

The Rise and Fall of Queen Cutlery

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The history of Queen, like the history of anything, can be better understood when placed in the larger context of time and place that created the circumstances and events that allowed the Company to exist for all those years. What follows is one version of that history.

To get a better understanding of the story of Queen Cutlery one really needs to start with the story of their predecessor Schatt & Morgan Cutlery. Because the men who started Queen were former Schatt & Morgan employees, we also need to address that history. And to get something approaching an accurate perspective it is also helpful first briefly overview American cutlery history in general. So we will begin our journey with these things in mind.

Queen Cutlery's predecessor, Schatt & Morgan Cutlery and Queen Cutlery both used the same building in Titusville. Queen, like Schatt & Morgan, had survived numerous economic and internal upheavals, until financial insolvency finally did each company in. Schatt & Morgan was yet another victim of the Great Depression. The contingencies that led to Queen's recent demise are not so clear. On the one hand Queen's closure seemed to fall in line with the more difficult times recently faced by other historical

American marques. For example Schrade closed in 2004 (subsequently selling their name and now produced offshore). Camillus closed in 2007, and the more limited production Canal Street Cutlery operation experienced problems starting in 2015 and struggled along until it also closed in 2018.

Needless to say, the last 15 years or so years have produced a number of historically challenging times for the companies whose main products were traditional pocketknives. On the other hand, Queen was a special case as traditional cutlery manufacturers go because they not only made knives under their own brand names, but they had made many high quality "contract" knives for a Who's Who of other well known American cutlery companies as well as individual businesses. Industry insiders often saw Queen as the best small-scale manufacturer for a variety of high quality traditional American cutlery. Queen's origins reached back towards what is often described as the "Golden Age of American Cutlery".

Until the end of the Civil War England and Germany had supplied most of America's cutlery needs. Most of the higher-grade cutlery used by Americans was primarily produced in and imported from Sheffield, England. Solingen, Germany, supplied most

of the remaining common cutlery during that time. This situation changed abruptly beginning with the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890, and continuing with other tariffs introduced in 1894 and 1897. These tariffs placed high duties on all imported cutlery. Suddenly, American cutlery importers had to start becoming manufacturers or change their line of work.

Fueled by the protectionist economic policy of the time, and aided by immigrating cutlers, abundant natural resources, and American mechanical ingenuity, U.S. manufacturers were free to create their own cutlery unhindered by guilds or European traditions. Thus, the so-called “Golden Age” of American cutlery was born. By 1918 and the end of the First World War, America was using its cutlery expertise to become the preeminent supplier of quality cutlery up until the Great Depression of 1929. But we are getting ahead of ourselves; so let’s return to Schatt & Morgan, and the origins of Queen Cutlery.

In 1895 John W. Schatt and Charles B. Morgan established the Schatt & Morgan Cutlery Company. Initially founded as the “New York Cutlery Company” (not to be confused with the well known New York Knife Company), the pair opened an office in New York City sometime in 1896. Although they started out as an import house, they quickly realized that in order to remain in business they would have to become manufacturers themselves; so sometime in 1896 or early in 1897 they moved to Schatt’s

hometown of Gowanda, New York, and in July of 1897 they purchased the Platts’ cutlery plant there. The Platts then moved on to Eldred Pennsylvania. (The area of Western New York and Pennsylvania was the home to many cutlery companies at the time including such venerable names as Cattaraugus, Case and Sons, Schrade, Union, Challenge, and Kinfolks.)

Schatt and Morgan hired Arthur Orchard to run the Gowanda facility and the former Gowanda factory site has a plaque noting the Platts’ earlier tenure there. The Schatt & Morgan knives manufactured in Gowanda were marked with a two-line S&M tang stamp with either “GOWANDA NY” or “NEW YORK” on the second line. The company was housed in Gowanda from 1897 until 1902, at which time they moved to Titusville Pennsylvania, where they incorporated that same year and changed their tang stamps accordingly. In addition to the Schatt & Morgan stamped knives, the company also owned the “Dollar Knife Corporation” marque and manufactured and marketed those knives from around 1922 to 1928 as a separate line of cutlery. And during its existence Schatt & Morgan also provided some cutlery under contract for over 40 other cutlery companies, as was common at the time and evidenced by tang stamps that were found in storage at the factory.

