



QueenCutleryGuide.com

## Wharncliffe Blade versions of Mountain Man Express switchblades by Queen Cutlery

Brian Guth and Dan Lago

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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 \(seureservercdn.net\)](#)).

The approximately 96 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"*);

Wharncliffe blades Mountain Man Express knives are the fourth article in our set: (*this article*);

Damascus or Mammoth Special Versions of Mountain Man Express knives are the fifth and final article in this effort: (*offered on Queen Cutleryguide.com. "knives"*).

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."

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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.

Wharncliffe Blade Mountain Man Express Summary Queen offered in this blade only 9 versions, 8 in our reference collection and 1 in a factory sample, or less than 10% of the Mountain Man pattern. This blade style has very old European antecedents (as in "Seax") and dated to the early 1800s as "Wharncliffe," after a British lord who was very active in the Sheffield, England knife industry. It has been generally seen as a whittler knife in American pocket knives. Recently "tactical" makers have become more interested in this blade style for its sharp point and cutting performance (see References: Longblade, and Knife Depot). One can consider Queen's use of this blade on a traditional folding hunting/trapping knife as targeting younger knife purchasers, and an acknowledgement of urban uses of an automatic knife. We have seen no cutting comparisons of the three blade styles for the Mountain Man Express, but we would not be surprised if this style would be most effective in creating puncture cuts! On You tube, one can see a video by LeRoi Price of Mike Latham demonstrating one of these knives ([Queen Moutainman 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 8 knives in this case) we have shifted to landscape format to provide slightly better view of the knives. Even though knives are numbered in each photo, they are NOT listed in factory production order, but in the order they were purchased and stored. So, each photo uses the same Wharncliffe Mountain Man Express Knives, page 2 of 6, 2/16/2022, first edition.

numbers over again – it is simply much easier to keep track. 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. Wharncliffe Blades produced for the Queen Mountain Man Express Knife. From the left: 1. Desert Iron Wood, 2. Carved Stag Bone, 3. Black Walnut, 4. American Elk, 5. Torched Stag, 6. Lightning Wood, 7. Marvel Wood, 8. Rams Horn.

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Figure 2. Wharncliffe blade in Red Maple 3EXP, with both "Factory Sample" and Ken Daniels signed certificate of authenticity. While not in our collection, these elements help improve our confidence that this knife "is right". It must be admitted that during the bankruptcy sale many parts for Express knives were available. As a new product, number of incomplete 3EXP and JHE knives with problem characteristics were sold. Any purchasers should study a rare Express knife carefully before paying in our opinion.





Figure 3. 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.

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Figure 3, displays the packaging for all versions of the Mountain Man Express knives by Queen Cutlery (3EXP). So, as Queen Cutlery moved past the experimental phase with the John Henry Express knives, this series is much more predictable for collectors. Each insert card is specific to the knife enclosed, showing the blade style and the factory name for the handle material.

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.

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 \(secureservercdn.net\)](#).

Longblade. (2016) [Wharncliffe Knives - All About Pocket Knives](#)

Knife Depot. (2018) [History of the Wharncliffe Blade Design | Knife Depot \(knife-depot.com\)](#)

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