



# The OPAL EXPRESS

VOLUME 21

JEWETT PATTEE, EDITOR

OUR SHOW IS NEAR; a little over a month away this show is the major fund-raiser for the Society. The larger the attendance, the more monies available for next year.

The Founding Chapter benefits too from the sale of opals and jewelry sold at their tables.

This year we will also be holding seminars during the show. (See the advertising page for a list of topics. You can register for these seminars at the show, but it would be helpful if you register in advance in case space is sold out in any of them.)

NOTE TO OPAL SOCIETY MEMBERS!!!! Admission to the show is free to members and -family -if you show your current membership card. If you bring a friend or several friends, you will be introducing them to our wonderful world of 'opal and helping the Society and Chapter at the same time.

I ask all of our members to plan to help out in some way at the show, just being good-will hosts and hostesses, ticket sellers and/or takers, watching over the jewelry design case, etc...  
If every member in the area volunteers to help for a short period of time, it will relieve a few from spending long hours at the tables...  
Thanks!

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Update on finding new Editor for the OPAL EXPRESS!!!!!!!

As of this date, I have thoroughly screened all applicants and have gone over their qualifications with a fine-toothed comb. Unfortunately, it is with great regret I must say that neither the screen or the fine-toothed comb had the necessary qualifications. What is needed is a minimum of one human volunteer. Ability to read is good; ability to write is preferred, but not necessary if you are good at pasting things other people write to a sheet of paper.

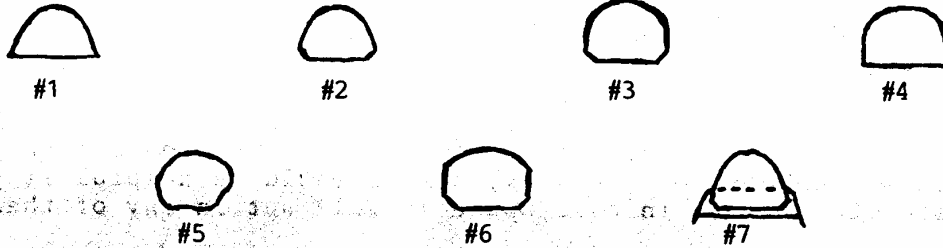
WITHOUT this minimum volunteer, this glorious publication shall cease publication as of the end of December 1989.....THE EDITOR.

FORM THE PREZ:

Well the latest news from dawn-under is: "Mate it's DAMN HOT!" Very little going on now. Holidays are in progress, so supply is short.

I was over at the work shop the other night, looking over the Chapter's cut and polished opal. In the ensuing discussion on how to finish the stones for setting with Cliff, Hal and all present, no one came up with what a definite slope or rounding of the top to bottom sides should look like.

The rule of thumb on the buying end seems to be a gradual slope from top to bottom, such as is illustrated in the drawings below for do's and don'ts.



#1. Shows the right draft angle for bezel and prong settings, but comes to a sharp corner at the bottom which the minutest chip can set up a fracture line for a broken setting.

#2. Shows the right angle and bottom chamfer - (exaggerated) so there isn't any sharp corners, polished and rounded where any change of 'angle meets. The least chip can set up a fracture if any pressure is put on that point. Use a thumb nail to run over these edges to detect any chips in the stone.

#3. Is a straight down side where a lot of pressure needs to be exerted of sides to keep stone in place, and even then except for a roll over prong, can slip out of a setting.

#4. No chamfer and sharp corners, a NO NO!

#5. Irregular shape, sharp corners and negative side angle from top to bottom can only be set by prongs.

#6. Sharp corners at top roll over and on chamfer with no bezel angle or good prong holding area without rolling over top of stone covering color and stone's uniqueness. All gold and little stone showing isn't a good setting.

#7. Shows stone setting in bezel where that slight angle holds stone in the gold, showing all the top and sides possible without losing the stone out of the setting. Prongs can be set this way too, net over top of stone to hold it in.

