Spotting a Fake Knights Cross

Most of the fake Knights Crosses that have inundated the collection world since the end of World War II are easily identified, even ones from the most important dealers and covered in “authoritative books” on the subject. The frames of all original crosses were stamped out of silver. When the cast-iron cores were placed between these frames, they were silver-soldered together, the edges carefully rounded and polished. The flat rims were then polished and lacquered to prevent tarnishing and the beaded edges chemically frosted.

The picture above is of an original wartime decoration. Note the smoothness of the finish at the soldered joint.

The picture below shows a typical fake piece.

The solder used to put the frames together contains lead and while this can indeed be polished, in time, it always oxidizes so that a thin black line is visible. Also note the crude filing to the flat (not rounded as in the originals) edge. This raw appearance was most typical in earlier fakes but even the later dealer-corrected" ones still have the thin black solder line. No original decoration, and there were about 7,000 actually issued during the war, had such markings.

As soon as it became general knowledge that the so-called “low swastika” on the center denoted a post-war fake, the dealers had new centers made with much higher and sharper edged swastikas. Unfortunately, casting iron centers was rarely done so we have what appear to be old pieces but with copper, zinc, brass or other metal centers. It is true that some of these were contract-support pieces made during the period by companies competing for contracts and for a brief time, these could be privately purchased by the decoration’s actual holders from military effects shops but this practice was soon forbidden. The large number of non-magnetic centers now in collections is not reflected by period production documentation.

At the very most, there were no more than a hundred genuine pre-production patterns in period existence.