Back in 1859 Titusville Pennsylvania had become famous as the birthplace of the petroleum industry when Edwin Drake drilled the first successful oil well there. Because of

this association with oil, Titusville became known as the Queen City (hence “Queen City Cutlery Company”). In 1860 the population of Titusville was 243. When the city incorporated six years later, the population was 8,000. Such was, and is, the power of petroleum.

However, by the mid-1870s other towns in the area were producing more oil than Titusville. Established in 1870, Standard Oil (John D. Rockefeller and Henry Flagler) would control 90 percent of all U.S. oil by 1880. In 1911 the Supreme Court declared it a monopoly. Titusville was one of those places that Standard Oil had passed by because the city fathers would not agree to become a one-industry town. The City Fathers responded to the events around them by creating an Industrial Association to attract new and different industries. Schatt & Morgan Cutlery was invited to town where they were offered both financial incentives and an already existing larger facility for their manufacturing. In Gowanda, the company had created a profitable operation and employed 125 men. Optimism and expansion were the words of the day. So Schatt, Morgan, and their new plant manager and treasurer, Jessie Crouch, moved the business to Titusville. In 1911 Morgan would buy Schatt out and Schatt would return to his hometown of Gowanda, becoming the manager of the opera house there.

By the end of 1903 Schatt & Morgan was manufacturing 40,000 dozen knives per year in Titusville and had twelve salesmen on the

road with sales all around the country per newspaper reports of the day. Several building expansions were undertaken to keep up with production, beginning as early as 1907. In less than five years Schatt & Morgan had doubled the size of its facility to keep up with an ever-increasing demand for its cutlery. The Schatt & Morgan catalogue # 2 published in 1908 noted, “Although comparatively young as knife manufacturers, we have already grown to be one of the largest and best known houses of the United States.” These facilities would end up being owned and operated by Queen City Cutlery twenty-five years later.

The First World War (1914-1918) altered the growth of Schatt & Morgan, partly due to the rationing of materials needed for the war effort, but primarily because of the Selective Service Act of 1917 and a resulting short supply of skilled workers. Additionally, the great influenza epidemic of 1918 also took its toll in Titusville. Morgan had also been active in local politics and had served as mayor from 1916 to 1919 and those duties likely impacted his personal oversight of the company during those years (especially the crucial year of 1918).

In 1919 Schatt & Morgan Cutlery expanded again and built a one-story building across the street from the factory to house the boiler, electric generator, and air compressor for the factory. However, by then, the heyday for Schatt & Morgan was beginning to fade. Their story gets a little hazy in the ten years between 1919 and 1929. (Morgan appeared to

be more attracted to politics than business and served as mayor again between 1924 and 1927.)

As if the effect of the First World War had not been bad enough for Schatt & Morgan, its longtime plant superintendent, Jessie Crouch, died in 1921, only two years after the company had built the new power plant building. And, more importantly in 1918, as alluded to above, five men who would later start the Queen City Cutlery Company were all summarily fired.

It's likely that Schatt & Morgan made what would become a fatal business error when it fired men who were also five of the company's most skilled workers, and perhaps more importantly, supervising department heads. One can only imagine the vacuum their departure created. They left together and immediately formed a new cutlery business. And four years later, in 1922, they would collectively incorporate their new business: "Queen City Cutlery Company".

There are two versions of why the five men were dismissed, the first being they simply decided to move on and go into business for themselves. However, the following second version seems more reasonable. These five department heads were more likely fired for "moonlighting," in the factory and making skeleton knives (knives without bolsters or handle materials), which they themselves then likely sold to jewelry manufacturers in New York City to finish. When this off-the-books "sideline" was discovered they were all fired.

Why else would anyone get rid of such crucial employees?

