

**CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS  
THE HISTORY OF EARLY  
ENGLISH PORCELAIN: FROM  
CONTEMPORARY SOURCES**

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Contributions Towards the History of Early English Porcelain: From Contemporary Sources by  
J. E. Nightingale

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TOWARDS  
THE HISTORY  
OF  
*Early English Porcelain,*  
FROM CONTEMPORARY SOURCES.

BY  
J. E. NIGHTINGALE, F.S.A.

*To which are added Reprints from Messrs. Christie's Sale Catalogues  
of the Chelsea, Derby, Worcester and Bristol Manufactories  
from 1769 to 1785.*

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1881.



## EARLY ENGLISH PORCELAIN.



IN the Journal of the Archæological Institute for 1862 Mr. A. W. Franks printed his "Notes on the Manufacture of Porcelain at Chelsea." This account contains pretty well all the information that has hitherto been known on the subject. Mr. Franks concluded his Paper with the following remarks :—"I feel certain, that if the newspapers of the period, both local and metropolitan, were carefully examined, much curious matter might be brought together, which would throw light on many debated points in the history of porcelain. I will venture to suggest the importance of collecting together such scattered notices, which are far more useful and far more to be depended upon than the vague opinions formed by collectors, resting frequently on hearsay, and on a misconception of the true bearing of some fact or document which is not given in full."

Acting on this suggestion, I have lately gone through such of the newspapers as are to be found in the British Museum, together with some others, which cover the period of the rise and development of the different manufactures of English Porcelain in the last century.

These notices consist principally of announcements of Sales by Auction, but I have also extracted any matter which bears at all on the subject from any other source, and have classified them all under their different heads. I have thus been enabled to add one more at least, namely that of Longton Hall, to the list of English Porcelain Manufactories, nearly all of which had their origin in the earliest years of the second half of the last century. Some few of these notices of Sales by Auction may be found already printed and scattered amongst the different accounts of the English Factories; but they are only such as have turned up accidentally and not the result of any settled plan.

These incidental notices, as far as they relate to the Chelsea works, are continued down to about 1769—70, the period when Sprimont retired altogether from the Chelsea Manufactory. After that time I have, by the courtesy of Messrs. Christie, been enabled to reprint either wholly or in part, a large number of sale Catalogues of the Chelsea and Derby fabrics, as well as a Worcester and a Bristol Catalogue: these extend to the year 1785, after which time these sales by public auction seem to have ceased. I begin with Chelsea, as that was incontestably the most important, both artistically and otherwise, of any of the English manufactories.

## CHELSEA.

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No information can be gained from any Rate Books of the Parish of Chelsea, as to the names or occupiers of any particular premises in the middle of the last century. The earliest Rate Books now preserved date from about 1798.

At what particular time the Duke of Cumberland and Sir Everard Faulkener became interested in the Chelsea works does not appear, but that a close connection existed between these two Patrons is evident from the following paragraph which appeared in the *General Advertiser* on March 18th, 1744-5:—"Sir Everard Faulkener Kn<sup>t</sup>. is appointed Secretary to the Duke of Cumberland, Generalissimo of the Forces in Flanders, &c." The earliest notice I have found in any Newspaper relating to the manufacture of English Porcelain is contained in the *General Advertiser* of January 29, 1750, and repeated several times during the spring:—

### CHELSEA CHINA WAREHOUSE.

SEEING it frequently advertised, that the Proprietor of *Chelsea Porcelaine* is not concerned in any shape whatsoever in the Goods exposed to Sale in St. James's-street, called *The Chelsea China Warehouse*, in common Justice to N. SPRIMONT, (who signed the Advertisement) as well as myself, I think it incumbent, publickly to declare to the Nobility, Gentry, &c. that my China Warehouse is not supply'd by any other Person than Mr. *Charles Gouyn*, late Proprietor and Chief Manager of the Chelsea-House, who continues to supply me with the most curious Goods of that Manufacture, as well useful as ornamental, and which I dispose of at very reasonable Rates.

Chelsea China Warehouse,  
St. James's-street, Jan.

S. STABLES.

17<sup>th</sup>, 1750.



