

California Antique Slots, Inc. - (805) 583-0785 (FAX)

www.california-antique-slots.com

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How to Spot a Fake, Counterfeit, or Reproduction Mechanical Slot Machine

The following slot machines have been reproduced and sold as the originals. This list is **NOT** complete. If any reader has suggestions and input, please email them to the above email address.

Fey Three Jacks
Mills Golden Falls
Mills Silver Palace
Mills Roman Head
Mills Silent War Eagle (made from a Mills High Top)
Mills Golden Nugget
Mills Castle Front
Mills Bursting Cherry (Brown Front)
Mills Wolf Head (Lion Head)
Mills High Top
Watling Treasury (made from the Watling Blue Seal)
Watling Rol-A-Top

How to spot a fake mechanical slot machine from the 1930s. Look for the following in the slot machine you wish to purchase. Question the authenticity of this machine if it has one or more of these attributes. Use an excellent light source and take your time (if you are permitted to do so by the dealer/seller. Do not buy anything in a hurry if you feel pressured.) The dealer/seller should have no problem allowing you to open the machine to inspect the interior. He/she should be able to answer all, or most, of your questions. By the way, a "guaranteed jackpot" stamped on a slot machine meant the house paid the jackpot. The house guaranteed these winnings, the machine did not.

If you feel you **have been** rushed, stop the sale! If you are unsure about any part of the slot machine, DO NOT buy it. Use this list to "check off" as you go through any slot machine.

Please use CAUTION, CAUTION, CAUTION when making any slot machine purchase via online "auction sites", estate sales, garage sales, etc.

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Online Purchases

In a word: don't. Don't purchase a slot machine online. It is difficult to trust the seller's information, description, and photographs. While we feel that many sellers are honest with their products, we stand by a simple rule. For you to feel comfortable with the purchase of a slot machine you must see it, touch it, play it and ask questions. That's it.

Most people do not know how to properly ship a slot machine. Insist that the machine be taken apart (separate reel assembly, coin overflow box, hopper, belly glass, back, bonnet, or any other parts.)

However, there is at least one advantage if you do decide to purchase an antique slot machine from an online seller and the sale sours. You can always point out that since you and the machine never met, then it was never personally inspected by you prior to the sale.

Insist on clear, sharp, color, and well-lit photographs of the interior, exterior and bottom. Ask for photos of the casing interior and the mechanism.

Insist on a video with sound showing the machine being coined, its kickoff mode, indexing, and resetting for the next coin. Listen for any unusual sounds (squeals, chattering, broken springs, grinding, etc.)

Antique slot machines can be misrepresented. It is possible that the seller may be selling a machine they are unfamiliar with. It is also possible that the machine may be a reproduction if the photos look "too good to be true."

Good luck with your purchase.

Grading Specification

The following is an abridged description of the various grades, the first paragraph is an abstract; a more thorough definition follows - (Reprinted with permission from the wife of the author, Nora Mead, the late Daniel Mead of Loose Change Blue Book for Slot Machines, Fourth Edition, 1997 - 1998.)

Mechanism

Mechanism shall consist of any working parts, including basic mechanism, reel assembly, payout system, jackpot mechanism/payout system, vender mechanism, escalator/coin-handling assembly and handle assembly/linkage.

Case

Case shall consist of the enclosure, including all hardware.

Insignificant Parts

Parts such as, but not limited to, handle pump components, miscellaneous springs and anti-cheating parts, double coin or slug rejection parts or coin return mechanism parts. Generally, components such as these are easily replaced parts not absolutely essential for the normal home operation of the machine.

How Slot Machines are Graded

Grade 1

This grade represents the absolute top of the line in terms of physical condition. Grade 1 machines are either brand new out of the crate, or in excellent, virtually unused condition, both inside and out. Whole reproductions, and machines which have been either partially or wholly restored, are **never** assigned a Grade 1 value.

