

The Opal Express

American Opal Society
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875



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Volume #33 Issue #10
October, 2001

Board Meeting – Wednesday, Oct. 7
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General Meeting – Thursday, Oct. 8

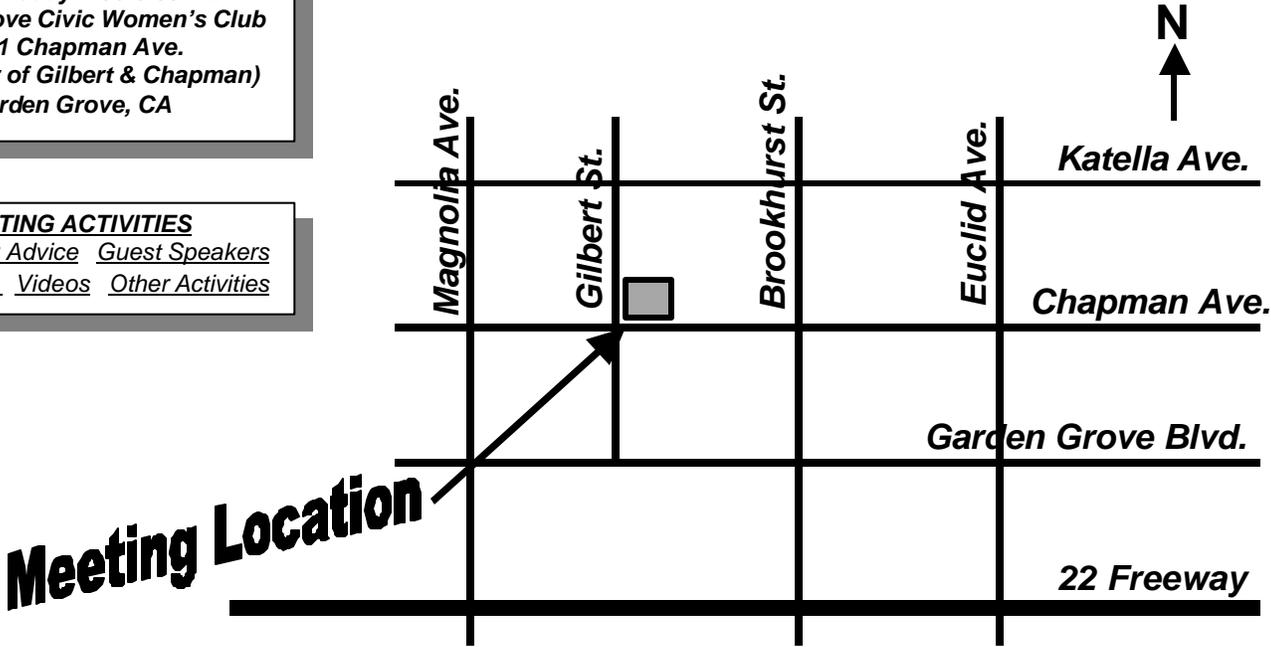
Speaker – Mike Kowalsky on:

- Lightning Ridge Opal Festival
- Multimillion-Dollar Rainbow Collection of Opal
- Million-Dollar Opal Dress

TO:

— **GENERAL MEETINGS** —
2nd Thursday 7:00-9:00 PM
Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)
Garden Grove, CA

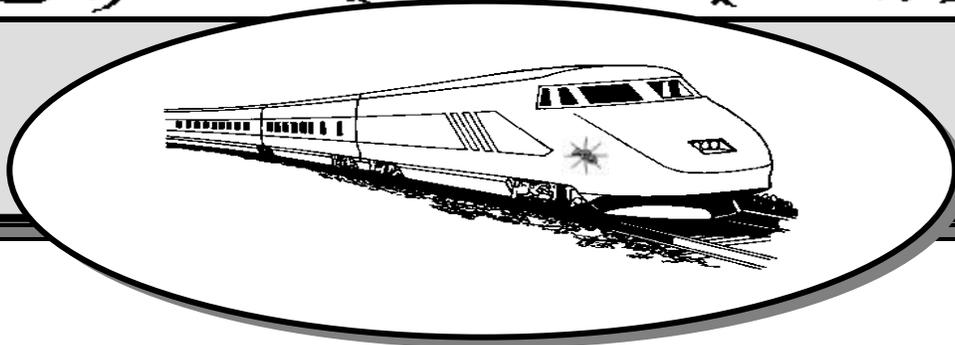
MEETING ACTIVITIES
Opal Cutting Advice Guest Speakers
Slide Shows Videos Other Activities