I had great difficulty in finding the advertisement of Sprimont's which called forth this retort from Stables. There is only a single number of the *Daily Advertiser* for the year 1750 preserved in the British Museum, and this is bound up with other Newspapers, but in this particular number of May 15th the following advertisement fortunately appeared:—

CHelsea PORCELAINe.

The Publick is hereby informed, that the Sale-Warehouse at the Manufactory there will from henceforward be constantly open, and that new Productions are daily produced, and brought into the Sale-Room.

And the Publick may be assured, that no Pains will be spared to extend this Manufacture to as great a Variety as possible, either for Use or Ornament.

Note, The Quality and Gentry may be assured, that I am not concern'd in any Shape whatsoever with the Goods expos'd to Sale in St. James's Street, called the Chelsea-China Warehouse.

N. SPRIMONT.

This advertisement by Stables seems to imply that Charles Gouyn had preceded Sprimont as Proprietor and Chief Manager of the Chelsea works, and that Gouyn still continued to manufacture on his own account.

This was evidently a period of considerable change and a new starting point in the history of the manufactory. In the *London Evening Post* of Dec. 19, 1749, a Freehold Messuage is advertised to be sold in "Great China Row, Chelsea," enquiries to be made of Mr. Brown "over against the French Chapel in Chelsea." Gouyn and Sprimont had probably both a French origin, and from the allusion in the advertisement to a Chapel of that nationality, there was apparently a French colony in Chelsea at that time. French

surnames frequently occur in connection with Chelsea. Previous to 1750 I find in the numerous sales advertised by public auction no notice of any English or European porcelain with the exception of Dresden. In sales of any importance belonging to persons of quality porcelain is almost always mentioned; but it is confined to Oriental, and in the majority of instances described as Old Japan. The first allusion to any English porcelain in a sale by auction is in the *General Advertiser* for Dec. 4, 1750, in which Mr. Ford announces the sale of a "Closet of fine Old Japan China," in which is included "curious Dresden and Chelsea Figures."

Whatever might have been the date of the first establishment of the manufactory of porcelain at Chelsea, it does not appear that works were extensively carried on there before about 1750. The well known examples of the "Goat" jugs with the inscribed mark "Chelsea, 1745," seem to show that articles of considerable excellence were made there at that period, but it was only in 1749 or 1750, when Sprimont appears to have succeeded Gouyn in the Chelsea works, that any specific public notice is found of the manufactory; even then it is announced that the sale warehouse at Chelsea would only be opened continuously for the first time for the sale of its products. Although Chelsea now may be considered as a part of London, it was very different in the middle of the last century, and there is no reason to suppose that the sale warehouse afterwards opened in Pall Mall was then in existence.

Sprimont, in 1750, says "no pains will be spared to extend this manufactory to as great a variety as possible, either for use or ornament." There are two

incidental notices of the Chelsea Manufactory in 1747, both of which go to show that the factory was not then firmly established. Shaw in his "History of the Staffordshire Potteries" (Handley, 1829) says that Carlos Simpson and his father, with six other Staffordshire workmen, went in 1747 to work at the Chelsea China manufactory for a short time; that they soon ascertained that they were the principal workmen on whose exertions all the excellence of the porcelain must depend. The other notice is found in the "London Tradesman" of 1747, by R. Campbell, who seems to have had an accurate knowledge of all the trades then carried on in London; he says, "Of late we have made some Attempts to make Porcelain or *China-Ware*, after the Manner it is done in *China* and *Dresden*; there is a House at *Greenwich*, and another at *Chelsea*, where the Undertakers have been for some time trying to imitate that beautiful manufacture."

Again a passage in the well-known "Case of the Undertaker of the Chelsea Porcelain"—whoever he may be—states that the manufacture was then put upon a more extended footing, and that the sales were very large "considering the thing is new." The earliest date that can be assigned to this undated document is 1752. The writer describes himself as originally a silversmith by profession; but I do not find either the names or initials of Gouyn or Sprimont in any list of silversmiths at that time.

At some period between 1750 and 1754 a warehouse was opened in Pall Mall presumably for the sale of the Chelsea products, but it does not appear at this time to have been used as a regular London depôt. In 1754