

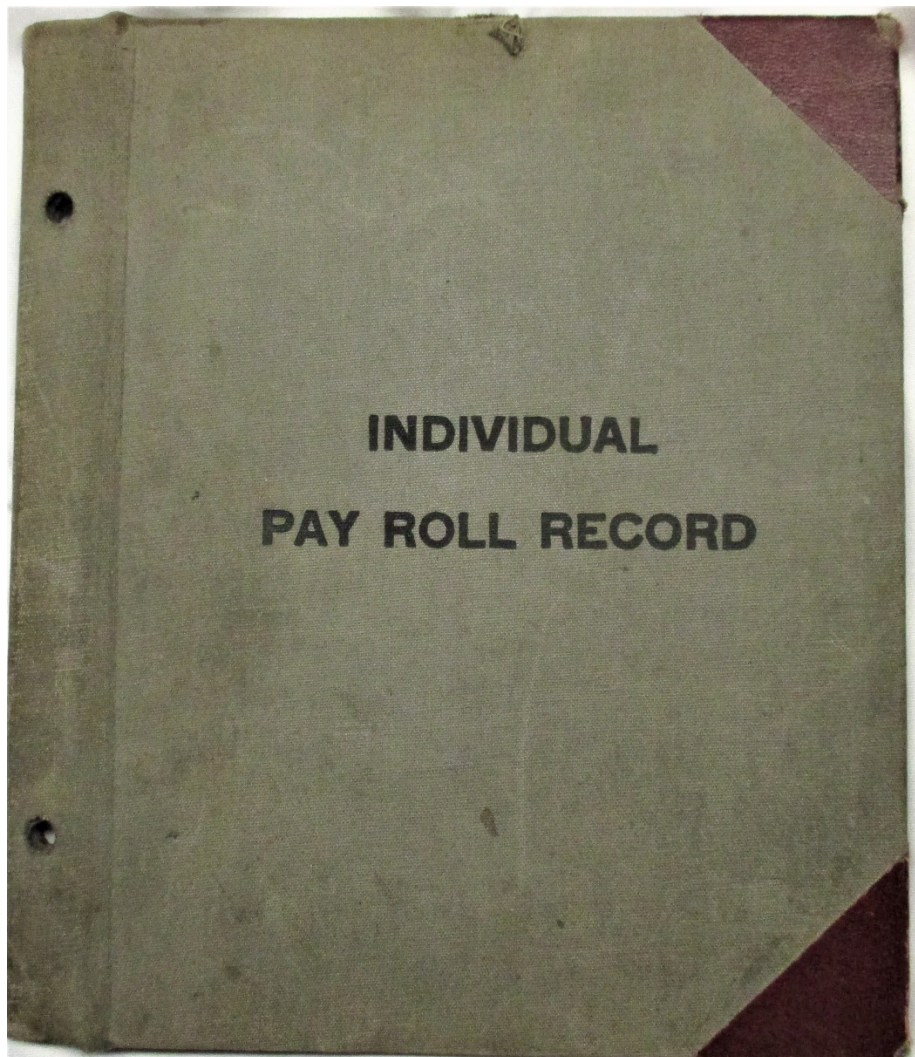


[QueenCutleryGuide.com](http://QueenCutleryGuide.com)

## **Queen Cutlery Individual Payroll Records, 1947-1948**

Dan Lago, David Krauss, and Fred R. Sampson, 3-4-2021

In sad fashion, the bankruptcy of Queen Cutlery at the very beginning of 2018, has provided a window from which we can look into the early post-World War II history of the company. A detailed record of individual pay has been recovered.



1947 -1948 payroll record for Queen Cutlery Company

Although the company records do include Social Security numbers, we have honored them as confidential information and have removed them from all the images that follow. However, using those Social Security numbers in a recent search of the Social Security death index (SSDI) shows that an unusually large number of employees (38 persons) are not reported to have died, even though they generally would be well over age 90 – assuming age 18 or older when starting work over 70 years past. (Probably some local person responsible for entering those who had passed into the Social Security Death Index -SSDI, was not too diligent.) Other records and recollections show almost all of these workers are no longer living and we will use their names and earnings (by group) in 1948 as one of the very few records remaining of the company's history. This story is one of praise for workers who contributed to the success of this Pennsylvania company and do deserve this small footnote. In the rare cases where the news might be seen as negative, we will preserve anonymity as well as personal detailed financial information from 72 years ago.

