard of the 1785 piano has a prominent inscription cartouche comprising an elongated rectangular form with convex rounded ends (Plate 43).\textsuperscript{349}

3. The nameboard of the ca 1790 (estimate) Beck square piano (a ‘tangent action’ instrument)\textsuperscript{350} has elaborate, exquisitely detailed handpainted sprays of flowers (Plate 43q).\textsuperscript{351}

4. The nameboard on the ca 1790? Frederick Beck and George Corrie piano (serial number 2505) has intricate handpainted decoration (Plate 43r).

Typically for the time, decisions regarding the decoration of an instrument were made in response to what a customer could afford. The nameboard decoration on the pianos of 1783, 1785, ca 1790 (estimate) and ca 1790? suggests that these instruments may have been made for someone who: 1) could not afford Beck’s simplified Tunbridgeware-style inlay; 2) did not desire an instrument decorated with Beck’s simplified Tunbridgeware-design inlay; or 3) elected to have the piano’s decorative focus located on the nameboard.

Some of the inlay woods that Beck used for case decoration may have been imported from Amsterdam. In 1759, Philemon-Louis Savary des Bruslons (son of the Inspector-General of Customs and Manufacturing in Paris Jacques Savary des Bruslons [1657–1716]) remarked:

\begin{quote}
Il se fait à Amsterdam un très grand commerce de toutes sortes de Bois, mais particuliérement de ce qui sont propres à la tainture, à la marqueterie & à la tabletterie.\textsuperscript{352}
\end{quote}

[A very extensive commerce in all sorts of wood is carried on at Amsterdam, but particularly in those species which are suitable for dyeing, marquetry and inlay work.]\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{349}  Beck’s 1780s nameboard inscription cartouches almost invariably comprise an elongated rectangular form, either with ogee pointed ends (Plate 17a) or with convex rounded ends (for example, Plates 20a, 43j and 43k). Of the 32 extant Beck pianos, 11 date from the 1780s. Of these 11, the author is aware of the form of nameboard inscription cartouche on seven instruments: 1) four of the seven 1780s instruments have a cartouche comprising an elongated rectangular form with convex rounded ends; 2) one of the seven 1780s instruments has a cartouche comprising a stylised small rectangular form (Plate 43h); 3) one of the seven 1780s instruments (1782/90?) has a plain elongated rectangular form (see photograph in di Stefano, ‘The Tangentenflügel and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, Figure 8, p. 90)—this instrument is owned by the Osaka College of Music Museum, Japan; and 4) one of the seven 1780s instruments has a cartouche comprising an elongated rectangular form with ogee pointed ends (Plates 15, 17a and 43g). See ‘1782/87?, Serial Number 5008’ in Appendix L, Volume 2 of this publication.

\textsuperscript{350}  See ‘Tangent action’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication.

\textsuperscript{351}  See also photograph in di Stefano, ‘The Tangentenflügel and Other Pianos with Non-Pivoting Hammers’, Figure 17, p. 101.


Beck’s inlaid simplified Tunbridgeware-style decoration is not particularly English, and may have been regarded as attractively exotic by Beck’s British customers. It may reflect the following.

1. Beck’s possible German origin: between ca 1650 and 1725, ‘one striking quality in the South German style’ of harpsichord decoration ‘is the prevalence of inlaid materials’. During the eighteenth century, North German harpsichord decoration ‘carried on the … southern German tradition in the use of contrasting ornamental materials, showing a fondness for striking … inlay’.354


3. Beck’s association with the immigrant Swedish-born, Paris-trained cabinet-maker and marquetry master Christopher Fuhrlohg, who, in 1769, set up his workshop at 24 Tottenham Court Road, London.356

Frederick Beck and Christopher Fuhrlohg

In 1775 and 1777, Beck and Fuhrlohg produced two of the most beautiful square pianos in existence. Beck signed and dated both instruments.357 The casework of these unique pianos is so beyond the ordinary that they must have been specially commissioned; each instrument has been given—at what must have been the highest cost to the buyer—‘all the luxurious treatment of Palace furniture’.358

The case of the 1775 piano is

no more than a great box with a top that lifts up to disclose the keyboard and with doors at either end that enclose cabinets for storing music. The case could scarcely have been designed by a pianomaker, as … the practical consideration of providing knee room for a seated player has been sacrificed ruthlessly to a monumental design. A plinth and the slight advance of the front corners articulate its rectilinearity.359

