



Queen Cockfighting knives (Rooster Knives) – 1-18-2021

(second edition)

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Introduction.

Since this is a primarily KNIFE site devoted to Queen and Schatt and Morgan knives, we will begin with a brief history of Queen knives, and secondly, an inventory of those knives. However, since the knives are in the process of being renamed as "Roosters" we felt it was also important to follow that inventory with a third section, a little history about cockfighting and the uses of the knives in that activity, and, finally, its current legal status. Readers are also advised to find a fine, detailed article by Doug Growitz and Mark Zalesky (September, 2019) in *Knife Magazine*.

The Queen and Schatt and Morgan knives

Blades and Use. The main blade (usually a spear blade pattern) is used as a regular, utility jack knife blade. The saw blade is used to cut the spurs off the lower leg of the rooster. The narrow hook blade or "string-cutter", was modified from a traditional narrow castrator blade, but not used for castrating roosters. This blade allows one to cut off the string which holds the gaffs (larger metal or bone spurs used to replace natural spurs) that are tied on to the rooster before a fight. The whetstone embedded in the mark side handle (only found with rounded, not square ends, to date) is used to remove a burr on a gaff so they will cut or penetrate easily.

Corporate Support for Cock Fighting

We have not seen any traditional Schatt & Morgan knives made for cockfighting in the years before 1929. Similarly, cockfighting knives may or may not have been made by Queen City Cutlery in the period from 1922-

1945, but no tang stamped knives from that period have been found, to date. From 1903 till 2017, despite a number of knives in collections, there was never a Cockfighting or Rooster knife in any Schatt & Morgan or Queen Cutlery catalog or sales flier.

That does not mean Queen Cutlery did not make them. Fred Fisher is quoted in Growitz and Zalesky (p. 32, 2019) saying that Queen did not want to be publicly associated with the illegal cockfighting sport, but would make special factory orders (SFO) for buyers, but with no tang stamp to identify that they were the makers of the knives. We see some knives with Queen tang stamps after 1980, but not earlier. Even in the '80s Queen management did not like making cockfighting knives, but their economic situation caused them to accept the SFOs documented in this article. After the Daniels family bought Queen in 2012, they saw a collector market for Rooster knives and made many on the #10 jackknife pattern, as shown below. These were clearly fancy knives with exotic handle materials and made in small editions with visible tang stamps on both mark and pile sides to identify the company, even though cockfighting still did occur, illegally.

Examples of Queen "Rooster" Knives.

However, one of the first rooster knives we have obtained was made on the #39 pattern – large two-blade folding hunter, at 5 1/4" closed (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. #39 rare cock fighting knife with Winterbottom bone scales and no tang stamp. This knife was the first Queen knife offered to the public in stainless steel in 1951, which would have made it desirable to cope with the bloody conditions of cockfighting. This knife probably dates from 1951 to sometime in the early '60s when delrin replaced bone in the handles. According to Fred Sampson, it was made by Bob Barker in an edition of less than 10 knives. This knife shows sign of use, while in very good shape, this was not a "collector" knife – it was a "user".



Figure 2. #39, rare cockfighting knife in Winterbottom Delrin scales and no tang stamp, but also no blade etch as was common in 1960's decade - an example of a company policy of no identification.

Both Figure 1 and 2 were SFO knives and produced in very small numbers. For the knife in Figure 2, Fred Sampson, Queen's Master cutler at the time, recalls that he had to cut the saw frames by hand with a band saw (2020, personal communication). Only two (2) of this knife were made by Fred; one for his son and one for himself. Both are in private collections

and were not used in actual cockfighting. They are the rarest of any Queen-made Rooster knives.



Figure 3. A 1982 Queen tang stamp for a version designed by Joe Z.



Figure 4. A "High-end" Rooster knife by "Joe Z" showing the serialized number 324, on the handle and Queen 1982 tang stamp with the Joe Z. gold blade etch. This version used a stainless steel handle suitable for engraving. It is probable that the total edition was probably around 500, including both the knives in figures 3 and 4.

In the early 1980s, Queen Cutlery revamped its product line and started looking much harder for special factory orders, giving more

attention to its sales force during the transition. Queen Sales Manager, Bob Siple was at a knife show in Baltimore when Mr. Joe Zannino approached him with an offer. Siple consulted with Master Cutler Fred Sampson who discovered a very old Schatt & Morgan die for forming the sawblades efficiently. This die (Made in the same manner as other 1907 period dies in the Queen factory) confirms that though never cataloged, Schatt & Morgan, must have made these knives early in its history in Titusville.

