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## **Titusville Cutlery Company, First Generation: Queen Special Factory Orders, 2008-2011**

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### Introduction

Titusville Cutlery Company is a trademark knife brand patented by the Watkins family, who ordered their knives as Special Factory Order (SFO) with Queen Cutlery Company in 2008. Lynn Watkins was a popular and long-term member of collecting American knives community going back to the early 1970s. He was a regular seller at the famous Washington Court House shows and many others. He owned Hickory Hills Cutlery for years. He was famous for his knowledge of knives and for treating people fairly in his many years of knife collecting.

One of his projects with his children was Titusville Cutlery Company as his son Anthony Watkins became heavily involved with Smoky Mountain Knife Works (SMKW). SMKW became the exclusive distributor of the new brand, largely on their show “knives live.” Lynn Watkins and family also sold the knives at any knife show where they set up as well, and eventually a number of secondary sellers. The knives were highly regarded, available in small editions, and sold very well. But it was hard getting new knives to sell from Queen and they could not meet their plans of selling four to six high-end patterns a year, featuring a high level of detail and many premium handle materials a year (Anthony Watkins, 2022; “Sunburst” Allaboutpocketknives, 2008).

Queen was in the later years of their very successful Schatt & Morgan Keystone Annual Series (1991 till 2010) and had developed a large following in Knife collecting clubs annual knives and many other SFO brands. They had developed a strong reputation and Lynn Watkins emphasized that in naming his new brand. Unfortunately, Queen, and thus Titusville Cutlery, ran head-on into major financial troubles of the recession of beginning in 2008 and had a difficult time meeting their contractual obligations. Queen

was also facing problems in internal leadership in knife design and production. Bill Howard, Queen's master cutler has left to form his own firm (Great Eastern Cutlery Company (GEC) the year before and Queen had a difficult time producing new knives and were heavily focused on their last issues for the annual Schatt & Morgan "Keystone" series. The two initial patterns were already available in Queen's repertoire, but the novel "farmer's jack" took considerably longer to be ready and required significant new investment in dies.

Quietly, Queen/Servotronics was already looking for a new buyer of the company. Despite having some very highly regarded knives, Lynn Watkins' effort did not last past 2011, and just the three patterns (described below) were produced by Queen, when it became clear Queen would be sold the next year. Despite the investment in new dies, the dies for the farmer jack were lost to Titusville Cutlery owners when Queen was sold.

During his last years, Lynn Watkins faced a continuing series of chronic illnesses which limited his activity in knives and resulted in his death in 12-28-2021. His obituary can be found on the Internet, (Knoxville News Sentinel) and he was also eulogized by editor Mark Zalesky in Knife Magazine (1-6/2022), a sign of Lynn Watkins prominence in the knife community.

## A Review of All Known First Generation Titusville Cutlery Knives

### 1. Cotton Sampler

A note by "Sunburst" (allaboutPocketknives, 2008) describes the first Titusville Cutlery knife. "The "King Cotton" is the first release using the new Trademark Titusville Cutlery Co. obtained through the courtesy of Bill Horn's Cumberland Knife Works. Here are 3 of the 4 samplers made: 1 of 40 Abalone, 1 of 70 Worm Groove, and 1 of 70 Stag. They also made a 1 of 70 Winterbottom that I have not received at this time. I really like the box design and the idea of a new tang stamp. There are supposed to be 4 to 6 new releases every year under this trademark."

There was a very similar article in Blade Forums that described the same handle materials. Both posts were quickly followed up by positive comments about the quality and beauty of this release.



Figure 1. An Abalone “King Cotton” sampler, showing the tang stamp and the etch on the single blade. The quality of the abalone is apparent – not a plasticized LVS simulation. A very striking knife. This first series used a yellow label, while subsequent knives used a blue label. This fine photograph by “Sunburst” from 2008 is one of the few photos of this very hard to find knife.

Eventually, these knives may start coming out of collections. In another 10 or 15 years as those original owners depart our ranks.