Shortly after these men were let go the Schatt & Morgan work force dropped about thirty percent, or from about ninety to sixty workers that year, at least in part as a direct result of firing those supervisors. This was in spite of the fact that the period between 1922 and 1929 was generally one of prosperity for the country.

By 1923 C.B. Morgan was quoted in the daily newspaper, the *Titusville Herald* as stating, "I think that we as well as most manufacturers made a mistake during the rush of war times that more apprentices were not kept at work...now we find ourselves short of skilled workers." (Some of those skilled workers in Titusville were by then likely employed by the nascent "Queen City Cutlery Company" or had chosen to follow their own fortunes to the numerous other cutlerys in the surrounding area, (several of which could be found as near as sixteen miles away in Tidioute, Pennsylvania). And that same year Morgan would accept the Republican nomination to run for mayor again.

Morgan was also quoted in the *Titusville Herald* newspaper at that time, denying rumors that the company had been sold to Remington. However, according to the *Titusville Herald*, the company had in fact been offered for sale but not purchased by an "unknown syndicate." Schatt & Morgan would have extreme difficulties with cash flow by the later 1920s as the Great Depression tightened its grip on the entire

country, but it seems that its terminal problems really began when it fired five men in 1918.

Even though the five men who began their own new cutlery venture did not incorporate for four years, their collective expertise made them real competitors to the diminished Schatt & Morgan from the moment they set up shop.

Schatt & Morgan Cutlery and Queen City Cutlery remained in competition with each other (and other area cutlerys) until 1933, the worst year of the Depression, when Queen City Cutlery was able to purchase the bankrupt Schatt & Morgan at a Sheriff's auction and install "Queen City Cutlery" in the former "Schatt & Morgan" factory. (It appears that the factory had produced little if any Schatt & Morgan cutlery for a year or so before the sale in 1933.)

The irony of their situation could not have been lost on those five men who returned as the new owners of the place from which they had been fired. Additionally, C.B. Morgan, the former president of Schatt & Morgan (and sometime Mayor of Titusville) ended up working as a traveling salesman for them.

The five men who founded Queen City Cutlery were Frank Forester (1883-1939), Geza Revitzky (1880- 1979), E. Clarence Erickson (1897-1961), Jesse F. Barker (1895-1970) and Harry L Matthews (1897-1967). Harry Matthews married Geza Revitzky's daughter, and their two sons were active in the business until 1975. Frank

Forester's son, Louis, was also active in the company from 1939 until his death in 1956. Clarence Erickson's daughter Eleanor married Walter Bell, who became President in 1961 when his father-in-law died. Bell was President of the company in 1969 when it passed out of family hands and was purchased by the Servotronics Corporation of Buffalo, New York. Servotronics owned Queen until 2012. Servotronics had also purchased the Ontario Knife Company of Franklin New York in 1967. Servotronics still owns Ontario Knife Company.

When Erickson's son-in-law retired as President of Queen in 1972, the leadership and all future Company Presidents would be working under the auspices of Servotronics for the next forty years. The first Servotronics era President was Robert Stamp, the last was Robert Breton, who had to divide his time between Queen Cutlery Company and Ontario Knife Company for the final ten years Servotronics owned Queen. Breton began his long career at Ontario Knife around 1975 and as this is being written, continues his tenure as the "Executive Vice President and Chief Manufacturing Officer", a position he has held since the late 1990's. Breton was President of Queen Cutlery Company in 2012 when it was sold to Kenneth R. Daniels, (Daniels Family Cutlery). At that time the new owner appointed long-time Queen employee Jennie Moore the Company President. And Moore remained President until she left Queen Cutlery in 2016. When Moore left the Company CEO Kenneth Daniels assumed the position of President.

Daniels declared Bankruptcy and shuttered the factory in the beginning of January of 2108.

Located at 507 Chestnut Street, that factory had produced massive amounts of cutlery for the previous 115 years, initially housing Schatt & Morgan (1902-1933) and later Queen (1933-2017). Built in 1897, the huge building was originally known as the “Horn Silk Company” building, and was partitioned in the middle to accommodate Schatt & Morgan in the eastern half. The western half of the building has always maintained that arrangement, now housing “The Ribbon Factory,” with a North Brown Street entrance and address. Now a division of Horn Textile Inc., it remains a multi-generational family business that has continuously occupied the other half of that building from shortly after its construction in 1897.