Mr. Zannino traveled to Titusville to meet with Bob Siple and Fred Sampson to complete the design of the knife, using the #10 jack knife, combining the saw, string cutter blade, and the addition of a whetstone from the #46 fish knife. As far as we know, his knives were the first to publicly show Queen Cutlery production and "set the mark" for the #10 Rooster knife, including all the various tools.

Mr. Zannino, was known to cockfighters around the world. In the tightknit cockfighting community, his nickname "Joe Z" on the blade etch was used on his many gifts to friends and for marketing his knives and book (Figure 5, for advertisement). So, in that sense, this knife was a tested user knife based on actual experience in the ring. Cockfighting was not illegal in many venues and family members recall him traveling to Puerto Rico and various countries in Asia for fights where this tool was prominently used (personal conversation with a confidante, 10/2020). Cockfighting was still legal in Maryland at the time this knife was produced. The knife was not used to harm roosters. The main spear blade was used as any jack knife, the string cutter was only used to remove gaffs that were tied on. The saw blade was used to remove spurs that could be used to harm hens during breeding and to clean the legs of roosters so the gaffs fit properly – much like trimming human finger nails. This means that most cockfighting knives from this period were user knives and will show heavy signs of use. Collectors will have to work very hard to find versions in good condition (Figure 6, gives an example of a survivor from those days.)

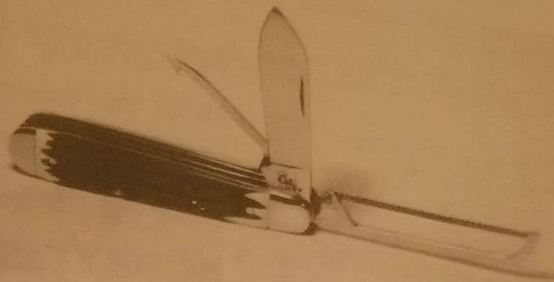
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Figure 5. An advertisement in *Gamecock Magazine* by Joe Zannino for Christmas in 1983, showing both his offerings @ \$40 for the delrin and \$75 for the metal handle combined with "the Chicken Book" to learn about the sport.



Figure 6. A well-used Joe Z. Rooster, faded delrin, broken whetstone, bent saw, rough sharpening, and tarnish on stainless blades. These knives were not meant for "collectors," and might well characterize the knives a collector might find today.

However, Bob Siple showed the "Joe Z" design of the #10 pattern to Kevin Pipes, the owner of Smoky Mountain Knife Works (SMKW) who saw

a market for a high-end knife. His preference for tang stamps that did not identify Queen as the maker fit well with Queen's policy of keeping a low profile on this knife and led the company to continue with the next big order for this pattern during the financially difficult years of the 1980s (Figures 7 and 8).



Figure 7. A Smoky Mountain Knife Works SFO, with their own tang stamp, and with a metal handle showing fighting cocks and blade etch. This handle is by Shaw-Leibowitz with pewter (or silver handles) and with gold-washed roosters (or with solid gold roosters) with a total of 700 knives in made in 1981 and 1982 (Growitz and Zalesky, 2019).



Figure 8. A "gold washed" rooster version of the SMKW Rooster knife (Queen '82) in the same year. A version of this knife with actual silver handles and golden fighting cocks would obviously be the most valuable and rare (no edition size known). The basic pewter version of this knife (figure 7) with striking appearance and large edition size would result in that knife being more commonly found in this unique pattern. There are reports of a plain brass-handled version as a seldom seen "overrun" of this knife.



Figure 9. An example of a SFO knife for the East Side Game Club with both the castrator hook blade ("string cutter" – note, does not show a large groove) and the whetstone in the handle. This model shows the Queen 1990's arched tang stamp but with no date – suggests early '90s. We do not know how many of these SFO knives were made, but with very small editions and more "user" than "collector" they are hard to find.



Figure 10. A "prototype"-marked version of a SFO in Torched Sambar Stag for the Mason Dixon Knife Club. Notice the tang stamp for the Mason Dixon Club. This knife might be a prototype for all future Daniels' rooster knives, aimed for collectors with no whetstone and stag handles. This knife was made in 2001, when Servotronics still owned Queen Cutlery.



Figure 11. The general production of the Mason Dixon Rooster Knife in jigged Chestnut Bone (2001, edition of 55 - clearly a collector knife). Note the string cutting blade is sharp, but "flat", not showing a groove as seen in many Daniels era knives. Blade shows the only gold etch documented for Queen factory-produced Rooster knives.

The remaining knives in this paper are all produced by the Daniels Family ownership of Queen Cutlery, during the period of 2015-2017. Made in the traditional manner of Queen Roosters on the #10 jack knife frame, but with the most exotic handle materials and in small editions. These knives have fueled great collector interest in the pattern. They command some of the most expensive prices of any Queen or Schatt & Morgan knife in mid-2020.