For incomes noted below, the U.S Census report of 1950 reports that in 1948, the average income of families was \$2,950, nationwide (U.S. Census, 1948). The minimum wage was \$.40 an hour. The average home value had increased from \$3,205 to almost \$6,800. (There was a significant housing shortage after WWII.) For consumers, a gallon of gas was \$.16, a loaf of bread was \$.14. Compared to the present time, \$100 in 1948, was worth \$1,152 dollars in 2019.

E. C. Erickson served as the President of Queen Cutlery at that time, along with Frank Forester (Vice President) and Harry Mathews (Treasurer). All three were paid similarly, so we will look only at the record of Erickson, as President, but all three officers were instrumental in the company's success. – Erickson helped develop "Queen Stainless Steel" with the local Cyclops steel firm, and produced patterns for highly successful knives such as the "Big Chief" and the Automatic "Jet" knife.



Figure 1, Obituary photo for E. Clarence Erickson from the Titusville Herald. He died, 7-21-1961, but is not listed in the SSDI,



**INDIVIDUAL PAYROLL RECORD**

YEAR 19 47

NAME E. Clarence Erickson  
 ADDRESS 617 E. Walnut St.  
 SOCIAL SECURITY No.             
 WAGE RATE \$            PER             
                   \$            PER             
 DATE EMPLOYED            DATE LEFT           

**WITHHOLDING CERTIFICATE**

DATE	PERSONAL CREDIT STATUS	NO. OF DEPENDENTS	CODE NO.
	Married		
	Five Exemptions		

FIRST QUARTER							SECOND QUARTER						
PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS			PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS		
	SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other		SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other
12-28-46			150 <sup>00</sup>	1840	150		4-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	-	677
1-15-47			425 <sup>00</sup>	5750	425	677	4-19-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		
1-30-47			425 <sup>00</sup>	5750	425	677	5-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		677
2-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	5 <sup>00</sup>		5-30-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		
2-28-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	5 <sup>00</sup>	677	6-5-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		677
3-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	5 <sup>00</sup>		6-30-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		
3-31-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	5 <sup>00</sup>				3000 <sup>00</sup>	42420		2031	
TOTALS			3000 <sup>00</sup>	41620	30 <sup>00</sup>		TOTALS			3000 <sup>00</sup>	42420		2031
TOTAL TO DATE							TOTAL TO DATE			6000 <sup>00</sup>	84040		3000
THIRD QUARTER							FOURTH QUARTER						
7-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	-	677	10-15			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		240 677
7-30-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	-		10-30			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		120
8-15-47			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	-	677	11-15			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		180 677
8-30			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070	-		11-30			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070		120
9-15			2000 <sup>00</sup>	28280		1354	12-15			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070 <sup>n</sup>		120 677
9-30			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070			12-30			500 <sup>00</sup>	7070 <sup>n</sup>		120
9													
TOTALS			3000 <sup>00</sup>	42420		2031	TOTALS			3000 <sup>00</sup>	42420		
TOTAL TO DATE			9000 <sup>00</sup>	126460		3000	TOTAL TO DATE			12000 <sup>00</sup>	168880		3000

Figure 2. 1947 Payroll for E. Clarence Erickson

We do not have any information about Queen's government contracts during WWII, but they made many military knives, and were reported to work around the clock with up to 144 staff – much larger than the post-war labor force of approximately 100 we see in this payroll ledger. The post-war recession was difficult for Queen and other cutlery companies as they coped with the slower economy and large numbers of military surplus knives reaching civilian markets. But, the profits from the war effort would have provided capital needed to reorganize the company and prepare for the emerging civilian market. It must have been a trying time for the owners and workers.

The success of their first catalog #82, in 1947, - the first under their new name Queen Cutlery Company - since they started business in 1922, provides the context for this report. (Please see David Krauss, 2002, for the best detailed history of this period.)

The recession and risk in expanding their business can be seen in the lower weekly compensation of Erickson in January in the 1947 year. However, soon they experienced good growth that can be seen in the increasing weekly pay as the year goes on - \$500.00 a week was a LOT of money in 1947. Erickson's, and other owners, annual pay for the year is shown as \$12,000.

However, in 1948, he and the other owners cut their weekly pay by 50%, receiving \$250.00 a week; reducing their pay to help grow the company. It is likely this strategy was also required by lagging finances – it was necessary to save the company! The strategy worked very well, for with supplemental compensation as each quarter closed, the owners actually increased their annual salaries to \$15,000, a 25% increase over the prior year (Figure 3, 1948 salary record for Clarence Erickson, below).

Retired Master Cutler and longtime Queen employee, Fred Sampson was not surprised when he learned this. "No surprise to me, they were great fellows; they were smart, and they cared for their workers, and keeping the business surviving." Titusville PA, is a small town. According to the payroll record almost all owners and employees lived within five blocks of the factory. Almost all walked to work.



