



## **Special Versions of Mountain Man Express switchblades by Queen Cutlery: Damascus steel, or Mammoth handle materials**

Brian Guth and Dan Lago

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

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### Introduction.

The "Express" series of switchblades was one of Queen Cutlery last great successes and we plan to cover it in a set of five different reference articles, covering well over 115 knives. Please see our completed article on the John Henry Express knives which were Queen's first modern effort of this series ([John-Henry-Express-Switchblades-Brian-Guth-and-Dan-Lago-8-17-2021.pdf \(seureservercdn.net\)](https://seureservercdn.net/02/16/2022/01/John-Henry-Express-Switchblades-Brian-Guth-and-Dan-Lago-8-17-2021.pdf)).

The approximately 110 Mountain Man Express knives are divided into four articles by the style of blades used and special steels or handles, since this allows collectors to more easily find the knife they are interested in and avoids having a single reference article of over 100 pages!

Clip Point blades Mountain man Express knives were the next series offered and are the second article in our set: (*offered on Queen Cutleryguide.com. "knives"*)

Drop Point blades Mountain Man Express knives are the third article in our set: (*offered on Queen Cutleryguide.com. "knives"*)

Wharncliff blades Mountain Man Express knives are the fourth article in our set: (*offered on Queen Cutleryguide.com. "knives"*)

Damascus or Mammoth Special Versions of Mountain Man Express knives are the fifth and final article in this effort: (*this article*)

While federal law limiting automatic knife ownership to police or active-duty servicemen, has not yet changed, enforcement of those laws had greatly slackened and Queen Cutlery joined many American cutlery companies in producing "automatic" or "switchblade" knives in their own style. Many of these modern knives looked "Tactical." But, in its last two years of operation, 2016-2017, Queen successfully found a niche that looked "traditional" and captured the interest of younger and older knife enthusiasts.

Queen began the Express series with the Kabar Grizzly switchblade as a model which dates back to the 1920s. but updated it through the efforts of Jeff Schley, Queen's last Master Cutler, to improve the opening of the blade. Since the John Henry Express knives were 5.25" closed and featured a very large blade, the smaller Mountain Man, with 4.5" closed length, and a proportionately smaller blade was easier to carry and buyers often thought the Mountain Man snapped open more quickly. The Mountain Man pattern had been Queen's best-selling knife in the early decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and had a large number of collectors already interested in that pattern, so adding the "express" mechanism was a good choice. None of the Mountain Man Express knives were ever shown in a Queen catalog as the company finished up in a very nearly custom shop mode.

These knives sold at a high price for Queen knives and were often produced in very small editions for each handle. Usually, edition sizes have not been documented. These knives were generally extremely well-finished and since most of these knives have been stored rather than used, future collectors have many good opportunities to find knives in very good condition. It is very likely that these knives will remain a collector favorite in our opinion.

### Special Mountain Man Express Summary

Queen recognized that it no longer had the resources to produce large quantities of knives but has a very good sense of what high-end buyers would want, so they produced very select knives in Mammoth handles and with Damascus blades, as shown below. These 22 knives are essentially custom/factory knives and represent about 20% of this total series. On YouTube, one can see a video by LeRoi Price of Mike Latham demonstrating one of these knives ([Queen Mountainman Express switchblade \(KA-BAR GRIZZLY pattern\) demonstrated by Mike Latham - YouTube](#), Leroi Price video, 3-11-2019)

Since our photos show knives in display boxes, (with up to 12 knives per case) we have shifted to landscape format to provide slightly better view of the knives. At the end of the article, we show a link to an Excel database to keep track of all these knives as a total group.



Figure 1. The only Damascus Blades produced in a 3 EXP) for public sale. Handles were limited to worm grooved bone, Desert Iron Wood, Torched Stag, Black Micarta, and Smooth White Bone.



Figure 2. All publicly sold Damascus blades, produced by Alabama Damascus Steel, were in Clip Point style, but three different forms of Damascus patterns were used with each handle material. These are labeled, from Left: Wave pattern, Birdseye pattern, and Ladder Pattern.



Figure 3. A very rare set of six Mammoth Ivory handled Mountain Man Express knives, using two different approaches for the ivory handles, - crosscut on the three knives at the left, and slabs of ivory on the right, with each in all three blade styles used in the series, clip point, drop point, and Wharncliffe.

In Figure 1, three knives are not included, two in Black Micarta, a "ladder" and a "birdseye", and a "ladder" in Desert Iron Wood. No edition size has been published for these rare knives. These knives were produced in such low

numbers that it has been impossible to obtain all at the time of sale, despite being in close contact and only a short distance from the Queen Cutlery factory.

The Mammoth Ivory sets in Figure 3, provide an example of small editions. The set shown is #1 of only five (5) complete sets. Jeff Schley, Queen's Master Cutler was responsible for completing all these special versions and indicated that finding and selecting matching ivory for each set was a challenge, and that the crosscut Mammoth ivory required much extra time to glue and fit the annular rings together to their liners. The crosscut Mammoth ivory is rarely seen for this reason and this is the only example of this style that Queen is known to have produced.



Figure 4. All versions of the Mountain Man 3EXP were provided with a nylon pouch, and the same size insert card, printed on both sides as shown above

Figure 4 displays the packaging for all regular releases of versions of the Mountain Man Express knives by Queen Cutlery (3EXP). We know the Damascus knives were shipped in pouches, but the Mammoth set was provided with both pouches and the gold-etched Schatt & Morgan display box.

