



QueenCutleryGuide.com

John Henry Express Switchblades by Queen Cutlery

2-16 – 2022 Second Edition

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We say thank you and acknowledge Carl Bradshaw's contribution in adding the rare Tuna Valley and custom John Henry Express knives that we have now added to the end of this second edition article.

Introduction.

This article provides a brief history of the Express automatic knife made by Queen Cutlery in its last few years and the Master Cutler who developed the knife for Queen. The article concludes with a detailed listing of the versions of the John Henry knife that Queen produced as far as we know. It is the most complete listing of these factory-made knives to date, including handle materials, edition size (when documented), packaging and inserts, available at this time. This summary is based entirely on knives purchased directly from the manufacturer and a key distributor at the time the knife was being sold by Queen – no secondary or after-bankruptcy sales are included.

The story of the Express Knives

The Schatt & Morgan version of the Express knife was designed by Jeff Schley, Queen's last Master Cutler in 2016, using the pattern from Kabar's the "Grizzly automatic folding hunting knife." The original Grizzly was first developed in the 1920s for trappers who wore gloves and preferred the automatic opening feature while working in the cold and wet conditions for northern climates. These original knives are VERY collectable and among the largest early American-made automatic knives (5.25" closed). There are some very useful videos on YouTube to put Queen's version in context (Ted Benedict, 12-3-2012; Leroi Price, 5-13-2020).

Queen's design of this knife used the spring on the left-hand side of the blade. Bob Rebbec indicates that this does seem to make the knife, if

well-tuned, smoother to use, and more effective as a one-handed knife (LeRoi Price, YouTube video, 3-10-2019).

In their last two years of operation Queen produced, as far as we know, a total of 18 knives in both traditional and modern handle materials of this very large pattern. The knife was prominently featured on the cover of the company's last catalog in desert Ironwood (Figure 1). We are told that only the first knives produced (approximately 500) in this pattern had nickel silver liners, after that they were made with Brass liners.

They also used the mechanism that Schley refined to make a version of the Queen Mountainman folding knife. Which was more popular for pocket use, at 4.5" closed, and sold in many more versions (See Brian Guth and Dan Lago in the references for a future series of four articles for that knife).

Queen's John Henry knife was a prototype in the beginning (still in Jeff Schley's possession), and there were early versions that had difficulties and were never offered for sale. There were parts and seconds at the time the company closed its doors that were sold at the bankruptcy sale. So, there are some opportunities to find knives NOT made by Queen with skilled factory workers, but knives that have been made by others after the fact. As these knives continue to increase in sale price, we expect this article will be an important resource for future collectors making purchase decisions.

Jeffrey Schley Queen's Last Master Cutler.

An original of Queen Cutlery company press release in 2016 is no longer available, but a copy is included on Frank's Classic knives for your review and included below ([Schatt & Morgan - Frank's Classic Knives \(franksclassicknives.com\)](http://franksclassicknives.com)).

"Queen Cutlery Co. would like to introduce, Jeff Schley in 2016. Jeff was 46 years old at the time and has been married to his wife, Julie, for 24 years, and is the father of two sons, Blaine & Jeffrey Jr. As a Titusville, PA native he started his journey into the knife world right out of high school on October 1990, beginning in blade finishing with Queen. Management saw major potential, moving him to set-up in the grinding room right away. To allow him to understand the full complexity of the factory, they moved him to maintenance for 2 years while attending Harry T Kerr Center in the evenings for Electrical and Hydraulics. This gave him an extensive

knowledge of all the machines along with his knowledge of building a knife from start to finish. He became supervisor of both the grinding and blade finishing departments.

After 13 years at Queen, he transferred to Ontario Knife Company in Franklinville, NY, in 2003 by Servotronics management. There he began a 5-year stint supervising the press and forge rooms and then added Special Projects Manager and Tool and Die departments. Jeff's final years at Ontario Knife company, he became Supervisor of press, and forge, grinding, swedge, tempering, power coating, and handle rooms."

Though Jeff was very effective in improving the overall quality of their knives and he did bring new exciting designs to their line, like the Express series, Queen faced other difficulties and ceased operations just as 2018 began. Jeff Schley has continued making high-quality, small edition knives in Titusville for the Daniels Family Brands in the Tuna Valley and Napanoch lines (Rookie, 3-12-2021 Allaboutpocketknives.com). He is also available on Facebook for custom knives and occasionally can help collectors with repairs for Schatt and Morgan and Queen knives.



Figure 2. Jeff Schley, Queen Cutlery's Last Master Cutler who designed the Express John Henry Knife



Figure 1. Cover page of last Queen Cutlery catalog, 2017, showing John Henry Express in Desert Ironwood.

The following three figures, with associated small Excel files, show all 18 John Henry knives that we know were completed in the Queen factory.