Figure 2. The pile side of another Titusville Cutlery Co. “King Cotton” showing the consistent etch with other patterns and the “QUEEN” block tang stamp of the first generation of this brand. Once again, the jigged green of the “worm Groove” bone is very superior and special for this offering especially when compared with the usual line of worm groove bone Queen often used. (again, a “Sunburst” photo from [Allaboutpocketknives.com](http://Allaboutpocketknives.com). 2008)

## 2. Premium Trapper



Figure 3, Series 2, a large Trapper in Fire Oak bone, with the Titusville shield showing three initials, and the mark side tang stamp of Titusville Cutlery, with both blades etched. The clip blade shows a ribbon with “Titusville Trapper,” and the spey blade with a very precise model number (a Queen #19 with a code for the year “08”, handle “FO”- fire oak) and the a lower etch for the year, edition size in a double circle, and “series 2”. This knife shows 1-100 edition. (available Internet photo)

Again, we do not all the handle materials in this pattern, with only fire Oak bone and torched Sambar stag, (see Figure 5, below) but there may well be others.



Figure 4. The pile side of each blade on the Fire Oak trapper shows a “Queen” tang stamp in block letters, leaving no question about the source of the knife. While not visible in this close-up, this is a torched Sambar handle, but does show the lined bolster. This tang stamp would be expected with the etch on the front of the blade for any first generation Titusville Cutlery original knife.



Figure 5. Torched Sambar Stag Titusville Trapper, showing very consistent tang and etch with the fire Oak trapper in Figure 3 above. This image gives a nice view of the original box and package insert with the First-Generation knives. This is again an available Internet photo. We cannot read the edition size in this photo but it is likely to be no more than 1-100.

### 3. Farmers Jack

The Farmers Jack was a new pattern for Queen and the brand with a slightly hawk-type pruner blade as the primary blade and a secondary spey blade from the bottom bolster. The handle narrowed for the bottom blade and had pinched bolsters for that end of the knife. It had the same shield as the Trapper but was produced in seven different handle materials, as shown as a group in Figure 6. Those handles include: green bone, dark Winterbottom bone, Mammoth ivory, torched Sambar stag, torched Sambar Stag with ATS34 blades, Red fire Oak bone, and Mother of Pearl. Again, there may be other handle materials in this pattern.



Figure 6. An array of Farmer Jacks by Titusville Cutlery produced by Queen Cutlery (Servotronics) as SFOs through 2011. (Internet photo)





Figure 7. A Farmer Jack handled in Mammoth Ivory, showing a consistent pattern of using the finest handle materials available at the time, with the Block “QUEEN” tang stamp on the secondary spey blade, and the very unusual image of a farmer working with oxen. In many ways, it is sad that this fine brand did not last, ending in 2011. (Internet photo)



Figure 8. A single blade Trapper, with worm grooved bone commonly used by Queen, with Titusville Cutlery tang stamp, correct upper bolster, and similar box. But, no shield, no etch on blade, no clip blade, and not a high degree of polish on handle, raising many questions. Anthony Watkins, (Personal Communication, 2022) is very clear that this was never a knife that Titusville Cutlery ordered from Queen. (Available Internet photo so no history of when this knife was bought or from whom. Note: we are not disparaging this knife – if might be a fine, useful knife, we are simply observing that it is probably not be a true first-generation, highly collectable Titusville Cutlery knife.)

There are several elements of the knife in Figure 8, that suggest it might have been made in the factory, including tang on the blade, handle material, top bolster, and box, but it does not have the fit and finish, the details, of an original first-generation Titusville Cutlery knife. It might suggest “inventory clean-up” that might have gone on as the factory faced bankruptcy, or perhaps a “parts knife” from someone who wisely bought a set of items together after Queen resources were sold at auction.

So, Titusville Cutlery knives, first generation are an attractive high-quality knife, produced in low numbers, at the end of Queen's relationship with Servotronics by a man who knew knives, was highly respected by his peers, and knew how to insist on quality work from a knife company. But, that does not mean every knife has that provenance. Collectors should be aware and study knives before purchase.

## References

[Lynn Carroll Watkins Obituary, \(12-29-2021\), Knoxville News Sentinel \(knoxnews.com\)](#)

“Sunburst”, Fri, Feb 15, 2008 1:35 am [Titusville Cutlery Co. Pennsylvania - All About Pocket Knives](#) This post was also the source of both Cotton Kings photos used in the text.

Watkins, Anthony, (2022) Personal communication.

Zalesky, Mark, (6-6 2022) Eulogy for Lynn Watkins, [Knife Magazine](#)