That building, and especially the half that comprises the 507 Chestnut street address should be seen as an important historical landmark for American cutlery history, for the useful steel tools produced there by generations of skilled workers who helped maintain the high standards of its products. It should also be a source of pride for the city of Titusville for jobs provided that helped to maintain and nurture the larger community for those many years. Queen Cutlery was a testimony to the perseverance of small town, small-scale manufacturing; now reduced to memory.

So let’s circle back the beginnings of Queen City Cutlery again. Shortly after they were

fired, those five men began their own cutlery venture in a building located behind Titusville High School, about a mile away from the Schatt & Morgan factory. The *Titusville Herald* reported that the five worked out of “an old building in School Place between Walnut and Spruce Street”. They did well enough that six months later they were able to move to larger building, formerly used as a mill, near the northeast corner of Spring and Kerr Streets. (That building was ultimately demolished in 1956 after being abandoned for a number of years). For their first four years the cutlery Company that would become Queen City did not have a marque of their own, it seems reasonable to assume that they continued to make skeleton knives, such as watch fob knives which were finished elsewhere, most likely by jewelry houses in New York City.

By 1922 they had finally grown their company to the point that they named and incorporated it as “Queen City Cutlery Company.” (The company name was shortened to “Queen Cutlery Company” in 1946). Queen City would stay at that Spring Street location for the next dozen or so years, purchasing new equipment and enlarging that facility in 1927. At the time they were employing twenty-five men and five women and had four salesmen on the road. They were thriving at the same time Schatt & Morgan was declining.

It can be argued that one of Queen’s most ambitious, forward thinking and successful accomplishment was in the development of

functional stainless steel for cutlery. This is something that set them apart from other manufacturers of the day and is an important aspect of Queen's history. The forward thinking owners of Queen embraced the idea of using the steel innovations of the day. The company pioneered the successful use of stainless steel for consumer pocket cutlery in America. Queen City Cutlery was listed in the regional trade publications as early as 1926 as manufacturers of "High Grade Stainless Steel Cutlery." And coincidentally, they were able to source their steel locally.

Stainless is defined as having at least 11% chromium in the alloy. It had been introduced in England in 1914 and first patented in America in 1915, but the change in blade material from traditional carbon steel was initially opposed by many cutlers as often happens when new technologies are introduced into an existing field. The new steel could not be forged by hand, and cutlers of the day simply did not understand how to properly temper and harden the new material, as it did not follow the rules of carbon steel that generations of cutlers had been used to. This led to poor products and a poor reputation for the new material.

By February 1927, the *Titusville Herald* noted, however, "the company (Queen City) has for some time been using what is known as stainless steel in the manufacturing of pocket knives and its output is eagerly sought in all parts of the country." Queen was the primary American innovator of this change from carbon steel to a stainless steel

formulation that was well suited for blades and backsprings. Moreover, Queen was the first American cutlery company to successfully introduce a large variety of stainless steel cutlery to the market.

Even though almost 90 percent of cutlery had carbon steel blades until the late 1940s, Queen had been successfully producing a line of functional stainless steel knives since the mid 1920's. Queen used "stainless" on its tang stamps from about the mid-1940's to the mid-1950's. Around 1955 or 1956, Queen changed the markings on its knives from "stainless" to "Queen Steel" and later to "Q Steel" because cutlery retailers and the public generally did not know that Queen had actually innovated and perfected the material.

"Queen Steel" was a type of 440 stainless steel developed by the Cyclops Steel Company, (originally called Eames Petroleum Ironworks). As luck would have it, Cyclops was a specialty steel plant located in Titusville. The first nickel-chromium steel produced in America was made there in 1917 under the leadership of Cyclops' chief metallurgist Charles Evans. Queen worked closely with Cyclops to develop its 400 series stainless steel products. Queen's willingness to experiment and push the limits of cutlery steel was evident once again in 1999 when it began to use ATS-34 steel on master blades, and again in 2002 when it began using D2 Tool Steel for blades. The 2017 (last) catalog featured folding knives in D2, 420 and 1095 High Carbon, as well as ATS-34 steels.