356 Two decades later, during the late 1780s and early 1790s, Tottenham Court Road ‘became the hub of a huge instrument-making enterprise’. Cole, The Pianoforte in the Classical Era, p. 101. See ‘Tottenham Court Road’ in Bowles, Bowles’s Reduced New Pocket Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, Grid Reference Cm.
The 1775 Beck/Fuhrlohg instrument manifests ormolu borders and extensive inlays of coloured woods, with a herring-bone pattern of harewood [that is, maple tinted greenish-gold] and wood lines dyed green … In the middle of the front panel … [within a medallion framed by a ribbon-banded metal border, a figure] seated in a landscape with tambourine … is suggested to be derived ‘from an engraving after Angelica Kauffman’s [1741–1807] “Triumph of Venus” and is made to represent the Muse Erato by the addition of a tambourine’.360

During the 1770s, Angelica Kauffman’s compositions proved to be ‘popular subjects for painted decoration on English furniture’.361 Marquetry translations of Kauffman’s designs were, however, something quite new. In London during the 1770s, there were only a limited number of cabinet-makers who could execute furniture incorporating elaborate marquetry.362 ‘Christopher Fuhrlohg’s painterly handling of marquetry represents an important intermediary step in the evolution of English taste, lying between the stylized floral marquetry of Peter [Pierre] Langlois [fl. 1759–81], and the naturalistic flowers and scenes painted on furniture in the 1790s.’363

John Hardy accurately describes the figure in the middle of the front panel as representing the ’Muse Erato by the addition of a tambourine’364 (Erato, the muse of lyric poetry, especially love and erotic poetry, was frequently depicted playing either the kithara365 or the tambourine). James366 and Clinkscale367 erroneously identify the muse as Thalia (the muse of comedy and pastoral poetry, who was commonly depicted holding a comic mask). Erato is also depicted in each of two single corner panels located at either end of the front panel; the corner panel at the left portrays Erato playing a kithara, while the corner panel at the right shows Erato dancing with tambourine and cymbals.368 The designs for Erato are derived from the several ancient Hellenistic sources that were ‘widely copied and adapted for various media in the eighteenth century’.369

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362  See ibid., p. 427.
363  Ibid., p. 428.
365  An ancient Greek musical instrument in the lyre family.
366  James, Early Keyboard Instruments, p. 138.
367  Clinkscale, Makers of the Piano 1700–1820, p. 19.
Fuhrlohg has discreetly draped the muse’s arm and bosom. As Josiah Wedgwood said in a 1790 letter, ‘none either male or female, of the present generation, will take or apply’ works of the ancients ‘to furniture, if the figures are naked’.

When judged against contemporaneous artistic standards, Wedgwood’s attitude appears to be somewhat puritanical. In late eighteenth-century painting:

Baroque woman was replaced by women that were less sensual but more free in their habits, unencumbered by suffocating corsetry and elaborate hair styles. At the end of the eighteenth century it was fashionable not to conceal the breasts, which were at times openly revealed above a band that supported them and emphasised the waistline.

It is reasonable to assume that the lavish cabinetwork of Beck’s 1775 piano was intended to function not only as an ecstatic decorative opulence, but also as a display of wealth and social status.

A spur to the creation of Beck’s 1775 piano may have been provided by a design (dated 1774) by Robert Adam (1728–92). This was

published in 1775 as an engraving entitled ‘Design of a Harpsichord, executed in London, with different Coloured Woods, for the Empress of Russia.’ The commission must have caused a stir among London’s musical instrument makers even before the publication of the engraving.

Gadd suggests that the second of the extant Beck/Fuhrlohg instruments (dated 1777) represents ‘a high water mark of the Neo-Classical movement and is amongst the most important furniture designs of the period’. The most striking visual characteristic of the 1777 Beck/Fuhrlohg piano is its pervasive, exquisite and elaborate marquetry.

‘Marquetry … was reintroduced into England from France late in the 1750s, but taken up by comparatively few craftsmen. In 1777, the [Beck/Fuhrlohg] instrument’s marquetry-embellished casework would have been at the forefront of fashion, suggesting that Beck sometimes catered to the avant-garde taste of an extremely wealthy clientele.’

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370 Ibid., p. 422.
373 See photographs in ‘Piano; Rectangular Piano’, in *Royal Ontario Museum*.
374 See ‘Neo-Classical’ in Appendix Q, Volume 2 of this publication.
At first sight, the instrument appears to be a commode, and is part of the beginning of a fruitful tradition of pianos disguised as commodes made for the very rich.

‘By 1790, the piano making firm of Longman and Broderip was offering “Piano Fortes in Commodes, Side Boards, and Dressing Tables for convenience of small rooms” at prices that could be afforded by the “middle class”.’