A Tuna Valley Mountain man Express in Mammoth



Figure 4. A Mountain Man Express in smooth Mammoth with Damascus blade by Devon Thomas made specifically for Ken Daniels, the owner of Queen at the time these knives were made. Probably an edition of 3 – see Figure 5.

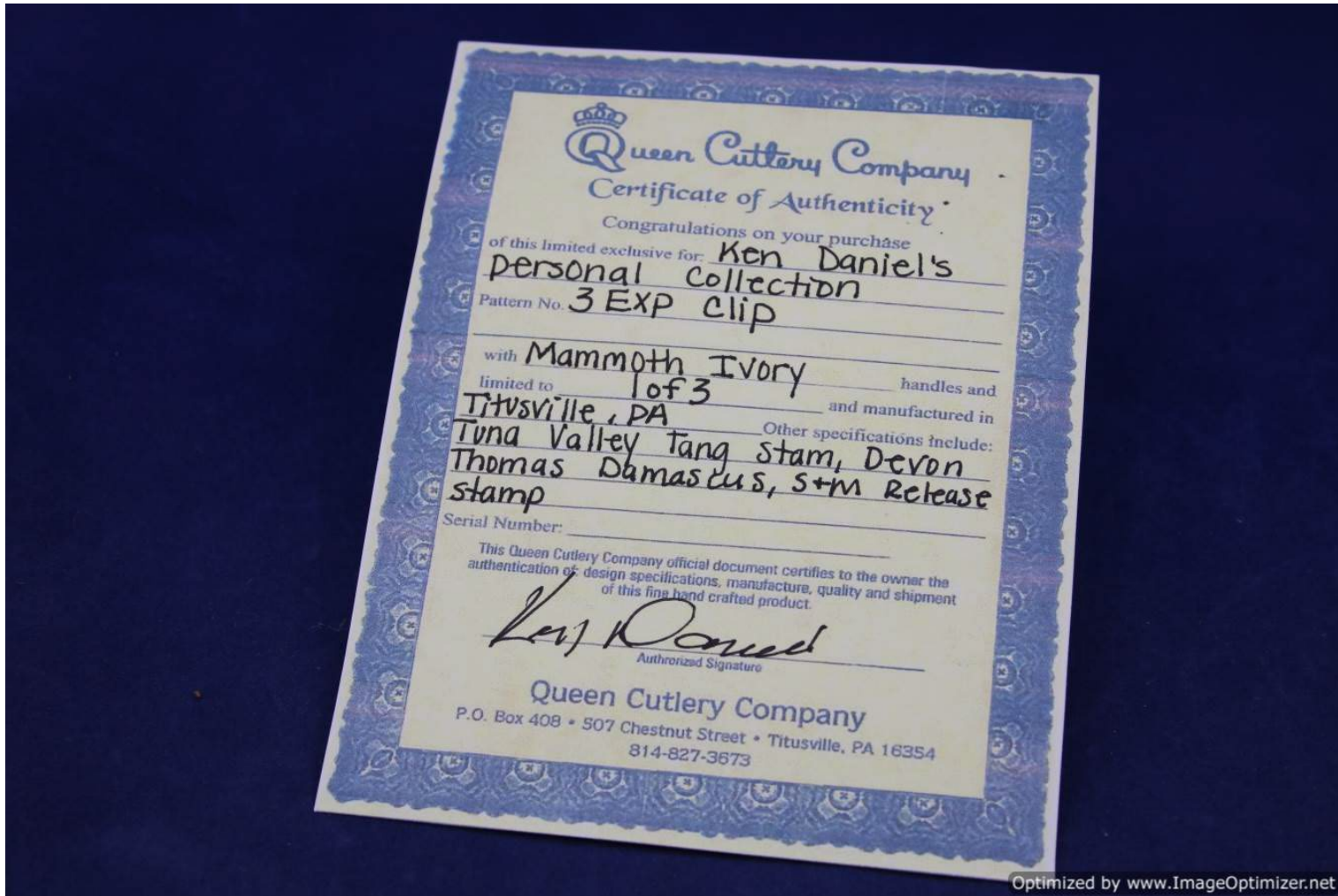


Figure 5. A certificate of authenticity for three knives in Mountain Man Express handles in Mammoth Ivory for Ken Daniels, owner of Queen at the time these knives were made, 2017, using the Tuna Valley tang stamp.



To help manage the large number of these knives in all four articles, we have added an excel database based on all the Mountain Man Express knives to provide an efficient summary of name, blade type, steels, to help keep track of the overall knives in this series. It can also be used to monitor one's own growing collection. (*offered on Queen Cutleryguide.com. "knives"*)

As a first edition article, if any reader has other knives, with good provenance, or has suggestions for improvement, we would be happy to add them to future editions of this summary. Thank you.

### **References.**

Brian Guth and Dan Lago. 2021. [John-Henry-Express-Switchblades-Brian-Guth-and-Dan-Lago-8-17-2021.pdf \(secureservercdn.net\)](#).

[Queen Moutainman Express switchblade \(KA-BAR GRIZZLY pattern\) demonstrated by Mike Latham - YouTube, Leroi Price video, 3-11-2019](#)