Queen also used a wide variety of materials over the years to haft their knives. In addition to variously worked bone and stag, some of the most expensive, rare, exotic, and highly collectable materials used for handles were mother of pearl, smoked pearl, black lip pearl, abalone. The company also used the more traditional top of the line, “presentation grade” mother-of-pearl and mastodon (non elephant). They also used various horn, and woods, as well as numerous synthetic materials in various colors and molded handle “jiggings” to haft its knives.

Although Rogers jigged bone was used on many of its early knives, by the mid- to late-1940s, Queen began producing most of its knives in “Winterbottom bone” and is best known for its use of Winterbottom bone handles. The bone was originally produced in the Winterbottom factory in Egg Harbor, New Jersey, and from about 1950 to 1959 Queen used that style of jigged bone almost exclusively. Queen continued to produce knives with both bone and synthetic handles in that distinctive Winterbottom jigging style until 2018.

Synthetic handles of plastic and nylon materials were used more and more beginning in the 1950’s to reduce costs and improve handle durability and Queen had begun hafting most of its knives in the synthetic Winterbottom style by 1959. Not only did Queen begin using Delrin Winterbottom and other less expensive synthetic handle materials in an effort to further reduce costs to remain competitive, the Company also

stopped tang stamping its knives all together as another cost cutting device around 1960. Queen resumed tang stamping in 1972 (after Servotronics was directing production), and would increase their use of natural materials as collectors and users increased their demand for it. It appears that Queen used approximately 46 different tang stamps during the Company’s tenure.

Overall, the 1950’s and 1960’s were not especially good decades for traditional American cutlery. During WW2 America became a world powerhouse, producing up to 33 percent of world GDP in the war years. As America shifted back to a peacetime economy, we remained an industrial giant, aided by ongoing migration from rural areas to the big cities by people looking for better employment opportunities. These were generally good times for the economy and boom times for manufacturing, home construction, and consumer goods. All of which reduced the rural labor force and consequently lessened the demand for the kind of cutlery traditionally used on family farms, etc. People who worked in those factories, in retail, construction, or in offices had less need for the quantity and variety of specialized pocketknives for day-to-day cutting chores. And some former rural areas surrounding cities began to become what we know today as suburbs or housing developments. Finally, inexpensive imported cutlery from post-war Europe and Asia also impacted American cutlery business.

As noted above, “Queen City Cutlery Company” shortened its name to “Queen Cutlery Company” in January 1946. This simple act quickly led to legal difficulties with the Henry Sears & Son Cutlery Company of Minnesota who claimed the change was an infringement on its name. Henry Sears was already using the word “Queen” on some of its straight razors and knife blades. It was also using the name on some of its knife handle shields. Henry Sears & Son threatened Queen Cutlery with legal action in 1948. This prompted numerous “cease and desist” letters between companies and a trip to Minnesota, where Queen president E. Clarence Erickson and the company lawyer, Roland Mahaney, met with the Henry Sears people. Through Queen’s successful legal maneuvers the dispute dragged on for eight years. Finally, in 1956 Queen hired a trademark registration company to file “Certificates of Registration” in all contiguous 48 states to protect its claim to the name, effectively doing a kind of legal “end run.” The case never went to court and Queen prevailed. Henry Sears & Son went out of business in 1958 for other economic reasons.

On another legal front, Queen was granted a patent for an Erickson designed automatic (switchblade) knife, “the Jet” in 1950, which was only manufactured until 1958. There were two versions of that knife, one with and one without a safety latch. The 1958 Switchblade Act made both of those items illegal. In a novel decision designed to keep additional knives off the market, the

Company disposed of the unused parts by mixing them in with concrete that was being used to make a driveway in Titusville. Fifty-nine years later, in 2017, a new automatic knife, patterned after the KA-BAR “Grizzly” would be reintroduced and sold as “The John Henry Express.” It was part of the company’s last hurrah.