By definition, the parameters of Grade 1 are narrow. This top level of physical condition is already fairly exclusive and becoming more restricted as time passes. Only a few select examples will qualify for inclusion at this level. A Grade 1 machine will look as if it had just been uncrated - brand new, original or in excellent and practically unused condition.

Even casual visual observation will be enough to make the determination of inclusion or exclusion from the Grade 1 rating. There will be no signs of wear. The exterior will be free of blemishes, defects or flaws (chipping, cracking, pitting, weathering, warping, etc.). It will be mint condition as [though it was] shipped from the factory. All exterior castings must be the original size and shape provided by the manufacturer, with no replacements, additions or deletions; and all exterior components must be secure, with nothing loose, missing or replaced.

The same holds true for the mechanism of the Grade 1 slot machine. Everything works, everything is in place, there are no signs of wear, and nothing has been replaced with a reproduced counterpart. The mechanism must be in working order, fully adjusted and timed for perfect operation. It goes without saying, the mechanism and case for Grade 1 machines must be the ones the original manufacturer combined in the factory prior to shipment. No missing combinations of case and mechanism qualify for inclusion in the Grade 1 classification.

Oil and grease will be newly applied; and fresh. It will not be old, dried, cracked, gummy or blocking any rotation of bearings (stud rollers). Levers will function flawlessly. Reels 1, 2 and 3 will rotate, index and stop with audible clicking. Payout slides will have a crisp "snap" and deliver any payouts/jackpots with a sharp sound of metal and clinking of coins into the tray. (These highlighted thoughts are additional written observations made by CA ANT SLOTS, Inc.)

Grade 2

This grade represents the second level of quality and includes two different classes of machines. Grade 2 machines are those in excellent to very good condition, inside and out, with no parts missing and only minor wear on the mechanism. This grade also includes machines that have undergone quality restoration to reinstate them to an excellent facsimile of their original condition, inside and out.

To qualify for a Grade 2 rating, the machine in question must be in very good to excellent condition throughout. There must be no missing parts. The case must be in very good to excellent condition, or restored to excellent condition. Restoration of metal parts may be with paint, electroplating or a combination of both - per the original.

Grade 3

This grade represents machines in average physical condition, inside and out. It allows for a maximum of two (2) missing, insignificant mechanism parts not essential for normal home operation of the machine.

To qualify for a Grade 3 rating, the machine must be fairly clean throughout and the mechanism must be in good, average operating condition, or repaired to good operating condition. A maximum of two missing, insignificant parts is permitted, provided this does not prevent normal home operation of the machine. The machine case must be complete and in average condition. Recast replacement parts (not the entire case!) are allowed, but they must fit and look as though original.

Grade 4

This grade represents machines in fair operating condition and allows for a maximum of four (4) missing, insignificant parts not essential for normal home operation of the machine.

A Grade 4 classification allows for the mechanism to be very dirty, but in fair, operating condition. The reels must stop in sequence, and the payout must be correct. Frequent malfunctions are to be expected due mostly to dirt, gummy parts and lack of lubrication. Up to four missing, insignificant parts is permitted, provided that they do not prevent normal home operation of the mechanism. Jackpot must be complete but need not working perfectly.

Grade 5

This grade represents machines in very poor condition and barely operable, with up to six (6) missing insignificant mechanism parts not essential for normal home operation of the

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machine; or in the case of modern machines with video monitors and/or hoppers, the monitor and/or hopper must both be intact and operable.

At this level grading, the mechanism is extremely dirty, barely in operating condition and missing up to six parts not required for home operation. The case of the mechanism must either be complete or made complete with replacement parts. Up to 60% recast parts are allowed, but they must fit and look as though original. Numerous medium-sized dents, nicks and scratches are permissible in original castings. The back door need not be original, but it must fit properly and not be of inferior reproduction.

Reproduction machines are worthless!

Terms to Be Aware Of - Used By Slot Machine Restoration Services

Reassemble: to fit or join (something) together again. An item is taken completely apart and then reassembled with new, old or reconditioned parts.

