



Queen Cutlery Guide

"Parts Knives" after the Queen Bankruptcy, 2018 and the future

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Earlier we discussed parts knives emerging from Queen Cutlery selling knife parts in the early 1970s (see article on this site). We want to draw a strong distinction from knives actually made in the factory by trained cutlers with high levels of quality control compared to knives made outside the company by somebody else. Thousands of knife parts and knives which failed quality checks are now available for sale. Quite simply, every parts knife devalues the actual Queen or Schatt & Morgan knife made in the factory during its time.

Thus Bankruptcy "Parts Knives" are a current, much bigger problem and will be available for many years. Queen closed its doors in January 2018 and filed for bankruptcy under chapter 7, which means, no possibility of recovery and selling all material to satisfy creditors. The sale occurred June 1st, 2019 and resulted in tens of thousands of knife parts, incomplete knives, or repair knives, being sold to the highest bidder. This also means there was a considerable amount of time for others to find a way to acquire knife parts ahead of the sale date. The auctioneer, Dean Gearhart of Hartland Auctions was surprised and elated at how much money was made in selling the various lots of parts, saying "Stunned by the reaction we had, particularly with regard to the remaining knives, knife parts, and memorabilia which went largely to knife collectors and distributors." (Knife magazine, July 2019, p. 29). Safe to say, some buyers had larger plans for these parts than nostalgia!

We are entering a time when these parts, now made by others, can masquerade as Queen-produced knives with high-end tang stamps from Schatt and Morgan, File and Wire, Robeson, and other lines, to collectors ready to pay for Queen knives they have not seen before, but recognize the tang stamp. It means that Queen collectors need to be more skeptical before paying big money for such knives. Solid information in evaluating a knife before purchase has become more important for Queen collectors.

Some knives which failed quality control in the factory may be offered, but they are often easy to recognize in lacking fit and finish. An example is shown in figure 1, which shows a 2016 Queen Blue bone trapper (this one with a liner lock, #19L), compared to a catalog image for the same knife produced by Queen Cutlery before they closed (figure 2).



Figure 1. A post-bankruptcy Queen Blue Bone, #19L, Sold on Ebay



Figure 2. Catalog version of a Queen Blue Bone #19 for comparison. On figure 1 knife, the pins, poor polishing (even basic cleaning), and lack of blade etch, show the parts knife as dramatically inferior, even though it was sold as "Queen-made" knife.

The knife in Figure 3, is a bit cleaner version of another #19, trapper, but with only one blade. It was probably made in the last year of Queen before bankruptcy as a special project knife, given the very unusual

black jugged delrin, but it also failed inspection. The prominent pin in the bottom bolster still gives the knife away as a second, unable to be sold until after the bankruptcy.



Figure 3, Single blade trapper on #19 pattern. Pins show problems, but could be a useful knife, but certainly not "rare or desirable"; A second, but not repaired, just sold "as is" after the bankruptcy.



Figure 4. A post-bankruptcy "replacement" blade (pile side, dated 1992) for a Schatt & Morgan swing guard knife, offered on Ebay in Fall 2019; A highly sought pattern in the first year the knife was re-offered. An easy blade to be deceived by, if used by a skilled parts knife maker.



Figure 5. Several other bankruptcy blades – Model #85 trout with Robeson etch – (note staining) and #4190 premium skinner from 1980s. This blade was given to one of us for free, by a generous fellow who said "Found many of these in the dumpster after the sale." Thousands of other blades as well.

The sale of parts for knives gives a skilled knife maker Identifying these "bankruptcy parts knives" is much more difficult than the early parts knives of the 1970s. Information becomes most important for collectors and looking at the whole knife is essential. First, as with the early parts knives, look at the central pin. It might show flatter surface and some damage on the handle. Second, if the handle material is consistent with the other knives in the series you may have a bit more confidence. Some handles may show mismatched sides, or a somewhat lower quality than knives in the same series, especially in stag handles. Third, some of the blades sold were marred in storage and might show signs of heavy buffing even some changes in original contour.

Fourth, For Schatt and Morgan or File and Wire knives, the last step in completing a blade is adding a blade etch on the mark (and/or pile) side. These etches are expensive to apply and may be beyond the resources of someone making a parts knife. Be concerned if a blade etch is not present – the knife maybe made from parts or has earlier been judged a judged as a second.

Also, it is a bit safer to buy collector knives only if they come with an originally labeled box that matches the knife inside. Seconds would be sold without a box. Not every knife was marked "EDC," as in the last years of the company. Schatt & Morgan boxes are also sold empty in the public market, so you would want to check if the labeling was original or a post-sale newly added label.

Here is a more complicated example of a second -quality knife removed from the factory in the bankruptcy (Figure 6). A 1L lockblade knife in bone from the second issue of the file and wire series. A similar knife was widely advertised and sold as a swing guard Lock, but NOT as just a locking blade. That means the handle might be available in parts for a slightly different blade to be added (only change is no hole for mounting the swing guard). The mark side of the center pin is clearly spun, but on the pile side, it does show a little roughness - not as smooth around its perimeter. Its red bone handles are somewhat different –

a little darker than other knives in the series - and not as polished. The knife in question has a lazy close and probably was a second. That means it might have laid around the factory for the last 18 years and not sold OR it might have been made out of parts recently. There was no box available with the knife. Taking all these small points together, this knife might be a parts knife or a second. The lack of etch seems especially important.



Figure 6. Second Series File and Wire Swing guard (bottom), showing brighter color, more polish, and blade etch compared to 1L lockblade knife just purchased.

So, our clear message is to study a knife with more attention to detail before purchasing and make sure you like what you are buying. Sadly, the risk of bankruptcy parts knives is now a fact of life in Queen collecting.

References

Staff of Knife Magazine (7-2019). Queen Cutlery's Assets sold at auction. Knife Magazine, 7-2019, p. 29.