As noted earlier, Servotronics had purchased the Ontario Knife Company in 1967 and a couple years later it acquired Queen Cutlery Company. Two years after that Servotronics purchased the Robeson Cutlery Company (owned by Cutler Federal at the time) in 1971 and they distributed Robeson brand knives until 1977. Servotronics ownership of the Robeson name would allow Queen to produce a number of traditional patterns with the Robeson “MasterCraft,” “PocketEze,” and “ShurEdge” marques beginning in 1995 and ending in the early 2000s.

Under Servotronics direction Queen returned to using tang stamps in 1972, at least in part to benefit from the renewed interest in collecting quality traditional pocket cutlery. The Company also began to issue limited edition knives around that time, the first being the 1972 “Drake Well Barlow” commemorating the 1859 discovery of oil in Titusville, followed in 1976 by a number of American Bicentennial commemorative knives using a special “Q76” tang stamp for that year. Queen continued to offer a variety of other “series” and styles of knives until the factory closed. For example, beginning in the 1970s, the Master Cutler series, the Stag

series in the 1980s, and the Burnt Bone series in the 1990s.

Over the last fifty years the Company released what might be considered “series” of general production pocketknife patterns using similarly hafted knives. Each of these “series” was offered in various handle materials of colored and molded Delrin, jigged bone, abalone, mother of pearl, stag, wood, and horn. For example, the last 2 Company catalogs featured a new “Queen Blue Bone” series offering in numerous traditional patterns.

Beginning in 1991, the Company launched the first of its two most ambitious and prestigious series; a yearly limited number of sets of premium reproduction Schatt & Morgan knives. Over the span of 20 years a total of 120 different knives would be produced for what would become known as the “Keystone” series. And, beginning in 1998, an equally prestigious “File & Wire” Schatt & Morgan series of limited production releases was initiated. Unlike the Keystone sets where all knives in that year’s set would be released at the same time, the File & Wire knives were initially issued about one knife every four to six months. The File & Wire series featured ATS-34 steel on all master blades. The File & Wire series continued until Queen was forced to close up shop. The Company also produced separate series of Queen Classics, Schatt & Morgan Premier, Keystone, as well as a Queen City knives, some for private dealers, and some showing up in catalogs beginning around 2005 and

running through last few years of Queen’s existence. But aside from the File & Wire series Queen was not always consistent in documenting the use of ATS-34 steel on other knives, During the late 1990s ATS-34 was featured on Schatts, some Queens, and some Robesons.

Because of Queen’s relationship to Servotronics they were able to produce premium quality Robeson marque knives: the “ShurEdge,” beginning in 1995, and an even two shorter offerings; ‘POCKETEZE’ which made its only catalog appearance in 1999, as well as a limited number of knives with “MasterCraft” shields and blade etches. There were no Queen Cutlery catalogs issued in 2000 or 2001, and there were no Robeson knives in the 2002-2003 catalogs forward. Nevertheless, some Robeson knives were produced through the early 2000’s, and some carry the ATS-34 blade etches. All were produced to very high standards.

After Daniels Family Cutlery took over ownership of the Company in 2012, there was an increased emphasis on “limited production” offerings for both Queen and Schatt & Morgan stamped knives. There were also limited production collaborations with several professional knife makers.

As knife collecting became more popular in the 1970’s Queen tried to make their knives more desirable to both users and collectors. In addition to commemoratives and series knives the Company also began making more “SFO’s”, special factory orders, and knives for local knife clubs and national knife

organizations. And by the 1990s Queen was beginning to increase its emphasis on the Company's rich history in an effort to make the company and its pedigree better known, (and of course, to sell more knives).

Beginning in 1991, with the yearly release of the limited production Schatt & Morgan series sets (eventually known as the Keystone series) the Company did generate increased interest in its history.