Rebuild: to repair, especially to dismantle and reassemble with new parts: *to rebuild an old motorcycle.*

Recondition: to return (something) to good condition by repairing it, cleaning it, or replacing broken original parts with working original parts (not newly constructed/fabricated parts.)

Reconstruct: to rebuild with new parts.

Re-equip: to replenish (someone or something) with new supplies, equipment, etc.

Refabricate: to reconstruct with new parts.

Refinish: to remove the coating on the surface of (furniture, a floor, etc.) and put on a new coating, to put a new finish on (something).

Refurbish: to make neat, clean, or complete, as by renovating, re-equipping, or restoring.

Remanufacture: to refurbish (a used product) by renovating and reassembling its components with new ones: *to remanufacture a vacuum cleaner with new and used parts.*

Renovate: to restore to good condition; make new or as if new again; repair. This may involve using original parts or newly-made parts as substitutes for the missing or broken ones.

Repair: to restore to a good or sound condition after decay or damage; mend: *to repair a motor.*

Replicate: to make a copy of, or a reproduction of, an original item: *to replicate a pencil-drawn design.*

Reproduce: to make a copy, representation, duplicate, or close imitation of: *to reproduce a picture.*

Restore: to bring back to a former, original, or normal condition, as a building, statue, or painting with original parts, pieces, construction techniques, brush strokes, and fabrications.

Revamp: to patch up or renovate; repair or restore with old original and new parts and state-of-the-art techniques: *to revamp an old automobile with modern safety features.*

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Terms to Be Aware Of - Used By Slot Machine Restoration Services

Confused now? Please don't be! These are terms to remember when searching for an antique mechanical US-made slot machine to buy. Be careful when reading a sales description using any of these words by a slot dealer.

Be sure you are inspecting the machine at the time of reading of the dealer's description. Assure yourself that what you are purchasing has an honest assessment of its condition and playability. Educate yourself. Research the history of the machine in question.

A slot dealer in Southern California claims to "completely strip" a machine and rebuild it into another model. Or, he says, he will "convert" it from playing a dime to the point where it will now play a quarter. If you purchase such a machine, keep in mind it is NO LONGER an original, or the dedicated original as it came off the assembly line from the factory decades ago.

In our opinion, if original parts are used during the RESTORATION of a slot machine, then it is possible that the machine remains an antique. If the antique mechanical slot machine is "completely REBUILT", as [a slot mechanic in Southern California actually advertises on his website](#), then it is most likely a contemporary slot machine and IS NO LONGER AN ORIGINAL. Or, more importantly, it is a reproduction - an inferior machine - and is not worth any more than a few dollars.

Yes, we have seen such machines command several thousand dollars. People pay that amount because they want a slot machine, and are too willing to trust a supposed "expert". One must do his/her legwork to be sure the antique mechanical slot machine is legitimate.

At what percentage of new parts does this become true? We do not know. This may be for future courtroom litigation to decide. If a slot machine is RECONDITIONED, REPAIRED or RESTORED, it may still be an antique.

"Completely rebuilt" means to us that the slot machine ceases to be original, and it most likely is NOT legal to own in [certain states if it is less than 25 years old!](#) California Antique Slots, Inc. cannot offer legal advice regarding the legality of ownership of any slot machine.

Please seek out competent legal counsel before purchasing and shipping any slot machine to your home state for private use.

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Play the machine prior to purchasing it! This is obviously quite important.

There are several stages of operation for any mechanical machine:

1. Coining
2. Wind-up Cycle
3. Release
4. Unwind Cycle
5. Indexing
6. Payout

Listen for five (5) clicks or noises **EVENLY SPACED** time-wise:

1. Reel Number 1 (left reel) comes to a stop.
2. Reel Number 2 (center reel) comes to a stop.
3. Reel Number 3 (right reel) comes to a stop.
4. Vertical payout pushback lever releases the vertical payout levers.
5. Payout slides reset.