Figure 3. Numbers 1-6, John Henry Express Knives

Number *	Handle Material	Edition	Liners	package **	Insert +
1	Red Acrylic	40		vinyl pouch	medium
2	Leopard Wood	50		vinyl pouch	medium
3	Walnut Wood	?		nylon pouch	large
4	Burlesque Stag	?		nylon pouch	large
5	Yellow smooth bone	?		nylon pouch	large
6	Black G10 or Black Micarta (same as #9)	50		vinyl pouch	large

* Number based on Figure 3-5, NOT on date of production

** Package – See Figures 6-7.

+ Insert – See Figure 8



Figure 4. Numbers 7 – 12, John Henry Express Knives

Number *	Handle Material	Edition	Liners	package **	Insert +
7	Brown Curly Maple	50	Nickel	Black Box	end label
8	Red Vein Micarta	?		nylon pouch	large
9	Black Micarta or Black G10 (like # 6)	50		nylon pouch	medium
10	Mammoth Ivory	5		nylon pouch	large
11	Moon Glow Micarta	7		nylon pouch	large
12	Chocolate Micarta	1		nylon pouch	large

* Number based on Figure 3-5, NOT on date of production.

** Package – See Figures 6 – 7.

+ Insert – See Figure 8



Figure 5. Numbers 13 – 18, John Henry Express Knives

Number *	Handle Material	Edition	Liners	package **	Insert +
13	Pearl Shockwood has Yellow tone	?	Nickel	Black Box	end label
14	Desert Ironwood	?	Nickel	Black Box	end label
15	Torched Stag	?		vinyl pouch	small
16	Red Schockwood	?		yinyl pouch	small
17	Green Vein Micarta	1		nylon pouch	large
18	Green smooth G10	25		vinyl pouch	medium

* Number based on Figure 3-5, NOT on date of production

** Package – See Figures 6-7.

+ Insert – See Figure 8



Figure 6. There are small differences in the blades used on the John Henry Express knives. These might be due to individual grinds used by the maker, or slight differences as the design of the knife was finalized. It is very clear that these differences were all made in the Titusville factory at the time of production.



Figure 7. Black Box used in earliest releases of Express John Henry Knives, showing end label with handle material.



Figure 8. Nylon pouch (left) and vinyl Pouch (right) used in later editions of Express John Henry Queen Cutlery Schatt & Morgan Knives. The vinyl was used second and the nylon third for these knives.



Figure 9. Insert cards used only in vinyl and nylon pouches for John Henry Express knives, showing three different sizes, small, medium, and large from front to back of image.

The package and insert materials above might help future collectors determine if a given knife is complete and factory-made.

Tuna Valley and Custom John Henry Express (#71EXP) made by the Queen Factory.



 CHUCK WARD photography

Figure 10. A Stag prototype of John Henry Express (#71 EXP) with a Damascus made by Devon Thomas and a Clip point blade, for Ken Daniels personal collection. Note Tuna Valley tang stamp. This knife sold for \$3000.00 in 2018. (Dealer's photograph.)




 CHUCK WARD *photography*

Figure 11. John Henry Express knives with Mammoth ivory handles and Devon Thomas Damascus Steel made for <<http://www.Kniferights.org>> auction in 2017, in an edition of 2 knives. Internet photo © Chuck Ward photography)



Figure 12. A John Henry Express (#71 EXP) custom knife completed in the Titusville Cutlery with Devon Thomas Damascus clip point blade and Pearl Shockwood handles, wearing a Tuna Valley tang stamp. This knife sold for \$3000.00. (© Carl Bradshaw).

There is also a custom Mountain Man Express (3EXP) that used the same Damascus and support to the idea that these were all made at the same time in the Titusville factory.

We are not confident of edition sizes and there still could be other handle materials made in the factory that we have not seen. This is a second edition article and we, of course, would like to hear of any additional John Henry Express knives that you can provide. Thank You!

References.

Benedict, Ted, [KA-BAR Grizzly Switchblade - Action and Overview - YouTube](#) 12-3-2012.

Brian Guth and Dan Lago (2021) Mountain Man Express switchblades by Queen Cutlery. Online at QueenCutleryguide.com (in process at this time).

Frank's Classic Knives (no date) Schatt & Morgan knives, FAQ: [Schatt & Morgan - Frank's Classic Knives \(franksclassicknives.com\)](#)

[How the KA-BAR GRIZZLY button automatic style knife is made by Bob Rebbec - YouTube](#) video by LeRoi Price, 5-13-2020

[KA-BAR GRIZZLY switchblade, and custom reproductions , by Bob Rebbec - YouTube](#) video by LeRoi Price, 3-10-2019

Rookie, March 12, 2021, Comment on Daniels Family Brands Knives, AllaboutPocket knives.com. Re: Napanoch Brand - Dixie Cock rooster knives!