INDIVIDUAL PAYROLL RECORD

YEAR 19 48

NAME E. Clarence Erickson  
 ADDRESS 617 E. Walnut St.  
 SOCIAL SECURITY No. [REDACTED]  
 WAGE RATE \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PER \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PER \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE EMPLOYED \_\_\_\_\_ DATE LEFT \_\_\_\_\_

WITHHOLDING CERTIFICATE

DATE	PERSONAL CREDIT STATUS	NO. OF DEPENDENTS	CODE NO.

FIRST QUARTER							SECOND QUARTER						
PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS			PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS		
	SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	ss-1 tax	Other		SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	ss-1 tax	Other
1948													
1-8-48			250.00	36.30	2.50	1.20 6.77	4-3			250.00	38.30	-	6.60 6.77
1-10			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	4-10			250.00	38.30		60
1-17			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	4-17			250.00	38.30		60
1-24			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	4-24			250.00	29.70		60
1-31			250.00	38.30	2.50	6.77	5-1			250.00	29.70		6.77
2-7			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	5-8			250.00	29.70		60
2-14			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	5-15			250.00	29.70		60
2-21			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	5-22			250.00	29.70		60
2-28			250.00	38.30	2.50	6.77	5-29			250.00	29.70		60
3-6			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	6-5						
3-13			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	6-12						
3-20			250.00	38.30	2.50	60	6-19						
3-27			250.00	38.30	-	60	6-26						
TOTALS			3250.00	495.90	30.00		TOTALS			2250.00	293.10		
TOTAL TO DATE			3250.00	495.90	30.00		TOTAL TO DATE						
THIRD QUARTER							FOURTH QUARTER						
7-3							10-2			250.00	29.70		6.60 6.77
7-10							10-9			250.00	29.70		60
7-17			200.00	29.70		13.54 7.20	10-16			750.00	104.70		60
7-24			250.00	29.70		60	10-23			750.00	104.70		60
7-31			250.00	29.70		60	10-30			500.00	67.20		60
8-7			250.00	29.70		6.77	11-6			500.00	67.20		6.77
8-14			250.00	29.70		60	11-13			500.00	67.20		60
8-21			250.00	29.70		60	11-20			500.00	67.20		60
8-28			250.00	29.70		60	11-27			500.00	67.20		60
9-4			250.00	29.70		6.60 6.77	12-4			500.00	67.20		6.60 6.77
9-11			1000.00	142.20			12-11			250.00	29.70		1.80
9-18			1000.00	142.20		60							
9-25			250.00	29.70		60							
TOTALS			4250.00	551.90			TOTALS			6250.00	701.70		
TOTAL TO DATE							TOTAL TO DATE			15000.00	2042.40		

Figure 3. 1948 payroll for E Clarence Erickson

As in many small businesses, owners also hired many family members as workers. Erickson had six employees with the same last name (Bessie Eleanor, C. Hilbert, Ida May, John Hugh, Martha Jane, and Waldo Sigfried). Harry Mathews also had four (Joseph Sibley, Robert, Gerald, and William David), and one more if you count his sister-in-law Mary Romaszyn. Frank Forester had only one, his son, Louis P. Forester. Almost 10% of the total workforce were "family." Indeed many of the workers were also related – there was definitely a family-neighborhood feel about the factory in 1948.

The owners were tightly integrated and close. Take for example, the daughters of one of the founders, Geza Ravisky, who left the Schatt and Morgan cutlery company to help start a new company in Titusville in 1918, which would incorporate as Queen City Cutlery in 1922. He had three daughters. Adele Ravisky married Harry Mathews, the company treasurer. Her sister, Mary Romaszyn, was hired early by Harry and was promoted to be the chief office manager and in day-to-day of all business records for the firm until factory until 1971, after Servotronics took over. The owners did have confidence over who was handling income and expenses.







Workers also received Christmas bonuses and salary increases, based on performance. This is not to say that everyone was rewarded. In 1947, with 131 employees, 35 workers did not show continued work through the end of the year. Two of these were likely school-aged children of the Erickson and Mathews family who worked only during the summer months. So, just over 24 % of workers did not stick with the company for the full year. In 1948, a similar percentage also did not complete the year. Perhaps the economy had improved enough for some workers to seek other potentially lucrative opportunities, or maybe they were simply let go.