If any one of these audible motions **DOES NOT** occur, the machine is jammed. A coin (especially a small, thin coin like a dime) can be wedged in: the clock fan, escalator, payout slides, payout tube, other levers, other coins.

If you decide to remove the jam, follow these directions:

- a. Open the back of the slot machine.
- b. Remove the bonnet.
- c. Lift the friction tabs and undo the thumbscrew/bolt (if one is present) holding the mechanism to the casing.
- d. Slide the mechanism out of the casing and place it on an old towel (to absorb grease, oils, etc.)
- e. Examine each section where the jam may have occurred (click the links below for additional photos; these show a Mills High Top, but there should be enough information nonetheless to assist you.) Call us to help you walk through the diagrams while you are standing next to your machine.

[Mechanical Slot Machine Photo Reference \(Part One\)](#)

[Mechanical Slot Machine Photo Reference \(Part Two\)](#)



Slot Talk

A Series Spotlighting
Contemporary Collectible Slot Machines

Restored, Reproduced and Remanufactured Slot Machines

by Brian J. Kearney

AS PRICES for antique slot machines increase, so does the concern over "look-alike" machines. These so-called "remanufactured" slot machines are usually very accurate reproductions, and are often indistinguishable from the genuine article.

Machines most often reproduced have characteristic fronts such as the Mills SILENT "War Eagle" and "Bursting Cherry," and the Watling TREASURY. And, although not a single part may be original, they command prices that often rival the copied antique.

This is not to suggest remanufacturers blatantly misrepresent their machines as original, that is, sell counterfeit machines. Most dealers identify their machines—although not often clearly—as reproductions. But look-alikes can be mistaken for antiques, especially after the machine passes from one collector to another.

Complicating the issue are "restored" machines—originals that have been repaired, rebuilt and otherwise renovated to a better or like-new condi-

tion. The *degree* of restoration creates the gray area: How many new parts can you replace before a machine passes from "original" to "reproduction?"

There probably isn't a definitive answer. Purists wouldn't allow any replacement parts to shade a machine's heritage. But the state of California is more forgiving: Its slot machine ownership law uses a "two-thirds" guideline in determining the originality of slot machines; that is, two-thirds of a

them apart.

Restyled Machines

These are slot machines that have been either built or modified to look like a popular antique or collectible slot machine. They generally fall into two categories: remanufactured machines and counterfeits.

Remanufactured machines ordinarily consist of relatively late-model workhorse mechanisms which are retrofitted with new castings to give the machines a more attractive appearance than they had originally. The so called "Golden Nugget" slots are an excellent example. In fact some of the "styles" of "Golden Nugget" machines never existed at the Golden Nugget [the famous casino in downtown Las Vegas].

In some cases the machine is completely built from the ground up with all-new remanufactured parts.

Remanufacturing is usually done openly, so the buyer is aware of the machine's status and the origin of the parts. They are seldom sold with the intention of deceiving or misleading buyers.

These so-called remanufactured slot machines are usually very accurate reproductions and are often indistinguishable from the genuine article

machine's exterior metal casing components must be original in determining a machine's vintage. Ironically, the date of manufacture or manufacturer of the insides is irrelevant.

Following is a breakdown on the types of machines commonly offered for sale, and a few guidelines for telling

However, the manufacturer is not always as forthright as he should be. One company uses the following advertising copy for its line of look-alikes built with new parts: ". . . are completely remanufactured to 'as new' condition. This requires that the machine be stripped down, cleaned, replated, and worn parts replaced with old 'new' parts or with newly remanufactured parts. The oak cabinet sides and base are newly crafted and hand finished in a medium dark stain. The new castings are chrome or brass plated and finished in either imeron or another type of automotive paint."

Now, depending upon the sophistication of the reader, this could be entirely misinterpreted as an ad for a restored machine, so it's important that the buyer ask questions if it is unclear what the remanufacturer is selling.