The notion that a piano could be regarded as ‘wooden furniture that happened to make music’ has its roots in Saxony. That late eighteenth-century English square pianos reflect this notion (when closed, English square pianos functioned as side tables) ‘may not be a coincidence, considering that many eighteenth-century English builders were trained in German-speaking Europe’. During the late eighteenth century, machines, including musical instruments, ‘were celebrated for their rational efficiency, which was also a Neoclassical criterion of Beauty’.

The case of the 1777 Beck/Fuhrlohg piano

takes the form of a rectangular commode with canted corners on straight, tapering legs. Behind the more obvious influences of the Adam manner—rectilinearity and strictly confined decoration—a hint of contemporary French design can be detected in the presence of a central panel that overlays the front; here it drops down to reveal a cabinet [beneath the keyboard] for storing music. Beneath the goat’s-head mounts, the corners are inlaid to simulate fluting and the legs to imitate panelling.

The front of the case is prominently decorated, and has a large central marquetry medallion within which there is a Classical figure [either the muse Erato, or the muse Polyhymnia—the muse of sacred poetry] playing the lyre. This medallion is amongst the most ambitious and successful pictorial marquetry surviving from 18th century England.

The marquetry that decorates the instrument’s mahogany case principally comprises satinwood, harewood, amaranth, rosewood and sycamore. The 1777 Beck/Fuhrlohg piano is certainly among the most beautiful furniture ever made.

377  Ibid., p. 422.
379  Ibid., p. 74.
380  Eco, On Beauty, p. 393.
384  See ibid., p. 424. ‘Sycamore: the English name for Acer Pseudoplanatus, the prevalent maple species in England.’ Cole, Broadwood Square Pianos, p. 120.
In 1775, at one of the annual exhibitions of the Free Society of Artists of Great Britain, Fuhrlohg’s half-brother and business partner, Johann Christian Linning (1706–79), exhibited ‘The Muse Erato in different coloured wood’.\textsuperscript{385} Linning gave his address as being ‘At Mr Fuhrlohg’s, No 24, Tottenham Court Road’. Perhaps Linning was involved in the crafting of the elaborately inlaid figures on the cases of Beck’s 1775 and 1777 square pianos, or perhaps there was ‘cross-pollination’ of ideas between Fuhrlohg and Linning.

It is possible that a third Beck piano with casework of extraordinary quality and exquisite beauty has been lost. The specially created \textit{Inventaire of confiscated instruments} made by the French revolutionary government provides estimates of the monetary value of 20 pianos. Of the 64 pianos listed, five are by Frederick Beck (\textit{Inventaire} numbers 99, 106, 111, 207 and 322); three of these are given a monetary value (\textit{Inventaire} numbers 106, 207 and 322):

\begin{quote}
99.—\textit{Un forte-piano de Fredericus Beck, année 1779.} \\
(A piano by Fredericus Beck, year 1779.)\textsuperscript{386} \\
(Owned by Brignard.)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
106.—\textit{Un forte-piano de Fredericus Beck, Londini fecit, année 1779, estimé 600 francs.} \\
(A piano by Fredericus Beck, made in London, year 1779, estimated 600 francs.)\textsuperscript{387} \\
(Confiscated from Maison Égalité.)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
111.—\textit{Un forte-piano, de Fredericus Beck, année 1774.} \\
(A piano by Fredericus Beck, year 1774.)\textsuperscript{388} \\
(From the administrative offices of the Menus-Plaisirs du Roi.)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
207.—\textit{Un forte-piano de Fredericus Beck, estimé 1 500 francs.} \\
(A piano by Fredericus Beck, estimated 1500 francs.)\textsuperscript{389} \\
(Confiscated from Jean-Louis-Marie le Bascle, Count of Argenteuil, Maison de Bascle D’Argenteuil.)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
322.—\textit{Un forte-piano de Beck, fait en 1788, appartenant à Debrange, émigré, rue de Sèvres, estimé 5 000 francs.} \\
(A piano by Beck, made in 1788, belonging to Debrange, emigré, rue de Sèvres, estimated 5000 francs.)\textsuperscript{390}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{385} Erato is the muse of lyric poetry.
\textsuperscript{386} ‘XXVIII \textit{Inventaire du 26 Fructidor l’an II}’ in Bruni, \textit{Un Inventaire sous La Terreur}.
\textsuperscript{387} ‘XXXI \textit{Inventaire du 14 Vendémiaire l’an III}’ in ibid.
\textsuperscript{388} ‘XXXIV \textit{Inventaire du 17 Vendémiaire l’an III}’, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{389} ‘LXX Rue de Thorigny, 539’, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{390} ‘C \textit{Inventaire du 13 Prairial l’an III}, rue du Regard’, in ibid.
The extraordinary estimate of 5000 francs for piano number 322 (Debrange’s 1788 Beck piano) is exceeded only once in the entire Inventaire—by a piano made by Sébastien Érard (Inventaire number 356):

356.—Un forte-piano d’Erard, fait en 1787, estimé 8 000 francs.
[A piano by Érard, made in 1787, estimated 8000 francs.]\(^{391}\)
(Confiscated from Antoine Doria.)