The American Opal Society
<http://www.opalsociety.org>

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The Opal Express



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From Mike Kowalsky

I feel that I'm on a train rushing to a special event. Yes, we all are heading for the annual Opal Show the first weekend in November which is the third and fourth. For the local members and the dealers the big night is Friday the second. We have to set up the dealer tables, get the electrical boxes in place, put together the display cases and arrange the final security plan. It takes a lot of planning [show chairmen, Jay Carey and Bob Dixon] which has been going on for over eight months. We have to ensure we obtain the correct City of Anaheim sale permits and fire permits. Putting together the door prizes and the raffle prizes and tickets all has to be completed before that exciting day. But it will all get done and I'm looking forward to a really great show with a large variety of old and new dealers with extensive displays of rough opal, finished opal and other stones, finished jewelry, lapidary tools and machinery, and shop supplies. We were able to obtain a large number of past issues of Rock & Gem magazines, which we will give away to attendees.

You may notice a new calendar, which will highlight festivals, gem shows' and other events, which we expect will be of interest to Opal Express readers. Please send in any events from Australia or other places in the world to include in the calendar. As you can tell, we don't have firm dates of some of the events as of this issue.

Our workshop has been operating almost every Wednesday in September. Please give

Stan McCall a ring at Opals and Gems to let him know you plan to be there.

Don't forget to let Bob Dixon know when you will be available to help out at our November Show. I hope to see you at the October General Meeting when I will be presenting slides from the Lightning Ridge Festival. I have some interesting stories about the events at the show. See you at the October meeting on the 11th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOVEMBER NEW MEMBER SPECIAL!!!

As you may remember AOS tries to have some special incentives for new members that join at the November Show. I would like to announce the 2001 New Member Incentive. I talked to Len Cram and he is going to help in the new member drive. The AOS is going to purchase and provide to each new member that joins at the show a new Len Cram book. They will have a choice of the new Coober Pedy book or the Lightning Ridge Book. Either of these new books is worth the year's dues including the initiation fee.

Please tell your friends that this is the time to join. The AOS can only afford to do this because of the generosity of Len Cram in providing this limited set of books at a very reasonable cost. Len has been exceptionally generous with his time and other ways to help us. I appreciate all your efforts to help the American Opal Society, Len.

Thank you,
Mike Kowalsky – President

OPAL SHOW PRIZES

The American Opal Society has received some wonderful prizes for our raffle held at our annual show on November 3rd and 4th.

Top Prize: "A Journey with Color" donated by Len Cram. This is an autographed collector's item; a new release this year containing history of Queensland Opal; 1869 – 1979.

Other Prizes:

Donated by Conrad Coan:

An Opal Hummingbird Necklace

A Magnificent Rose "Created Opal" Necklace in a Sterling Silver Setting

Ironstone Matrix rough opal

Lightning Ridge rough opal

"A History of Coober Pedy", by Len Cram (new issue)

This is a wonderful start for the raffle prizes.

Any other donations will be gratefully accepted.

OCTOBER SPEAKER

Our President, Mike Kowalsky, will be the October speaker. He will do a slide presentation of his recent trip to the Lightning Ridge Opal Festival in Australia. He will discuss and show pictures of the multimillion-dollar Rainbow Collection of Opal, the million-dollar Opal Dress, the major opal displays at Lightning Ridge as well as the gem and mineral show.

Newsletter Archives Online

There is one password for all members: the password is "opalsrus". (Do not touch the member box and just type the password.) The newsletter archives have been just recently been made to work, and more articles will be added in the future.

A Message of Support from America's Friends Down Under - 9/11/01

Dear Jay,

Today we share with you the horror of your national disaster. Our company will be closed for business so that we can contact all our clients in America to offer them our sympathy and to guarantee them our support.