This is a general rule of thumb, and the jeweler that sets the stone will have to work with you on any stone you want set. The easier you make it on him, the, less your cost of .the, setting will be. Less gold, less labor,

Good Luck and God Bless, TA DA,

Dick Koch

## JEWELRY DESIGN CONTEST RULES

1. Contest is open to Society members only. There are two (2) divisions.
  - A. Professional: Those whose primary income is from the jewelry and gemstone industry.
  - B. Amateur: Those whose primary income is from outside of the jewelry and gemstone industry.
2. Each entry is required to feature opal, or to be entirely of opal. The finished item is to fit the broad classification of jewelry; personal adornment. All entries must be made by entrant.
3. Entries are to be brought to the Contest Committee on Saturday between the hours of 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Each entry must be accompanied by a fee of \$5.00. Entries are limited to three (3) per person. Entrant is responsible for his/her own insurance, although the Society will responsibly handle submitted material.
4. Judging will be by a panel of judges and will take place Saturday afternoon. Winners will be announced Sunday morning.
5. Entries must remain on display until 4:00 pm on Sunday.
6. Judging will be on the basis of:  
  
OPAL: Quality, color, uniqueness, attractiveness and appeal.  
  
SETTING: Design, balance, execution and presentation.
7. Prizes are:-

FIRST PLACE PROFESSIONAL: Plaque and name on perpetual trophy. Winner will be allowed to display said trophy in home or shop for one (1) year, or until show following the present one.

FIRST PLACE AMATEUR: Plaque

SECOND PLACE PROFESSIONAL & AMATEUR: Plaque .each

THIRD PLACE PROFESSIONAL & AMATEUR: Plaque .each

\*\*\*.WHERE AND WHEN ? \*\*\*

" THE OPAL SHOW "  
November 18 & 19, 1989  
California State University Long Beach Student Union Building

\*\*\* HOW ? \*\*\*

See Rule # 3 and GET STARTED!

Any questions? Contact Joyce Funk, American Opal Society, Inc. P.O. Box 1384, South Gate, CA.90280. Or call (213) 869-0527 Mon.-Fri. 9:00am - 3:30am.

# History of Opal

This article was excerpted from OPAL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S GEMSTONE, by L. C. Barnes and I. J. Townsend... a publication of the Department of Mines and Energy

The anthropologist, Louis' Leakey, reported opal and jade artifacts, dating from about 4000 B.C., in a cave in Kenya. The Romans established opal as a gemstone, being introduced to the Roman Empire in about 100 B.C. The Romans obtained their stones from traders in the Middle East and believed that the gem came from India. Their name for this gem was Opalus, which is based on the ancient Indian word, Upala (precious stone). The Romans valued opal above all other gems, believing it to combine the beauty of all other precious stones.

In the 1st Century, the scholar Pliny wrote "Of all the precious stones it is the opal that presents the greatest difficulty of description, it displaying at once the piercing fire of ruby, the purple brilliancy of amethyst, and the sea-green of emerald, the whole blended together and refulgent with a brightness that is Incredible" (Plate 1).

It is probable that the stones so eagerly sought after by Rome came from open-cut workings in andesitic volcanics in eastern Czechoslovakia, which was then part of Hungary. The Hungarian mines remained the only source of opal for Europe until the 16th Century. Although in fairly short supply, opal was a popular gemstone among the rich upper class.

The Spaniards returned from the New World with many fine examples of Aztec opal. Volcanic opal is widely, but sporadically, distributed throughout northern South America, Central America and North America, and the Aztecs probably mined the gem from several sites.

In the later 18th and early 19th Centuries, opal fell out of favour and inherited a reputation as a harbinger-(bad luck stone) of ill fortune. There are numerous stories (fall of monarchs, pestilence, famine) that blamed opal as a bearer of bad luck, but in all probability the main factor contributing to its decline in popularity was the fact that much of the opal found at this time tended to crack badly. This coincided with the start of underground mining at the Hungarian deposits where the opal won from fresh lava dried out too quickly and crazed. The demand for the stone deteriorated and prices became so low that the Hungarian mines closed for many years. They were re-opened by a few individuals in the mid-1800's and very slowly opal regained some popularity.

When Australian opal appeared on the market in the 1890's, the Hungarian mines, in a last desperate attempt to remain viable, tried to promote the idea that Australian opal was not genuine, probably because gems with such brilliant fire had not been seen before. The Hungarian mines finally closed in 1932 (Leechnian, 1961).

The Mexican opal deposits at Querétaro were discovered in 1835 and have been worked to the present day. The dominantly yellow and red-fire opals are found in cavities in volcanic lavas rich in silica.