In several of those cases, weekly payroll predicted who would leave. In one example, a worker hired at \$50.00 per week (highly skilled) was reduced to \$15.20 per week – he did not stay long after the reduction. While 69 workers saw salary increases in 1948, 24 persons experienced salary declines of about 35%. To us, this suggests that these owners were true master cutlers themselves, spending time on the factory floor, training and carefully supervising the quality and amount of work produced there. They were likely separating the wheat from the chaff on an ongoing basis.

Those salary increases were based on who impressed the owners as they worked. Fred R. Sampson (a future master cutler and our co-author) almost doubled his salary in five months, going from \$23.45/week to \$40.41, as an 18-year-old. He had played in the factory as a child, worked as a truck driver for the company since age 16, and was well-known to the owners.

Unsurprisingly, men earned more money than female employees. Males were paid on average \$45.47 per week, while women earned an average of \$32.70 weekly, or approximately 72% of men's wages. Mary Romaniszyn, daughter of Geza Ravitsky and sister-in-law of Harry Mathews ran the business operation and managed the office, staffed by "the girls." She was paid \$40.00 a week, given her responsibilities, roughly 25% more than the average for women – the highest paid woman by the end of 1948.

The only woman earning more than her was Ms. D. A. who was paid \$50 per week and worked for the company for essentially only a year – hired 7-26-1947. She earned more than any other women throughout the year in 1948, but showed no increases. Suddenly in July 17, 1948, her weekly salary dropped by 50%, and she left the company after July 24 (see figure 5). She appeared to have been at a "female plateau" and probably left for

more opportunity somewhere else. We do not know her job description, but she may have been involved with military contacts or tax issues and is not remembered as an office worker. Of course, we just do not know the whole story.

But two points are clear: women were paid less than men and salary reductions for all workers predicted quick departure.

**INDIVIDUAL PAYROLL RECORD**  
YEAR 19 48

NAME [REDACTED]  
ADDRESS [REDACTED]  
SOCIAL SECURITY No. [REDACTED]  
WAGE RATE \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PER \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE EMPLOYED 7/28/47 DATE LEFT \_\_\_\_\_

**WITHHOLDING CERTIFICATE**

DATE	PERSONAL CREDIT STATUS	NO. OF DEPENDENTS	CODE NO.
7/28/47	Single		

FIRST QUARTER						SECOND QUARTER							
PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS			PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS		
	SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other		SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other
12-27-47			50.00	5.00	50	60	4-3			50.00	3.20	50	60
1-3			50.00	5.00	50	60	4-10			50.00	3.20	50	60
1-10			50.00	5.00	50	60	4-17			50.00	3.20	50	60
1-17			50.00	5.00	50	60	4-24			50.00	5.60	50	60
1-24			50.00	5.00	50	60	5-1			50.00	5.60	50	60
1-31			50.00	5.00	50	60	5-8			50.00	5.60	50	60
2-7			50.00	5.00	50	60	5-15			50.00	5.60	50	60
2-14			50.00	5.00	50	60	5-22			50.00	5.60	50	60
2-21			50.00	5.00	50	60	5-29			50.00	5.60	50	60
2-28			50.00	5.00	50	60	6-5			50.00	5.60	50	60
3-6			50.00	5.00	50	60	6-12			50.00	5.60	50	60
3-13			50.00	3.20	50	60	6-19			50.00	5.60	50	60
3-20			50.00	3.20	50	60	6-26			50.00	5.60	50	60
3-27			50.00	3.20	50	60							
TOTALS			700.00	64.60	700		TOTALS			650.00	65.60	650	
TOTAL TO DATE			700.00	64.60	700		TOTAL TO DATE						

THIRD QUARTER						FOURTH QUARTER							
PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS			PAY PERIOD ENDING	EARNINGS			DEDUCTIONS		
	SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other		SALARY OR WAGES	OTHER EARNINGS	TOTAL	WITH-HOLDING TAX	SS-1 tax	Other
7-3			50.00	5.60	50	60							
7-10			50.00	5.60	50	60							
7-17			25.00	1.90	25								
7-24			50.00	5.60	50								
8-1													
TOTALS			175.00	18.70	175		TOTALS						
TOTAL TO DATE			1525.00	148.90	1525		TOTAL TO DATE						

Figure 5. Payroll record for Ms. D.A., the highest paid woman worker for Queen Cutlery in 1948

The following summary of men, by name, who earned more than \$2,500.00 up to \$3700.00, for the entire year of 1948 – the highest earnings among all workers. Thirty-one men, or approximately 30% of the workforce, are included:

**Workers Earning Over \$2,500 – up to \$3,700.00, in 1948, by Departments in the Queen Cutlery factory in Titusville, PA.**