The casework of this particular Érard instrument must have been utterly beautiful.

With a considerable margin of 3000 francs, the nearest estimate to Beck’s 1788 piano (5000 francs) is for a piano combined with an organ (claviorganum, piano organisé, fortepiano organisé or forte-piano organisé) made by Érard (2000 francs) (Inventaire number 219):

219.—Un forte-piano organisé de Sébastien Erard frère et Cie, fait à Paris, 1791, estimé 2 000 francs.
[A claviorganum by Sebastien Érard Brother & Co., made in Paris, 1791, estimated 2000 francs.]\(^{392}\)
(Confiscated from Louis-Alexandre-Céleste d’Aumont, Duke of Villequier.)

The success of the claviorganum ‘in the upper ranks of society was prodigious; the Queen commanded one to be made for her own use, and in the construction of it Érard introduced several novel contrivances, which at that time awakened much interest’.\(^{393}\)

Érard’s claviorganum receives the same estimate (2000 francs) as the two highest-valued harpsichords (Inventaire numbers 151 and 154):

151.—Un clavecin anglais de Thoaner, année 1772, estimé 2 000 fr.
[An English harpsichord by Thoaner, year 1772, estimated 2000 francs.]\(^{394}\)
(Owned by Count Fernan-Nunez, the Spanish ambassador.)

154.—Un clavecin anglais, en acajou, tout neuf, fait par Johannes Broadwood, Londini fecit, année 1789, estimé 2,000 fr.

\(^{392}\) ‘LXXIV Inventaire du 29 Nivôse l’an IIIe, rue des Capucines’, in ibid.
\(^{394}\) ‘XLIX Inventaire du 12 Brumaire l’an IIIe, rue de l’Université’, in Bruni, \textit{Un Inventaire sous La Terreur}. 
[An English harpsichord, in mahogany, perfectly new, made by Johannes Broadwood, in London, year 1789, estimated 2000 francs.\textsuperscript{395}

(Confiscated from the stables of Philippe-Égalité Louis-Philippe, Duke of Chartres, the future King of France.)

Érard’s claviorganum is one of two listed in the Inventaire as being made by him. In total, the Inventaire lists six claviorgana. Apart from Érard’s claviorganum (Inventaire number 219, valued at 2000 francs), only one other of the six claviorgana is given a value (Inventaire number 150):

\textit{150.—Un forte-piano organisé d’Adam Berger, Londini fecit, année 1775, estimé 1,200 francs.}  

[A claviorganum by Adam Berger, made in London, year 1775, estimated 1200 francs.\textsuperscript{396}

(Confiscated from Count Fernan-Nunez, the Spanish ambassador.)

(Note that the clerk has mistakenly transcribed the maker’s name as ‘Adam Berger’. This is not surprising, given the sometimes confusingly elaborate calligraphic style found on the nameplates of pianos made by Adam Beyer.)

The only possible explanation for the astonishing 5000-franc valuation of the 1788 Beck piano confiscated from Debrange is that it must have had inlaid casework manifesting levels of intricacy and quality similar to the two extant Beck/Fuhrlohg instruments of 1775 and 1777. Sadly, Debrange’s piano no longer exists.

The quality and beauty of the simplified Tunbridgeware inlay on the 1780/86? square piano by Frederick Beck currently housed in the Stewart Symonds Collection, Sydney, suggest (at the very least) the affirming influence of Fuhrlohg’s refined aesthetic on Beck’s decorative sense, if not Fuhrlohg’s participation at some stage in the decorative design and/or making process. In short, the inlay is in extremely good taste, and proves that ‘within the quiet restraint of tones of ivory … and rich woods combined, English [pianos] … were often among the most beautiful furniture ever made’.\textsuperscript{397}

It appears that, like Frederick Beck, George Bouchier Worgan also had good taste (at least in relation to decorative casework). Furthermore, the date of Worgan’s Beck piano (1780 or 1786?) and the unique design of its stand allow for the hypothesis that this was the instrument that Worgan brought with him to Sydney Cove in 1788, while serving on board the Sirius.