Figure 12. A very special collection of Rooster knives showing the variety of Queen and Schatt & Morgan knives. Subsequent figures will show these knives individually.



Figure 13. PAUA/ Abalone Rooster, with Keystone shield. There is also a version of this knife with no shield – just traditional Abalone handles.



Figure 14. Mammoth Ivory Schatt & Morgan, #10 Rooster knife. Note the Mammoth ivory shows the most variability in handles across different knives, with some appearing much whiter, almost smooth, while others are much darker and furrowed. To date, no keystone shields have been seen with this handle material.



Figure 15. Torched Sambar Stag #10 Schatt & Morgan Rooster knife with Whetstone embedded. For "traditionalists", this knife embodies all the tools of an early Joe Zannino version. This image shows clearly, the desire to acquire many copies of a knife for resale. (anonymous image from Facebook)



Figure 16. A very nice #10 Rooster knife in Torched Sambar stag by Schatt & Morgan with Keystone shield.

Note how almost all of these images show the white one-piece box with pre-printed labels that generally characterize this "series" of knives by Daniels Queen Cutlery.



Figure 17. #10 Rooster knife with Torched Sambar Stag with no shield and no embedded whetstone in the handle. One of three different treatments by Daniels in this popular handle material.



Figure 18. #10 Rooster in Marvel Wood with Keystone shield.

Note that this version represents the only use of wooden handle materials in the Daniels series. We have been told that some wooden handled knives were also made in "lightning wood," but to date, none of them have shown up in collector sources. It may well be that that other wooden handles, or Daniels era bone, (blue bone or red jigged bone, etc.) may someday may appear out of collections – (Also, these type handles would be prime candidates for counterfeit or "custom" knives, in our opinion.)



Figure 19. #10 Rooster in Amber Carved Stag Bone (ACSB), no shield. The box shows a handwritten note suggesting that this knife was made in an edition of 15 pieces.

It would not be surprising if version of the knives in Figure 19 and 20, with added Keystone shields might also appear out of collections sometime in the future, given the pattern we see in other handles in this series – again other prime candidates for counterfeit or "not factory-produced" knives.



Figure 20. #10 Rooster in Amber Winterbottom bone, no shield

As a company is going into bankruptcy some unusual events might occur, especially with a knife that has sold in small editions for very high prices. Figures 21 - 24, show four highly finished Mother of Pearl knives in this pattern that have been discussed controversially on the Internet. They each carry a certificate of authenticity (COA) but also state that they were completed "elsewhere." That means, "not in the factory" in our opinion. The story has been shared that these knives were originally finished in abalone, but showed cracks and were sold to others who then completed them in these very exotic handle materials.



Figure 21. #10 Rooster with pearl and Keystone Shield, COA "completed elsewhere".

We will not enter that argument of whether the knives in Figure 21-24, are "factory" or "custom" knives, but simply say all collectors should be aware of the provenance of these last of the Queen Cutlery rooster knives and decide for themselves whether they want to collect these rare, highly-finished knives.



Figure 22. #10 Rooster with pearl handle, completed elsewhere.



Figure 23. #10 Rooster with Cigar Banded pearl (edition of 2) completed elsewhere.

It is not known how many knives were issued for each model. Some say less than 50, others say around 50. Most agree that additional knives were added (especially in stag) as some of the last knives made in the period leading up to the bankruptcy.



Figure 24. #10 Rooster with Cigar Banded Gold Lip Pearl (edition of 3) completed elsewhere.



Figure 25. A gold-etched Rooster knife #10 by Queen Cutlery. This knife is perhaps one of the last Knives Queen produced and has been controversial since it has not appeared for sale till almost three years have passed. It shows a Queen DFC tang stamp – not a Schatt & Morgan as seen in most of the others. It also shows gold color etch compared to all the other last year's production. There has not been found any certificates of authenticity for the production of these knives in the factory. So, there is some unfortunate ambiguity about the knives from that final year.

Brief Description of Cockfighting

The history of cockfighting goes back to India and Southeast Asia approximately 6,000 year ago. It was practiced by Greeks and Romans before battle in order to stimulate the warriors to brave and valorous deeds, and large sums of money were wagered on these fights.