In its simple form, remanufacturing is comparable to revamping, which was practiced many years ago. Machines that are completely remanufactured are comparable to a kit car, thus offering the buyer a cheaper and more dependable alternative to a genuine antique. There will always be the collector of the rare, original and one-of-a-kind, but with the scarcity of antique machines, there is plenty of room for the wage earner who is simply looking for a toy, a machine with good looks and dependable performance at a relatively low price.

Before a remanufactured slot machine is purchased, two things should be kept in mind. First, machines that are completely original are more likely to appreciate in value over the years. Second, machines having too many replacement parts, especially case parts, may not qualify legally as antiques under some states' collectible laws, making them contraband. If this is disturbing, check with local authorities in your state.

Counterfeit Machines

Counterfeit slot machines are copies of relatively rare and desirable machines which are fraudulently sold as the genuine article. Counterfeiting of slot machines is of very serious concern to every buyer and to the collecting

community in general. Some counterfeit machines have been produced from relatively common machines by installing new castings and/or other cabinet parts to give an appearance nearly identical to more expensive models.

Sizable numbers of relatively plentiful Mills "High Top" slot machines, for example, have been turned into counterfeit "War Eagle" replicas in this manner. In other instances, counterfeit copies of vintage machines have been built using all new parts. Unfortu-

Most counterfeit machines are distinguishable from the genuine article if the two can be inspected side by side, but this isn't usually possible when a machine is being offered for sale.

nately, many unsuspecting buyers have paid premium prices for counterfeit slot machines only to find out later that they had been victimized. The two machines most often counterfeited in the past have been the Mills SILENT "War Eagle," the "Lion Front" and the Watling TREASURY. There are others, of course, and counterfeits are known to exist even among some of the early cast iron and color-wheel floor machines. In any case, caution is the byword. One can only speculate about which machines may become the darlings of future counterfeiters.

Original Mills machines have "MLB" cast or stamped on their parts, which stands for "Mills Liberty Bell."

Telling The Difference

Most counterfeit machines are distinguishable from the genuine article if the two can be inspected side by side, but this isn't usually possible when a machine is being offered for sale. Buyers should always carefully inspect any machine being considered for purchase, inside and out.

Make sure that everything fits to-

gether properly. Poorly-fitting castings may be neither old nor original. Any casting that appears *smaller* than it should be is immediately suspect.

Back doors are frequently a tip-off for originality. The most common back doors on antique slot machines are of embossed, pressed steel, although some machines such as the models preceding the Jennings CHIEF, were built with cast aluminum doors. Wooden back doors were also used on certain early slot machines, mainly on models manufactured prior to the mid 1920s.


Replacement doors are usually made of thinner steel stock and usually don't fit as well. Practically all original steel slot machine doors also have raised areas or patterns impressed into their surface (requiring huge metal stamping presses); to date,

replacement doors lack this kind of detail.

When examining the interior mechanism, the inner surfaces of castings should be scrutinized. While quality of any new castings fabricated for replacement can vary a great deal, most will have been made by a sand-casting process. This typically leaves a rather irregular interior surface and telltale lumpy areas where sand has broken away during the casting process. Such signs will usually be found near corners or in regions containing sharp angles.

Original slot machines were manufactured by a molding technique that many times did not use sand, so any evidence that sand was present when a casting was poured is an indication that the casting may not be original. Also, replacement castings often require extensive filing or machining of inner surfaces to make them fit. If you see these file marks or deep scratches it's a good bet that the casting involved is not original.

Paper, decals or other identifying information may or may not be helpful inside the machine. Many paper items have been reprinted so their authenticity inside the machine is not always assured.

Original Mills machines have "MLB" cast or stamped on their parts, which stands for "Mills Liberty Bell." But don't automatically feel secure if you sight the initials. Counterfeiters know how to spell as well. 