\textsuperscript{395} ‘\textit{L Inventaire du 12 Brumaire l’an III}’, in ibid.

\textsuperscript{396} ‘\textit{XLIX Inventaire du 12 Brumaire l’an III, rue de l’Université}’, in ibid.

Dampers

The design of Beck’s pianos replicates that of Zumpe, with the exception of damping. Beck’s square pianos have dampers only to c\textsuperscript{3}.\textsuperscript{398} No other maker of square pianos used this damping pattern.

Undamped strings will sympathetically vibrate in response to any other vibrating strings that are close by. Sympathetically vibrating strings enhance the sound with a background ‘glow’ of overtones. In late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, the simultaneous sounding of struck and sympathetically vibrating strings was regarded as the equivalent of resonance, and was greatly desired. Commonly, this background ‘glow’ of overtones was enhanced by (or, in the absence of sympathetically vibrating strings, created by) an intentionally inefficient damping system. Damper design, and therefore the degree of damping inefficiency, differed from maker to maker.\textsuperscript{399}

English piano makers were capable of incorporating an efficient damping system into their instruments (one based, for example, upon the ultra-efficient damping of ‘Viennese’ pianos).\textsuperscript{400} That they did not leads one to conclude that the typically ‘resonant’ sound of English pianos (both square and grand) had its basis in aesthetic and musical considerations. The sound produced by inefficiently damping English pianos is far removed from the ‘highly articulated delivery that was the ideal of the … Viennese piano and its composers’,\textsuperscript{401} and highlights a fundamental difference between the aesthetic values represented by the two schools of piano making: Viennese pianos ‘speak’, and English pianos ‘sing’.

Frederick Beck’s idiosyncratic exclusion of dampers for the top-five notes of his square pianos represents an innovation inspired by the contemporaneously desirable English aesthetic of overtone-rich, ‘background’-resonant piano sound.

\textsuperscript{398} See Cole. Beck’s tangent action instrument of ca 1790 (estimate) has dampers throughout the compass—that is, up to and including f. The dampers are located below the strings. Each damper compartment comprises red woven cloth, positioned like an open book with the pages facing upwards. See Plates 447 and 448.

\textsuperscript{399} For example, following the attack of a loud staccato chord in the bass, and after the dampers have fallen onto the strings, the dampers of a restored Broadwood grand piano of 1796 (serial number 875, in the author’s possession) allow the strings to resonate for approximately five seconds as the sound dies away. By way of comparison, following the attack of a loud staccato chord in the bass, and after the dampers have fallen onto the strings, the dampers of Joseph Haydn’s restored Longman & Broderip grand piano of ca 1795 (part of the Cobbe Collection, Hatchlands, UK) allow the strings to resonate for approximately one to two seconds as the sound dies away. ‘Richard Burnett…describes a restored 1823 Broadwood grand in which the tone takes eight seconds to die out after a staccato chord in the bass, and a ‘massive concert grand’ of 1848 by Broadwood, in which it takes ten seconds.’ Van Oort, \textit{The English Classical Piano Style and its Influence on Haydn and Beethoven}, p. 30, fn. 75.

\textsuperscript{400} The type of piano commonly referred to as ‘Viennese’ had its origins in Germany, as the brainchild of Johann Andreas Stein. The design, sound and touch of Viennese pianos are dissimilar to English pianos.

\textsuperscript{401} van Oort, \textit{The English Classical Piano Style and its Influence on Haydn and Beethoven}, p. 34.
Beck’s Absorption of Zumpe’s Ideas

Beck adopted Zumpe’s basic design, the most important elements of which are the action (which, being identical to Zumpe’s, has no escapement), bridge design and the underlying principles of soundboard ribbing. Beck’s absorption of Zumpe’s ideas is not the result of a lack of inventiveness, nor is it mere opportunism; rather, it shows that Beck was capable of mature creative reasoning. The principle described in 1920 by the poet Thomas Stearns (‘T. S.’) Eliot (1888–1965) could well apply to Frederick Beck: ‘Immature [artists] … imitate; mature [artists] … steal; bad [artists] … deface what they take, and good [artists] … make it into something better, or at least something different.’

Frederick Beck’s pianos, which are modelled so closely on those of Zumpe and represent the creative thinking of a ‘mature’ and ‘good’ artist, call to mind the rhetorical question posed by Horace Walpole (1717–97): ‘Ought one man’s garden to be deprived of a happy object, because that object has been employed by another? The more we exact novelty, the sooner our taste will be vitiated.’

402 See ‘Soundboard and Bridge’ in Appendix A, Volume 2 this publication.