Cockfighting was widely practiced in the colonies and throughout the American frontier and was especially favored in the South. In the early days of the country, Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln were said to enjoy cockfighting. It was acceptable for a gentleman to keep a flock of gamecocks and be expert in breeding and training for the sport. It has been said that the fighting cock almost became the national emblem of the United States, losing in Congress by only one vote to the American Eagle. The sport declined as the Civil War began. <https://peippfa.wordpress.com/photos/the-history-of-cockfighting/>

(<https://www.britannica.com/sports/cockfighting>) provides a good summary of the sport, abbreviated below:

Cockfights have historically taken place in cockpits, round arenas bounded by wood, plexiglass, or chicken wire. Stadium seating might be offered at more posh facilities, but at "brush pits" the audience might stand or sit on primitive benches or old car seats. Betting would commence before the fight and continue throughout. Cockfights would usually be arranged in sets called derbies, in which the owner whose birds won the most fights of the day won the derby.

Cocks usually are put to the main when between one and two years of age and are bred to produce an aggressive rooster. Before their entrance into the fighting pit, they are given intensive training.

The owners or trainers tightly hold the birds and allow them to peck at each other; this is termed "billing." Then the birds would be turned loose from lines drawn in the sand and allowed to peck or lash out with their spurs. The natural spur of the chicken was heeled with artificial metal gaffs, which were slightly curved and sharp like ice picks. The modern short spur is 1½ inches (4 cm) or less in length; the longer spur scales from 2 to 2½ inches (5 to 6 cm). Latino cockfighters typically used a "slasher," which looked more like a sharp knife blade.

A cockfight would usually be a bloody affair and almost always ended in the death of one of the roosters. The events occurred as noisy

happenings in which betting, shouting and all sorts of ancillary activity developed on the sidelines. Fights have been predominately male situations, with women usually holding the roles of supporters. Sometimes, but rarely, special cockfights allowed women to be handlers in "powder puff derbies."

Although some fights still are to an absolute finish, later rules have sometimes permitted the withdrawal at any time of a badly damaged cock. Other rules fix a time limit for each fight. On rare occasions when a gamecock refuses to fight longer, his handler puts him breast to breast with the other bird. If he still refuses, it is ruled that he has quit, and the fight ends. At all mains the judge's word is absolute law, even as to gambling. There is no appeal from his decisions.

Legal Status of Cock fighting in the U.S.A.

Massachusetts was the first state to ban cock fighting in 1839. At the turn of the twenty-first century cockfighting remained legal in Oklahoma despite intense, emotionally charged wrangling to change its status. In 2000 and 2001 attempts to proscribe the activity, both sides engaged in stratagems in the state legislature and in the courts of public opinion. Supporters of Cockfights won, but in 2002, Oklahomans approved State Question 687, which made cockfighting a felony. In 2004 the Oklahoma Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the ban. (OKhistory.org)

Nevada became the most recent state to make cockfighting a felony in June 2013, making cockfighting illegal in all 50 states. However, more than 100 people each year are arrested for cockfighting in the Los Angeles area and other states, especially southern states still have arrests for cock fighting. Thirty-one states permit possession of cockfighting implements, and 12—Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota and Utah—allow possession of a fighting cock, even though cockfighting is illegal.

Federal Animal welfare act of 1996 was amended in 2002 to make cockfighting illegal. Subsequent law increased penalties and made it illegal to allow a minor to attend a cockfight. Cock fighting is still legal in Puerto Rico, Mexico, The Philippines, and Indonesia.

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-and-rural-development/cockfighting-laws.aspx>.

Conclusion

While Queen made some of these knives in the early years, there is no way to assure that a specific knife is "Queen-made," until after the 1980s. This paper contains an example of all the known knives, especially the many small editions made in the Daniels era and should help collectors. However, "rare birds" may someday come out of private collections.

Since many knife parts, including blades, were sold at bankruptcy sale and on the Internet, and since interest in this pattern remains high, there is a risk of "parts knives" being produced at the present time and in the future. Collectors should be careful in spending big money until they are satisfied the knife is right. Lately newer production of this pattern have been offered by both American and Chinese makers and their provenance should be clear in details on their tangs and etches.

As far as Queen factory-produced Rooster knives, there are some considerations. The boxes for Daniels era tend to be white one-piece and show pre-printed labels (Figures 12-24), usually with no edition size. Rarely, some knives have been delivered in the usual brown Schatt & Morgan boxes. Most of the Daniels knives have a groove in the "string cutter" blade, but a few show a flat string cutter (Donald Carson, Personal communication, 10/2020). So there is some variability in these knives and each collector should decide for themselves about purchase. One should watch for sudden appearance of relatively large numbers of a version of this knife.

Still, this is an interesting knife with an interesting history and especially in its latter years an important part of Queen Cutlery's history. This is a revised edition and we would appreciate any corrections or additional knives to add to its inventory. Thank you.

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