It is possibly a **FAKE or COUNTERFEIT** slot machine if it has/is:

- Been reconditioned to what the dealer/seller claims to be in "Grade 1" status (**no mechanical slot machine exists today that can have that distinction; unless there is buried in a warehouse somewhere in Chicago near the waterfront a slot machine in its original box and packing - these would also be worth something, in addition to the slot machine!**)
- Been rebuilt with all new parts made with so-called "original dies" from the manufacturer (**it's still a reproduction machine!**)
- Been rebuilt with all new parts of unknown origin (**DO NOT purchase this machine**)
- A reproduction claimed to be in "Grade 1" status (**reproduction slot machines are inferior, there is no such thing as a "new", antique slot machine**)
- A machine where the dealer/seller knows absolutely nothing about it (**careful! this could be a very good find**)
- No warranty (**ask the dealer/seller if it is possible to bring the machine back after discovering problems, or you are not satisfied**)
- A very high restocking fee (**to prevent you from ever thinking of returning the machine**)
- A machine where the dealer/seller will not allow you to inspect it or play it (**this should set off all sorts of "red" flags for you!**)
- A machine that is completely non-functioning (**a set decoration or prop**)
- A machine made of many different original parts consolidated from different slot machines from the same manufacturer and passed off as an "original" (**this is a tough one to verify; an astute professional slot mechanic can tell after a very careful examination**)

- A machine that is not a "*dedicated original*" (again, similar to the preceding item, this machine was made in the US factory with nothing added or taken away from it in later years - every piece aged/worn in a similar fashion - all parts present are what came off the assembly line down to the last screw, spring, nut, bolt, cotter pin, base, casing and finish)
- A machine made of mostly new parts and a few very minor original parts (**DO NOT PURCHASE** such a machine, especially if there is a sticker inside the machine stating this "mix" of old/new parts is "**certified genuine**")
- An overall look of crude workmanship (**a genuine antique slot machine still looks GOOD after all these years**)
- No natural wear around the coin entry
- A machine where both inside and outside components do not "fit" together properly
- A machine where poorly-fitting castings may be neither old nor original (**walk away if this is the case!**)
- A machine where any casting appears smaller than it should (**inspect the inside mechanism very carefully!**)
- A machine where file marks and deep scratches exist on inner surfaces of cast pieces (**this would indicate extensive filing to make the pieces "fit"**)
- Everything in a given area on the mechanism has exactly the same color and metallic luster (**it probably is a coat of aluminum spray covering extensive rust; walk away from this machine**)
- A machine that needs to be plugged into a wall outlet (**a very select few true mechanicals had a candle, bell or lights fitted by the casino they were used in; later models had a motorized hopper, stepper switches and relays allowing for multiple coin entry - these were ELECTROMECHANICAL machines**)

- A lack of natural wear and tear to the cabinet exterior (**some machines get a complete and magnificent makeover; ask to see high resolution before and after photos, however, the machine should still look OLD**)
- No Formica sides (**look especially carefully on the Mills machines**)
- A machine that does not have vertical steel plates (armor) on the inside wooden walls
- A quarter machine (**almost all 1930s slot machines used nickels, quarter models were made later**)
- Extremely new castings: base, levers, etc., (**real slot machines look old because they ARE old, having many decades of use**)
- A metal base with no tapped holes for other hardware (**many different slot machines had some drilled holes in the bases used for other features**)
- A brand new wooden base (**no nails in the front base**)
- A brand new metal door that is smooth to the touch
- A brand new door on a genuine antique mechanical slot machine (**be careful here; sometimes, the original door is missing - hence, a 'new' door is made for the machine in question**)
- An original door on a reproduction machine (**this simply will not happen, why would a slot restoration 'expert' go to such trouble of using an original door for the back of an inferior reproduction machine?**)
- A door with sharp edges
- A door that is not heavy gauge metal
- No original key with a dimple cut (**actual Mills keys are nearly impossible to reproduce**)
- No original lock (**a real lock will have "Made-in-USA" or "Chicago" stamped on it**)