Many Australians sat up all night as I did, watching the actual devastations that took place. Our Prime Minister who is currently in Washington was taken from his hotel, which was opposite the White House to the Australian Embassy where he was bunkered down. After 3 hours he came out and addressed the Nation advising that Australia as in the past, as will do all that it can in its power requested by your Government to assist wherever we can.

Your ex-President Clinton is in Australia at the moment, and immediately a cordon of extra security was put around him; a plane was put on standby to be available to take him to wherever he may need to go. Our security forces immediately stepped up security around your Embassy in our National Capital Canberra and all

American assets and installations in Australia have special security and a stand-by alert.

We as you are devastated at the news and will spend the day contacting you as the friends and clients of Australian Opal Mines.

This is not just an attack on America. It is indeed an attack on the free world. I have no doubt that every democratic nation of the free world will give America all the support it deserves as leader of the western and democratic world.

Australians love and admire your country. As in the past you will receive every bit of support, moral and physical, Australians can give. You are assured that American assets and installations in Australia have added security today. We will remain on alert to protect your interests.

We have no doubt that your great nation will dig out this cancerous, evil phenomenon and destroy it with the precision of a surgeon's knife.

Please accept our deepest sympathy and support.

Your Aussie Friend Murray Willis, Family and Staff (Judy and Angelika)

The American Opal Society

Proudly presents its

34th Annual

OPAL & GEM SHOW

Largest Opal show in USA!

November 3rd & 4th, 2001

Saturday 10AM - 6PM

Sunday 10AM - 5PM

Australian Opal: *Lightning Ridge, YOWAH, Koroit, Mintabe, Coober Pedy, Andamooka*

American Opal: *Idaho Blue, Spencer Opal, Mexican Opal, Honduras Opal*

Opal Related Seminars; Demonstrators

Location: Quality Maingate Hotel
616 Convention Way **ANAHEIM**, California
Close to **DISNEYLAND**

One block South of Katella Avenue
On Harbor Blvd at Convention Way

OCTOBER SHOW DATES

3-7--JOSHUA TREE, CA: 27th annual show, "Gem & Mineral Jamboree"; Sportsmans Club; 6225 Sunburst; Wed. 12-5, Thu. 8-5, Fri. 8-5, Sat. 8-5, Sun. 8-3; free admission; more than 50 dealers from around the country, donation raffle, grab bags, snack bar, school tours, Sat. night auction; Gary Palmer, 6225 Sunburst, Joshua Tree, CA 92252, (760) 366-2915; e-mail: gary@rocknbead.com; Web site: www.thegrid.net/sportsmansclub.

5-7--BIG SUR, CA: 10th annual show, "Jade Festival"; South Coast Community Land Trust, Pacific Valley School PTO; Pacific Valley School, Hwy. 1; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; free admission; jade, gems, lapidary arts, world-class wood and stone sculptures by local artists, raffle, barbecue, live music, Sun. basketball tournament; Kenny Comello, Big Sur Jade Company, Pacific Valley HC 67, Box 1772, Big Sur, CA 93920, (805) 927-5574.

6-7--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: Show, "The Great San Francisco Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Fort Mason Center, Laguna and Marina Blvd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; admission \$4, children under 12 free; vendors of crystals, minerals, gems, jewelry, mystical and healing arts; Jerry Tomlinson, Pacific Crystal Guild, P.O. Box 1371, Sausalito, CA 94966, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: sfxtl@earthlink.net; Web site: www.crystalfair.com.

12-14--COSTA MESA, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Orange County Fairgrounds, 88 Fair Dr., Bldg. 14; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$4; Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

13-14--TRONA, CA: 60th annual show, "Gem-O-Rama"; Searles Lake Gem & Mineral Society; Trona Lapidary and Show Building; Sat. 8-5, Sun. 8-4; displays, dealers, demonstrations, geode cutting, movies, prizes, mineral auction, three mineral-collecting field trips, tour of IMC Chemical Co. plants; Bonnie Fairchild, 84830 12th St., Trona, CA 93562, (760) 372-5356; Web site: www.1iwvisp.com/tronagemclub/

13-14--TURLOCK, CA: 29th annual show; Faceters Guild of Northern CA; Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway St.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; gemstone auction Sun. at 2; Marion Roberts, (209) 538-0197

19-21--SANTA ROSA, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Sonoma County Fairgrounds, 1350 Bennett Valley Rd.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$4; Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

19-21--COSTA MESA, CA: Show, "West Coast Gem & Mineral Show"; Holiday Inn-Bristol Plaza, 3131 S. Bristol; Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-6, Sun. 9-5; free admission; 85 dealers from France, Brazil, Russia, India; Martin Zinn Expositions, P.O. Box 999, Evergreen, CO 80437-0999, fax (303) 674-2384; e-mail: MZ0955@aol.com; Web site: www.mzexpos.com.