Other deposits of volcanic opal have been occasionally worked in Indonesia, Honduras, Guatemala and in several places in the United States of America. As far as is known the Mexican deposits are the only volcanic opal deposits at present being worked, and they remain the only significant, but very minor, source of opal outside Australia.

In the early 1970's an Australian syndicate worked opal deposits in Brazil. This Brazilian opal (probably sedimentary opal) shows fire and colour comparable with Andamooka opal and for a while competed actively with Australian stones. These operations were closed with the death of the foreman in 1976.

In Australia the first discovery of precious opal was by gold panners in Victoria in the 1860's and there followed rapidly a number of discoveries of both volcanic and sedimentary opal throughout eastern Australia.

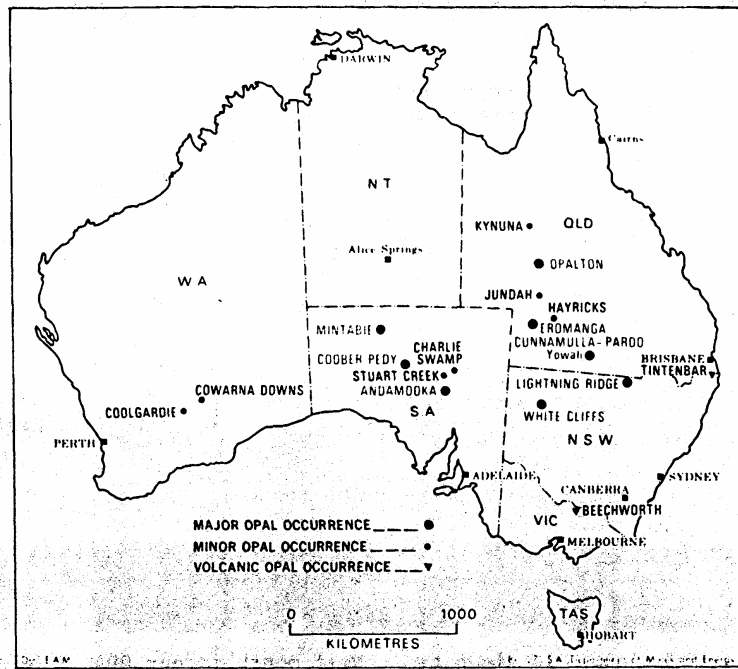


Fig. 2 Australian opal deposits.

Notable dates in the development of the Australian opal-mining industry include the following (for locations see Fig 2)

- 1849 Discovery of common opal by the German geologist Menge near Angaston in South Australia
- 1863 Recovery of water worn pieces of precious opal by gold panners in the Beechworth district, Victoria
- 1872 Discovery of sedimentary opal at Listowel Downs, near Jundah in central Queensland.
- 1877-78 Discovery of opal in the Eromanga and Cunnamulla area, Queensland.
- Late 1880's Discovery of White Cliffs where production began in 1890.
- 1896 Start of production from Opalton, Queensland.
- 1903 Discovery of Lightning Ridge Where production began two years later.
- 1904 Discovery of opal 'with a play of colours similar to precious opal' at Charlie Swamp in South Australia, the first recorded discovery of semi-precious opal in the State.
- 1915 Discovery of opal at Stuart Range—now Coober Pedy
- 1921-22 Discovery of black opal at Mintabie. Aborigines had previously collected pieces of opal from this area.
- 1930 Opal found at Andamooka.
- 1947 Probable date of discovery of Stuart Creek Opal Field.

Since the Australian stones have been on the market, opal has regained its former popularity and is now one of the most appreciated and valuable of gems. The price has increased, slowly at first, but in the last 20 years it has escalated rapidly.

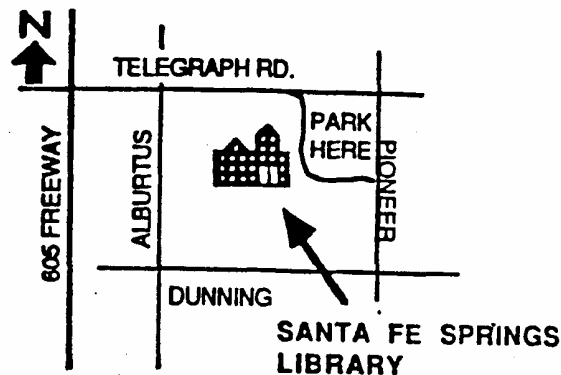
Aug. 1989

# !!!! NEWS FROM THE FOUNDING CHAPTER !!!!

American Opal Society  
Founding Chapter  
P.O. Box 3895  
Downey, CA 90242

AUG. MEETING ON THUR. 8/10

President	Hal Brees	714-820-6446
Vice Pres.	Bobbie Gledhill	714-828-6830
Recording Sec.	Catherine Doten	714-220-5891
Treasurer	Bill Means	213-560-3965
Board Members:	Edith Ostrander	213-698-3985
Honorary Members:	Sue & Harold Umberson	213-693-7380
Nancy Means,	Bill & Della Judd	