**Die Maker:** Geza Ravitsky. *Make dies to stamp out knife products from raw materials*

**Press Operator and Materials:** Clarence L. Maynard, Walter Sigfried Erickson, Leroy Orrin Smith (hired 1/2/1922). *Operate large presses with dies for blades, brass or nickel silver parts and manage the raw materials, steel and brass used for those operations*

**Grinding room:** Clive Leroy Armstrong (foreman), Kenneth Clarence Murphy, Shirls Lewis Wrigley. *Use large grindstones to shape blades.*

**Blade Finishing:** Joseph H. Hoepfl, jr., (foreman), Rudolph Leroy Pratt, Francis Emmanuel Hull, Elmer Geiser, John Jacob Hiller, Lewis Hoepfl, William Davis Matthews, Howard Allison Burrows, Joseph Sibley Matthews. *Use sanding belts to finish blade shapes*

**Hafting Department:** Harry W. Courson (foreman), Frank Rankin (later foreman), Claire Henry Moore, Paul Alden McGregor, Joseph Higrual Hibbard (later foreman), Fred George Lallman (later foreman). *Attach blades to handles.*

**Assembly Department:** Leo Nadolny (foreman), Albert Smith (Switchblade assembly), Lloyd Edwin Matson (later foreman) *Final assembly of knives for function*

**Cover Room:** David H. Jacobs (foreman). *Prepare handle scales, install shields and attach to knives*

**Buffing:** C. Hilbert Erickson (foreman). *Polish completed knives*

**Maintenance Supervisor:** Robert L. Barker. *Machine maintenance and cleaning*



**Company Executives:** Frank Foresther, (Vice President), Harry L. Matthews (Treasurer), E, Clarence Erickson, (President). Each paid \$15,000 in 1948.

Mr. Geza Ravitsky was one of the cutlers who had helped start Queen City Cutlery, but was paid as a highly skilled tool die maker, not as an "owner." He did however, have considerable respect from the three executives who included his daughters in long-time roles, as discussed above. Also Mr. Frank Foresther, Vice President of the company, but also was extremely skilled in adapting and maintaining machinery throughout the factory – he was a very valuable part of the team.

Queen Master Cutler Fred Sampson noted, that Queen transferred workers from one to department to another over time. The company wanted every workman to be skilled in all phases of producing a knife so every worker understood how their current job fit into the process of completing a quality knife. The payroll record reflected the increasing skill a worker had acquired. So, these estimates of work performed in 1948, might not reflect what a worker did later in his career or what that worker felt was his best skill as a cutler.

In discussing this article, Fred R. Sampson in recalling wages had several comments. "Yes, we ate cold meat." And, "The paper boy would cash our checks." Fred also played the trumpet well, and said, "Many weeks I earned more playing in a band with my trumpet than my day job." Still, he reported. "It was a good life and I was glad to be working there." These were above average wages for the top earners in the Titusville area and were considered "good jobs" by the men who held them.

In spite of the fact that they were the most valued employees by pay scale, it can be seen from the information above that these workers only earned about 16% to 25% of what the owners earned in the same year. On other hand, it should be noted that any worker could walk away at any time. And some did. Workers had no financial investment in the machines, tools or the financial obligations required for the successful upkeep and maintenance of the building that the owners were liable for, and which made it possible to hire those workers. They carried a substantial amount of risk.

We believe that the quality of work by these men as a group was a major factor in the success of Queen Cutlery company. They should receive major recognition for their contributions. In spite of the fact that they were

the most valued employees, they have worked in anonymity until now. We are pleased to add their names to the history of Queen Cutlery. After the war, the owners made wise decisions including modifying product line. Their emphasis on hiring, training workers in multiple skills and supervision, developing new products, and marketing their use of steels, helped the company prosper for the next 20 years. It also allowed their children, the workers, and collectors to benefit for the next 70 years.

## **References**

Anonymous. (1947-1948) Queen Cutlery Individual Payroll record, now in collection of first author.

Krauss, David (2002) American Pocketknives: The History of Schatt & Morgan and Queen Cutlery. 236 pages. Krauss Publications, 3260 Euclid Heights Blvd, Cleveland Heights, OH44118. Available online at: <http://www.americanpocketknives.com>.

<https://nwpastories.com/2018/01/19/queen-cutlery-the-history-of-a-titusville-icon/> (for archival photograph of E. Clarence Erickson)

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1948/demo/p60-006.html>

**And, Of course, we are very grateful for the conversation and detailed memories of Fred R. Sampson, our co-author, over the period of time included in this article.**