- A stainless steel lock (an original lock is made of brass and is held onto the frame with several brass screws mounted into tapped holes)
- A mechanism that is extremely clean/new (real ones are sometimes bead-blasted clean, however)
- No horizontal check detector lever
- No vertical check detector lever assembly
- No serial numbers on: the bonnet, the base, on or near the escalator, or the operating fork
- A new sticker on the outside cabinet (brand stickers are just a few dollars apiece, they mean very little)
- A single cherry payout (legitimate machines of the 1930s paid on two cherries)
- Payout slides that are plastic or steel (real ones are brass)
- A low price for a "quick sale" (too good to be true?)
- A high price to sound legitimate (a true mechanical slot machine commands thousands of dollars; inspect this supposed-antique machine very carefully)
- Claimed by the dealer/seller that "many other buyers are ready and willing to pay much more" (buy now, now, now!)
- A nonfunctioning jackpot assembly; it is simply a window holding coins (exception: early jackpot assemblies by Wesco Specialty Company, Rockola, Roberts Novelty Company, and Hoke are considered rare and EXTRAORDINARY)
- A missing jackpot assembly (nearly all real machines had a jackpot, some Nevada retired machines DID NOT; jackpots were hand-paid back then)
- Missing the trip levers protruding from the mechanism, near the payout slides, to trigger the jackpot assembly (look to see that the jackpot can be won during the maximum award payout)

- Two very small coin trays (**one coin tray should be much larger**)
- A silkscreened award table (**authentic pay tables are stamped, your fingers will feel the indentations**)
- A missing tapped bolt hole for a thumbscrew (**this holds the mechanism to the casing**)
- A missing coin box
- A plastic coin box
- A coin box without a hinged, spring trap door (**some early slot machines had an open metal box, however**)
- Reel strips that look brand new
- Reel strips made from thin-gauge metal
- Reel strips that are poorly-made photocopies (**real ones are thick paper with the symbols printed on them in color; there is a code number on each strip designating its location on each reel**)
- Reel strips with mismatched code numbers (**all three should match each other, left/center/right; these are printed at the end of each strip**)
- Reel strips that have completely incorrect symbols **and** that do not match the pay table
- Reel strips that have hand-drawn symbols (**yes, this has happened as well**)
- Reels that have been removed and replaced incorrectly (**there may be payouts when mismatched symbols occur, stop the clock fan, and physically rotate the reels to line up the drilled holes in each disc/plate for the vertical payout levers to verify wins and pay table**)
- A "slot machine" that accepts any size denomination coin

- No payouts when there is a winning combination after the reels properly index (**however, it still may be a genuine mechanical slot machine where a coin is jammed in the payout tube, slides, etc., preventing other coins from exiting**)
- A foreign machine with a "Genuine Mills" sticker on it (**or another manufacturer**)
- A foreign machine with the claim by the dealer/seller that it is a genuine Buckley, Watling, Pace, Caille (the Holy Grail of slot machines), Jennings, or Bally
- A Pachinko game being passed off as a slot machine (**Pachinko games use ball bearings tumbling through a maze of spikes within a glass enclosure sent by the user hand-operating a spring-loaded handle, they are not slot machines**)
- A slot machine that accepts foreign coins (**be careful, some early slot machines were indeed made for foreign markets such as a Mills Black Cherry playing an English sixpence coin; study the rest of the mechanism very carefully**)
- No signs of obvious wear and tear to the underside of the metal base
- Missing the safety slide lever assembly (**check the underside of the base of the mechanism after it is removed from the casing, carefully lean the mechanism over**)
- A thin, flimsy wire holding the "tilt" door open, under the base of the mechanism
- No safety slide door on the underside of the base of the mechanism (**take the machine out of the casing, turn the mechanism over to verify**)
- No nail holes in the base in front (**a real Mills slot will have two nails holding the wooden base together**)
- Two decorative "tacks" in the base in front (**staples, really, to attempt to show some legitimacy**)