Along the way there have also been several prominent long-time collectors of Queen Cutlery who have contributed much to our understanding of the Company's production of knives and related cutlery items. For many years Fred Fisher and David Clark along with a group of about a half dozen others, have collected, displayed and shared a wealth of historical Queen and Schatt & Morgan related artifacts and valuable verifiable information. In 2005 David Clark and this writer published "The History of the Dollar Knife Corporation" monograph. In 2010 Clark published facsimile editions of the extremely rare Schatt & Morgan Catalog Number 1 (originally published in 1903) and Catalog Number 2 (originally published in 1908). In 2012 he was asked to become the official Company Historian for Queen Cutlery and held that position until the Company closed.

However, even to this day, Queen may never have been as well known or respected, as it should have been. Not only did they produce great knives under their own marque for over a century, but the Company also produced many great pocketknives under contract (just

as Schatt & Morgan and many other cutlery companies had done in the past) for other companies like Case Classics, Marbles, Moore Maker, Remington, Winchester, etc. Queen was the place other brands turned to when they wanted a well made traditional pocketknife produced. Even when some tang stamps purport otherwise, many of those modern well-made knives noted above actually came out of the Queen factory.

In reviewing the more recent history of Queen Cutlery, it appears that 2006 was a pivotal year for the Company. That was the year that the Company lost the talent and leadership of Bill Howard, a long time Queen employee, master cutler and Queen's chief knife designer. He left the company to form a partnership with Ken Daniels (Daniels Family Cutlery). Together they started "Great Eastern Cutlery".

Great Eastern Cutlery is another "traditional" pocketknife manufacturer in Titusville, located within a couple of miles from the now closed Queen factory. Great Eastern also builds very high quality bench-made pocketknives, "the old fashioned way," and the Company's limited production, well documented offerings have quickly found favor with collectors. It appears that Bill Howard's departure from Queen and the new knife company he and Ken Daniels started at that time impacted the long-term viability of Queen. (This is somewhat reminiscent of what happened to Schatt & Morgan in 1918 when five crucial employees no longer worked there.)

It is difficult to see just exactly how things were impacted from 2006 onward. For those of us not privy to the goings on inside the Company it seemed that business continued much as usual even after Daniels Family Cutlery purchased Queen Cutlery from Servotronics in 2012. Ken Daniels had turned the entire operation of Great Eastern Cutlery over to Bill Howard several months before the purchase of Queen.

One could imagine that in addition to the normal concerns any employee would have when there is new leadership at their place of employment, there may have been thoughts and questions about the man who, with the help of long time Queen's chief knife designer Bill Howard, had started the rival Great Eastern Cutlery now being the new owner of Queen. And those thoughts and questions had to accommodate Daniels' expressed sincere interest in making Queen Cutlery Company a successful family enterprise for the two present generations of Daniels involved in the business, and his hopes of creating a business that could be a lasting legacy for future generations of the family. Daniels already had a long history with Queen. The Company noted that he had been a "long time collector and dealer of Queen knives since the 1950's and a traditional pocket knife expert." All of which must have given some comfort to the Queen employees.

Reviewing the Company's last years through their catalogs is one way to get a sense of the business's direction. Unfortunately the last 3

catalogs would show a diminishing selection of both pocket cutlery and fixed blade knives.

The first catalog published under Daniels ownership circa 2013 was essentially the same as the final Servotronics owned 2010-2011 catalog with the addition of a new series of knives hafted in linen Micarta. The catalog featured pocketknives handled in bone or wood as well as a couple of smaller patterns with mother of pearl or abalone handles and a couple of traditional "country cousin" knives. Nine fixed blade knives were shown in a variety of handle materials. Interestingly, there were no Schatt & Morgan or other variations of Queen derived marked knives shown in either of those two catalogs.