20-21--ANDERSON, CA: 48th annual show; Shas ta Gem & Mineral Society; Shasta District Fairgrounds; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; free hourly door prizes, demonstrations; Alex Stoltz, (530) 474-4400.

20-21--GRASS VALLEY, CA: Show, "Earth's Treasures"; Nevada County Gem & Mineral Society; Nevada County Fairgrounds, 11228 McCourtney Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; exhibits, mineral sales, lapidary equipment sales, jewelry sales, children's games, gem auction, mineral identification, door prizes; overnight camping available at fairgrounds for self-contained vehicles Fri. afternoon through Sun.; Cliff Swenson, (530) 272-3752; e-mail: ribet@jps.net.

20-21--PLACERVILLE, CA: 18th annual show, "Hangtown Gembooree"; El Dorado Mineral & Gem Society; El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Dr.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; gem, mineral and lapidary displays, dealers, geode sales, door prize drawings, grab bags, bargain rock table, silent auction, demonstrations of scrimshaw, wire wrapping, rock painting, capping, wire necklace weaving and soapstone carving; Jackie Cerrato, P.O. Box 950, Placerville, CA 95667, (530) 676-2472; e-mail: jacobocer@directcon.net; Web site: www.eldoradomineralandgem.org/edc-gemshow.html.

20-21--SANTA ROSA, CA: Annual show, "Expo 2001"; Santa Rosa Mineral & Gem Society; Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, 1351 Maple Ave.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; admission \$3, children under 12 free; vendors of jewelry, beads, minerals, fossils and

gemstones, demonstrations, exhibits, silent auction, door prizes, raffle, gold panning; Bonnie Wood, P.O. Box 192, Guerneville, CA 95446, (707) 869-9385; e-mail: steelie@ap.net.

20-21--WHITTIER, CA: 52nd annual show, "Shades of Jade"; Whittier Gem & Mineral Society; Whittier Masonic Temple, 7604 Greenleaf Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; Jay Valce, (626) 934-9764.

26-28--DEL MAR, CA: Show; Gem Faire; Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$4; Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

27--CANOGA PARK, CA: Show; Woodland Hills Rock Chippers; Canoga Park Community Center, 7248 Owensmouth Ave.; Sat. 10-5, free admission; Charlene Komatsu, (818) 349-8672; e-mail: smpine@msn.com.
9813 Paramount Blvd. Hours: Sat 10-5 Sun 10-4, Manfred Dextling (562) 425-0192

September 29-30, Monterey, CA Carmel Valley Gem and Mineral Society Monterey Fairgrounds 2004 Fairgrounds Road, Hours: Sat. 10-6; Sun. 10-5 Co-chairs: John Wills (831) 394-9099 / jbmarsa@aol.com, Sky Paxton (831) 663-6978 / paxtons@jps.net

October 3-7, Joshua Tree, CA Sportsmans Club Sportsmans Hall 6225 Sunburst Avenue Hours: Wed-Sat 8-5 Sun 8-3 Gary Palmer (760) 366-3430 e-mail: sportsmansclub@thegrid.net

Australian Calendar of Events

Coober Pedy Festival; May, 2002

Yowah Festival; July 19-21 2002

Lightning Ridge Festival; July 24-28 2002

Fossickers Convention and Festival; Sept. 6-19th 2002, Newman, WA

OPAL SOCIETY WORKSHOP

The workshop at Walker Jr. High is available for the use of AOS members on Wednesday nights. Please call Stan McCall at Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680 if you plan to attend a shop session.

WORKSHOP RULES

1. Shop may only be used by AOS members.
2. Shop users must sign liability waiver.
3. Shop users must sign in. Shop supervisor will maintain sign-in list and collect usage fees.
4. Shop usage fee is \$3 per session.