- No certificate of authenticity (a legitimate slot dealer will have one for the machine you purchase, insist on it)
- Putty that is used to fill inferior castings
- Metal castings that appear to have been burnished smooth (using a rotary tool and brush)
- Metal filings in/on the mechanism that show possible drilling of the original lock (most likely, the original key was lost, hence the lock was drilled out using a high-speed drill and a clumsy, jagged cobalt drill bit)
- A new lock that is a utility or cabinet grade lock (unlike the security locks the real machines used)
- Missing a lock (a hole is where the lock should be)
- No wrinkle finish on cabinet door
- Been "converted" from its original denomination to another, and passed off as an original (originally say, the machine was a dime or nickel machine, then it was "made" to play a quarter, as a slot "repair" person in California writes: [he is known] worldwide from [sic] converting nickel, and dime machines to [play a] quarter)
- Been "converted" from a Mills High Top into a "Golden Nugget" and passed off as an original Golden Nugget (look carefully at the award card, coin entry, mechanism and the escalator)
- Been "stripped" of everything from the front and interior and converted into an entirely different slot machine and passed off as an original (again, look carefully at the machine's interior, ask for original paperwork)
- Been restored to a condition the slot owner says that "looks and plays better than new" (what does this even mean?)
- Missing a door (a thin, wood panel covers the interior mechanism; careful! this machine may be a good find!)

- Plexiglas that is used in the windows (**real glass is used in slot machines, 3/16 to 1/4 inch for jackpot windows, 1/8 inch in escalator windows**)
- A handle that is either too loose or too tight
- A handle that is incorrect for the time period (**a 30s machine will have a handle that is "staggered", it appears to have a bend in it to allow the player's knuckles on his/her right hand to clear the machine's right side during the pull - a reproduction machine will almost always have a straight handle**)
- The entire contents of the jackpot "dump" out when the mechanism is removed from the casing (**generally, in a real slot machine, this does not happen, but it can if the jackpot release lever is triggered by the horizontal movement**)
- Sand-casting-processed metals with very rough surfaces
- Telltale lumpy areas where sand has broken away during the casting process to make a part or parts (**especially in areas with sharp angles or regions with corners**)
- No original old paper slips attached to the inside walls of the cabinet showing a serial number, inspector number or date (**be careful, sometimes photocopies are used!**)
- Nails inserted in locations where cotter pins should be (**inspect levers and pivot points carefully**)
- Spray paint to cover rust and corrosion
- The gold award window painted over and plugged
- The escalator teeth that have been "chopped"; that is, the teeth have been cut off so the coins now touch each other (**a Mills escalator has the coins separated by a space, they NEVER touch one another**)

- An escalator with non-moving coins (**very cheaply-made reproduction machines sometimes have coins "glued" to the inside of the glass, any coins played completely bypass this "escalator" and go to the payout tube**)
- Missing the pneumatic pump assembly (**in an authentic mechanical slot machine, it is located under the mechanism in a compartment by itself and is attached to the handle with levers**)
- A "dummy" pneumatic pump assembly (**that is, it is just a block of metal merely attached to the frame, there are no levers**)
- Mismatched paint colors on inside and outside surfaces (**on both the casing and the mechanism**)
- Been spray-painted to hide cracks or broken hardware (**inspect the frame of the mechanism and the integrity of the casing carefully**)
- Stainless steel gears in the clock fan assembly (**the gears should be brass metal to minimize expansion/contraction during temperature changes**)
- Stainless steel clock fan "fins" (**the fan should be brass metal**)
- Missing weights on the clock fan fins (**the weights allow the fan to turn at a consistent rate during the play cycle**)
- A machine without any initials of the manufacturer cast or stamped on its parts (**i.e., MLB stands for "Mills Liberty Bell" - don't automatically feel secure if you see the initials or name of any brand...counterfeiters know how to spell as well!**)