General Meetings held on the 2nd Thursday at 7:30 PM In the Santa Fe Springs Library, 11700 Telegraph Rd., Santa Fe Springs See Map

Happy OPALween,

Here it is October, this year has flown by. Next month is our OPAL SHOW \*\*\* We need volunteers to 'help us get the cases out of storage and set-up for the show. Those of you who can spare some time and offer our help will be much appreciated. Please call Hal Brees (714) 820-6446 or Harold Umberson (213) 693-7380.

Our September Gen. Meeting was fantastic. Clare Gagnon was so kind to come out and demonstrate Wire wrapping. He made a beautiful ring and pendant. Boy, he's good. As some of you know, who were 'able to make Sept. meeting we were detoured to Heritage Park; We believe we will be able to have the library back this month, if not at least this time we won't get lost. HA, HA. -

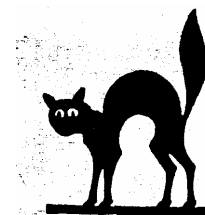
The workshop is going great guns. We have had in the last several weeks as high as 15 people show up. THIS, people is the heart of the Opal Society. Without the workshop to draw people, a place where they can be taught about our precious opal-taught to cut and polish, the society would not be.

We have four new members and they would .not be here except for the workshop. We are in good shape for the Nov. Show, but we are going to take at least 2 workshop evenings where eve ryone will be asked to work on show materials. You will be given a specific task when you arrive.

I'm sure with all our hard work and everyone's help, we will have a very successful show. Thank-you to every one for your help, see you at the workshop or gen. meeting.

Talking about the gen meeting, this month we're having Mr. Cliff Cohen who will give us some great tips on good nutrition. He's very good at this, he runs a column In the L.A. Times. So he's gotta be good. Come on out OCT. 12th, He's great, Folks.

From the Prez.



INITIATION FEE: \$10.00, DUES \$20.00 PER YEAR, AFTER JULY 1ST, \$10.00

7

NO. \_\_\_\_\_ CHAPTER (NAME): \_\_\_\_\_

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SUNDAY, OCT. 29th 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Student Union Building

Saturday 10-6 Sunday 10-5  
Adults \$3.50. With Student ID: \$1.50; Under 12: \$1.00

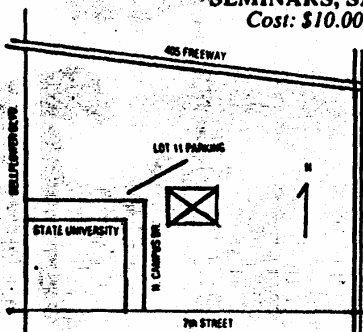
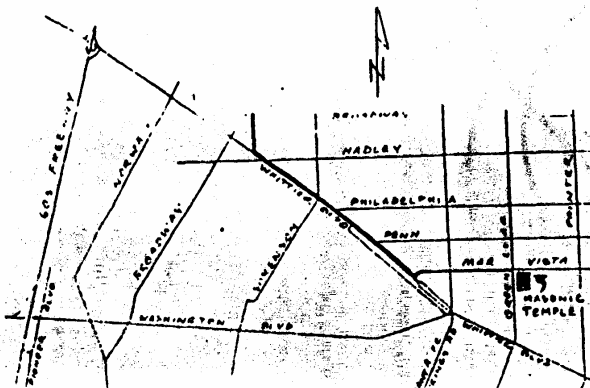
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SEMINARS, SATURDAY & SUNDAY  
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1. Elements of Jewelry Design
2. Opal Mining in Australia
3. Purchasing Opal Rough and Cut Stones
4. Types of Opal and Famous Opals
5. Orienting for Color
6. Evaluating and Pricing Cut Opals

For schedule and application please write:  
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