To assist us in scheduling, please call Stan or a board member in advance to reserve shop time. Thank you!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

American Opal Society Annual Opal & Gem Show
Sat. & Sun., November 3 & 4, 2001

NOTICE!!!!
THE NOVEMBER GENERAL
MEETING WILL BE ON
NOVEMBER 15TH
FOR

BONITA CHAMBERLIN
ON
GEMS OF AFGHANISTAN
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!!!

"DANGER IN THE MINES"

BONITA CHAMBERLIN ON AFGHANISTAN

In an unusual coincidence with world events, the American Opal Society has been able to reserve Bonita Chamberlin as November's monthly meeting's speaker on her experiences in Afghanistan, which she had to flee due to the Taliban's horrific control and extreme violence towards women.

Billions of years ago, and on the other side of the world, in one of the most geologically dynamic regions of the world, two crustal plates collided, giving rise to the Himalayas. This activity resulted in the vast mineral and gem deposits, spectacular finds, many only located during the past 20 years. It is Afghanistan.

Although a San Diego native, Bonita Chamberlin has lived, worked, and lectured in many countries in Latin America, Africa, Europe and the Middle and Near East. She has spent the past 24 years developing a relationship with first, the Afghan Ministry of Commerce while living two years in the capitol of Kabul; and since 1983, during the Soviet conflict, with the famed Mujahideen, or Freedom Fighters. Her hard work and persistence has born fruit. Working in the Hindu Kush mines of Afghanistan under very primitive conditions, she assists the locals in the establishment of a viable postwar economy through the mining, marketing and sale of gemstones and minerals. She is also an expert on blasting techniques, as the Afghans have a tendency to use too much dynamite or blasting materiel, destroying the valuable crystals, and many times endangering themselves.

Although Afghanistan has historically been known for its lapis lazuli deposits, significant amounts of tourmaline, kunzite, aquamarine, emerald, ruby, sapphire, spinel and amethyst have also emerged from the embattled nation. Much of the wealth was unknown until the Soviets began bombing, and the bombs exposed the crystals.

Come hear her tale of walking over the Hindu Kush mountains from Pakistan, covering over 500 miles, 6 passes over 14,000 feet, tip-toeing through mine fields, avoiding bandits, dodging bullets and bombs, and the usual challenges of a country with precious little food. Trying to communicate in a country with over 20 languages, and a 5% literacy rate presents an additional challenge.

Bonita is a major international player of more than 30 years, working with diverse cultures, and within various political and economic situations. She holds a doctorate from the Universidad de los Andes in Biological Sciences, and is recognized as a specialist in training people in Lesser Developed Countries.

Join us November 15 to hear the whole story - it's an extraordinary one - shared by an extraordinary woman.

-----Opal Express Advertisement-----

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Article Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to each issue

North American Opal

By Jim Pisani

Much to do is made upon Australian opal, which is the undisputable leader in the world in quantity and quality of the classic types of precious opal. However, in doing so, we have ignored our own continent's precious opal, which can be a surprisingly beautiful and valuable gemstone and is deposited much more prevalent than typically thought. To show that, we here at the American Opal Society decided to conduct a survey among our members to tabulate locations and samples of precious opal in the North American continent.

