

iKnife Collector
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Topic: Schrade Cutlery Company
March 14, 2012

Schrade Cutlery Co.

The Schrade brothers, Louis, William and George, incorporated Schrade Cutlery Company in 1904. As former employees of Walden Knife Company, the brothers were well indoctrinated in the cutlery business and began their own venture in a building about 2,000 square feet in size. The primary goal was, at first, to produce and market the Press Button Knife that had been invented by George a dozen years earlier. George left the growing company in 1910 to pursue other ventures, ultimately forming the George Schrade Knife co. in 1929.

Upon his departure, Louis Schrade filled the office of president left vacant by George. The new leader took immediate steps to revolutionize his factory for mass production. In 1915, Schrade purchased the Walden Cutlery Handle Company. This company had been formed by the Schrade brothers' company in cooperation with two other New York cutlery firms, New York Knife Company and Walden Knife Company. A second factory in Middletown, New York, was established in 1918 and managed by Joseph Schrade, another brother. This branch was closed in 1932 as a result of the Great Depression, but the parent company would continue to survive and produce knives of superb quality. Its capacity for producing large quantities of quality knives would stand in good stead for the business brought by government contracts during World War II.

Schrade Cutlery Company remained under the ownership and leadership of the Schrade family until 1947, when the brothers Henry and Albert Baer of Ulster Knife Company bought the company. The company's name and knife stampings were changed at that time to read Schrade-Walden. Ten years later, production of the company's knives was moved to Ellenville, New York. Although the Walden factory was closed, most of the employees remained with the company and many of them were transported daily by bus from Walden to Ellenville.

In 1984 the Imperial Knife Company, also owned by the Baer family, was merged with Schrade-Walden to form the Imperial-Schrade Corporation. After a full century of cutlery production, Imperial-Schrade suddenly closed its doors in 2004 and the company's assets were dispersed. Among the items sold was an extensive "factory collection" of knives which included many beautiful, pristine examples and unusual prototypes that were never produced for sale. Ironically, Schrade's closure and the subsequent sale of the factory collection has done much to raise awareness of the brand among collectors, and interest in vintage Schrade knives is now at an all-time high.

It's almost cutlery tradition that a good brand survives, and that's the case with Schrade as well. Schrade, Schrade-Walden, and related trademarks are now owned by Taylor Cutlery of Kingsport, Tennessee, which carries on the Schrade tradition of fairly priced traditional working knives with a line of the company's old patterns imported from China, as well as higher quality American made knives.

Schrade's earliest knife stampings is the rarest to be found. Used at the time of the company's founding, it is SCHRADE CUTCO. WALDEN, N.Y. GERMANY and it dates to about 1904. The next marking was SCHRADE CUT CO, in an arch over WALDEN, N.Y. in a straight line. Although no records can be found showing how long this marking was used, it is believed to have been up until the World War I era. The straight-line "Schrade Cut Co." marking was adopted after World War I and was used until 1947 when the company was sold. Markings reading SCHRADE WALDEN were then used until 1973, when they were changed to SCHRADE NY USA or SCHRADE USA, both accompanied by the knife's pattern number. Many other marking variations were used from the early 1970's until 1994 on contract knives and for special limited edition sold by Schrade, such as SW CUT USA.

Among Schrade's famous brand names were and are OLD TIMER, introduced in 1958 for carbon steel bladed knives, and UNCLE HENRY, used on stainless steel knives since 1965 and named for Henry Baer.

Through the years, Schrade has used practically every popular handle material on its knives. The favorite for collectors, however, has been bone and other natural materials. Bone handles used during the 1920-1965 era are commonly referred to as "peach seed bone," due to the material's resemblance to a dried and cut peach seed, and are especially favored. This bone, usually dyed a medium tan to brown color, was made for Schrade by the Rogers Manufacturing Company until its factory burned in 1961. The company made very few bone handled knives after that. Even though peach seed bone has a distinctive appeal all its own, knives made by Schrade and handled in red bone and smooth tan bone are considered by collectors to be much rarer.

From the mid-1960s to 1978, Schrade did not produce any bone-handled knives, but used Delrin or man-made materials instead. In 1978, several different bone handled knives were produced on contract for Parker-frost Cutlery Company. Approximately 6,000 knives were produced in each of green, red and brown bone and these knives were stamped "Schrade" on the rear tang. In 1983, Schrade's own knives handled in genuine bone were reintroduced in the company's "Heritage" series. By the mid-1980s, these knives were dropped from the Schrade line.