From the 2015 catalog onward the standard production offerings seemed to diminish. In the 2015 catalog fifteen traditional Queen bone handled ("stagbone") patterns were offered as standard production. Schatt & Morgan knives hafted in stag reappeared, some in limited production, and a number of small stag handled knives from Schatt & Morgan in standard production. "Limited production" knives were also offered in the Schatt & Morgan File & Wire series, and a "Feathered Buffalo Horn" hafted Queen series. Three "Queen City" bone handled knives made their first catalog appearance. A number of fixed blade hunting knives and a new "tactical" type knife were also displayed. The catalog also showed limited edition collaborations with knife makers Joe Kious, who had died the year before, Joe Pardue and Bill Ruple. Historically Queen had also

produced a number of limited edition knives in collaboration with Dan Burke from around 2004 to 2006. (And to the sometimes consternation of collectors, Queen had a long history of selling knives that were never shown in a catalog, produced in small numbers without a lot of fanfare; for example the “Ranger” series, 2011, or the “John Henry” non-automatic knife 2016. Often these knives would only have a flyer as the advertisement.)

In a significant change from past catalogs less expensive “Workhorse” knives were offered in synthetic Winterbottom handles, with “birds eye raised pins.” Traditionally “birds eye” was solely associated with “birds eye maple” knife handles or otherwise referred to large “birds eye” rivets in the handle of a knife. In this case the word had been repurposed to describe pins that protruded from the bolster instead of the usual flush pin one would expect to find there, thus eliminating one step of the finishing process. Additionally, the catalog curiously noted that the handle material “will vary based on availability.”

In reviewing the 2105 catalog as a way to see what the Company was focusing on, several questions emerge. Why could the Company not secure enough Delrin molded Winterbottom, and why the sudden change to produce some knives more cheaply and then feature them in the catalog? It’s also notable that neither the long standing variety of abalone or mother of pearl (or other exotic material) handled Queen knives would ever

appear in a Queen catalog again, further suggesting the Company’s difficulty in sourcing handle materials. And the in-house produced aluminum handled, long time best selling Queen staple, “Big Chief” knives also were discontinued. As one looks back on this transitional time for the Company, questions arise related to impediments in cash flow, difficulty retaining skilled workers, and/or a planned change of direction.

It turned out that the 2015 catalog was the last widely distributed catalog Queen would publish. The 2016 catalog and 2017 catalogs had very limited distribution and would be available primarily online, changing a long tradition and further suggesting what we now know as difficulties with cash flow.

Pocketknives made in collaboration with Joe Pardue and Bill Ruple made their second and last appearance in the 2016 catalog. The catalog showed only traditional knives with either the Queen, Queen City, or Schatt & Morgan tang stamps, many of them presented as limited editions. Of the nine fixed blade patterns shown in the 2015 catalog only four were shown in 2016, and none would be shown in the final 2017 catalog which featured “The John Henry Express” automatic knife on the cover. Overall, the 2017 catalog was sixteen pages shorter than the 2016 catalog had more pages of copy and fewer knife offerings, presenting further evidence of the Company’s continuing decline.

Additionally, the Company’s historically strong warranty for all Queen knives was changed so that “All Queen Cutlery Company

product marked EDC, Every Day Carry are not covered under warranty.”

In looking back to those more recent times it is now clear that there were mounting financial problems, reflected in the significantly diminished offerings in the 2016 and the final 2017 catalogs. Sadly, Daniels Family Cutlery ended up owning the Company for only 5 years before declaring bankruptcy in January of 2108.

Although the Company is now gone, anyone with an interest in American cutlery and manufacturing history, should be aware that from 1933 to the beginning of 2018 Queen manufactured all of its pocket knives in one place; that Titusville factory originally occupied by Schatt & Morgan Cutlery Company, and that some of those Schatt & Morgan workers would become the founders of Queen City Cutlery Company. During the factory's last days knives were still made there in pretty much in the same way as knives had been always been made there for more than one hundred and fifteen years. Queen's products were real bench-made cutlery with a long and proud history and reached back to the days when small-scale manufacturing could be found all across the country. Queen had continued to manufacture cutlery where “fit and finish” was still dependent on the human touch and expertise. The factory harkened back to the very Golden Age of American Cutlery itself. It had been a long-standing and remarkable constant in 115 years of cutlery history and the third oldest

industry in Titusville when it closed. Many of us mourn the passing of that era.

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David Krauss is the author of *American Pocketknives: The History of Schatt & Morgan and Queen Cutlery*. His book is available at Americanpocketknives.com