

THE BENTLEY PIANO COMPANY

In 1879 Douglas Grover, the third generation of Grover piano makers (the first was producing pianos in the 1830s), was born in the house attached to the Avill and Smart piano factory, then owned by Grover & Grover, in which Douglas' father and grandfather were in partnership. Douglas trained in his father's factory, and in 1906 founded his own firm, the firm which flourishes today.

In 1911 Douglas Grover, observing a number of empty ~~cottages~~ ^{cottages} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~old~~ ^{old} ~~cloth~~ ^{cloth} ~~mill~~ ^{mill}, rented one at Woodchester, two miles from Stroud. He brought with him ~~some~~ ^{some} ~~ten~~ ^{ten} ~~key~~ ^{key} workers from London and commenced training local labour.

In the 1920s production increased rapidly. Many of these pianos were sold under dealers' own names, as was customary in those days. In 1930 Douglas, now joined by his son, Richard, introduced a middle market overstrung piano to be sold under a brand name. The name 'BENTLEY' was selected and was an immediate success, so that during the thirties the Company became one of the largest piano producers in the country.

Following the Second World War, by government edict all pianos made had to be exported. World-wide markets for Bentley pianos were developed quickly, and in the 1960s the number of pianos sold to the European continent grew

dramatically. In 1969 the late Mr Richard Grover was awarded the M.B.E. for services to exports. Today pianos are exported to over thirty countries every year, so that Bentley pianos are found in all continents and most countries.

In 1962 Richard Grover's son, David, joined the Company. During this period models, for example the 'Studio Minor', which had enjoyed a long career, were replaced by models incorporating modern advances. Particular mention should be made of the neat 'Compact 85C' for to date many thousands have been produced.

The later 1970s witness Bentleys to the forefront in the reintroduction of period casework stylings. They saw also a new building added to the original factory, making possible later concentration of production on one site. Now various highly specialists components (e.g. iron frame, steel wire, wrest plank) are acquired from manufacturers supplying parts of identical quality, albeit often of individual design, to many prestigious makers.

In November 1989 40% of the Company's production space was destroyed in a fire. The new building, which is to be officially opened today, was carefully planned, its traditional exterior harmonising with its surroundings, while its interior facilitates modern production methods. Built by Moss Construction Southern Ltd., it is a worthy successor to its predecessors on the site.

With pianos, experience counts! In 1991 Bentley Piano Co. Ltd. celebrates 85 years, while benefitting from a family tradition stretching back five generations to the first part of the last century.