In addition to its own extensive line, Schrade manufactured knives under contract for a large number of other companies during its century long existence. These included several major hardware distributing firms such as Shapleigh Hardware

and Hibbard Spencer and Bartlett as well as other establishments desiring their own line of private branded cutlery such as Coast Cutlery, L.L. Bean, and Buck Knives, as well as the before mentioned Parker Frost Cutlery.

Schrade also was a major producer of commemorative knives and played a major role in building the popularity of commemoratives during the “early days” of the 1970s. They were produced by the thousands, but with special issue such as The Minuteman, Paul Revere, Liberty Bell, Jim Bowie, Will Rogers, Service Series, Buffalo Bill, and Custer’s Last Fight found homes with many would-be knife collectors. While the company’s aim was profitable sales and collectors were a means to that end, its activities proved a benefit to the collector movement, as the general public was made aware of limited-edition knives as collectibles. Because of the number produced, 18,000 to 24,000, most of those knives sold over thirty years ago are valued in the collector market at prices only slightly higher than their retail price at issue.

This listing of Schrade knives consists of those produced from 1904 to 1947, stamped “Schrade Cutlery Co., Walden, N.Y.” Many hundreds of patterns were produced by this large pocketknife manufacture. The serious collector of Schrade Cutlery knives will want to locate a copy of the reprinted Catalog E and Supplements (now out of print), which pictures and describes knives made during the late 1920s to the mid 1930s, and is of great benefit.

During the era of the Schrade-Walden stamping, 1948 to 1973, a good share of knives produced was patterned and produced just as their predecessor were. Although a three-digit numbering system was adapted, the number of many of those early knives was taken from the Schrade Cut era. Knives produced during the first ten years of this period are becoming popular with collectors as the Schrade Cuts and, in general their values are at least 80% of those of older knives.

When Schrade’s knife production moved in 1957 from the Walden factory to the Ulster factory in Ellenville, construction changes included a switch from bone to Delrin and to different blade finishes. Knives produced during this later portion of the Schrade-Walden era are generally worth less than half that of knives from the early Schrade-Walden era.

Schrade Cutlery Pattern Numbers

The number of blades is denoted by the first number as follows:

1 – represents a one-blade knife

2 – represents a two-blade knife with both blades in one end

3 – represents a three-blade knife with all three blades in one end

7 – represents a two-blade knife with a blade in each end

8 – represents a three-blade knife with two blades in one end and one blade in the other.

9 – represents a four-blade knife with two blades in each end

The second and third digits of the knife number indicate the handle die or pattern. An example would be 2013 with the second 01 indicating the Easy Open pattern. Knives in the following are arranged by number of blades, and secondly by handle die number. The fourth digit indicates the kind of handle material used.

1 – Cocobolo

2 – Ebony

3 – Bone Stag

4 – Celluloid (Pyralin)

5 – White Bone

6 –Mother of Pearl

7 – Dyed Smooth Bone

8 – Buffalo Horn

9 – Miscellaneous

The type or color of celluloid handles is indicated by a letter code after the fourth digit (always “4”) as follows:

AC – Assorted Colors

AP – Abalone Pearl

B – Black

BLUE – Blue Pearl

BP – Black Pearl

BRNZ – Bronze

C – Cocobolo

GL – Goldaleur

GP – Golden Pearl

G – Green Pearl

H – Black & White Stripe

HORN – Horn

J – Red, White & Amber Striped

K – Brown Lined Cream

M – Marine Pearl

MB – Mottled Blue

MR – Mottled Red

O – Onyx

P – Smoked Pearl

PP – Persian Pearl

S – Tortoise Shell

US – Red, White & Blue Striped

W – Imitation Ivory

X – Mottled Green

Miscellaneous handled materials are indicated by a letter code after the figure “9” as follows:

BR – Solid Brass

GM – Gunmetal

GOLD – 12-Karat Gold Plate

GS – Genuine Stag

GSIL – Nickel Silver

SS – Sterling Silver

A fraction at the end of a number indicates the kind of blade substituted for a spear blade as follows:

$\frac{1}{4}$ - Spey

$\frac{1}{2}$ - Sheepfoot

$\frac{3}{4}$ - Clip

7/8 – Razor Point

Other Designations include:

T – After the pattern number indicates tip bolsters

S – Before the pattern number indicates a special combination or finish

SS – Before the pattern number indicates stainless steel blades and back springs

B – Before the pattern number indicates a knife with brass liners that was usually made with steel liners

F – Before the pattern number indicates a knife with nail file blade that was usually made with cutting blades.

LB – After the pattern number indicates the substitution of a punch blade.

Ch – After the pattern number indicates a knife with chain

Sha – After the pattern number indicates a shackle (bail) on knife end

Emb – After the pattern number indicates an emblem on handle