State or Province	Name	Location	Type	Description
California	Opal Canyon	Located near Red Rock Canyon State Park, many drivers going North on US 14 have probably seen the small sign.	Hydrothermal deposit in basalt. Opal is in bubbles in hard rock.	Opal Canyon is probably the most famous California site. There used to be a fee dig area there at the Barnett Mine, but it is closed.
California	Lead Pipe Springs	Located in China Lake Naval Weapons Center near Ridgecrest. Off limits to civilians.	Opal is in center of geodes at a rhyolite perlitic boundary. About 1 out of 100 are precious.	Opal site was discovered by famous turn of the century prospector, "Shady" Myrick. The opal resides in the centers of red, rhyolite geodes. The opal has a white base, and sometimes a crystal base, and has multi-color flash.
California	Opal Mountain	Located 20 miles North of Barstow.	Rhyolite	Most opal is non-precious, but of different colors (red, green, etc.). There was once precious opal here, mined many years ago for Tiffany's of New York at Scout's Cove. Deposit is exhausted.
California	Opal Hill	Located south of Blythe near Palo Verde.	White based	Primary deposit is fire agate, but some precious opal has been found in geodes.
California	Tecopa	Near town of Tecopa south of Death Valley	Sedimentary. Small nodules in clay like lakebed.	Opal can be brightly colored but is usually quite small.
Idaho	Spencer			Opal is the second largest contributor to the total value of gemstone production. The varieties mined include precious, yellow, blue, pink, and common. The Spencer Opal Mine, the largest privately owned gemstone producer in the State, is the major source of opal. At Spencer the precious opal formed as one or more thin (generally 1/16 to 1/4 inch thick) layers within common opal that has partially filled gas cavities within a rhyolite-obsidian flow. About 10% of it is thick enough to cut into solid gems; the remainder is fashioned into doublets and triplets. The Spencer Mine is also the source of pink opal, which occurs as either pink common opal or pink-bodied precious opal.
Nevada	Virgin Valley			The opal forms primarily as replacement of wood, or cones of conifer trees, and a small amount does form as nodules filling void spaces in clay. The wood replacement is so complete, that generally the wood grain and banding are no longer visible. This opal can be a true black opal with brilliant color. The uses of opal are greatly restricted because of a severe problem with crazing. A small percentage of the opal does not craze or is stable.
Nevada	Black Rock Desert		Basaltic Bubbles	Two other locations in Nevada also have produced precious opal. The opal does not have as nice a play of color as that from Virgin Valley and it has the same crazing problem. One deposit is south of the Virgin Valley in the Calico Mountains of Humboldt County, and the other is near Gabbs in Nye County. The three precious opal districts and other deposits around the State produce common opal and opalized wood.

North American Opal, continued

State or Province	Name	Location	Type	Description
Oregon				During 1988, West Coast Gemstones, Inc. began the first significant mining and marketing of a wide variety of very fine-quality opals from Opal Butte in Morrow County. The opal varieties include hyalite, rainbow, contra luz, hydrophane, crystal, fire, blue, and dendritic. Exquisite contra luz stones as large as 315 carats have been cut.
Arizona			Blue opal	Two commercial mining operations in Arizona produce blue precious opal. The body color is a light or pale blue with strong play of color in red, blue, green, and orange. The two operations sell most of its material as finished stones at the Tucson Gem and Mineral show and other local gem shows.
Idaho	Spencer Opal	Spencer	Thin sheets that form thick bands. Good triplet material. Some solid crystal found.	The varieties of opal produced in Idaho include precious (white and pink), yellow, blue, pink, and common. The Spencer opal mine, the largest privately owned gem stone producer in the State, is the major producer of opal. At Spencer the precious opal occurs as one or more thin layers within common opal partially filling gas cavities within a rhyolite-obsidian flow. About 10% of the material is thick enough to cut into solid gems; the remainder is fashioned into doublets and triplets. The Spencer Mine is the source of pink common opal and pink precious opal.
Texas		Woodward Ranch, in Alpine, TX	Found near agate deposits.	Found near large deposits as a secondary gem stone. Blue fire has been seen.
Louisiana		Pineville	Quartzite base	The precious opal from Louisiana is a sandstone/quartzite with precious opal cement and matrix. It has blue or purple, sometimes red, play of color. The material is cut into cabochons for jewelry. Louisiana opal was discovered in the early 1990's in southern Louisiana in extremely small quantities. It is much harder than other opals and has sand floating around in a transparent opal matrix.
British Columbia (Canada)	White Horse Mountains	Northern British Columbia	Basaltic Matrix	White Horse Mountain Opal has only recently been discovered in Canada a few years ago. The opal is on a mountain above tree-line and can only be worked a few months a year. Most of the opal is a fairly strong multi-color imbedded in a gray-black basalt matrix. Whether there is seam or bubble deposits is yet to be seen.
British Columbia (Canada)	Okanogan	Vernon, Southern British Columbia	Clear jelly type seams and bubbles in basalt flow.	Okanogan Opal is also a recent Canadian opal discovery.. The opal is on a mountain in a pine forest. It also can only be worked only a few months per year. Seam and bubble deposits have been discovered that is similar in appearance to jelly Mexican with fire, but more of a blue and green base instead of orange
Mexico	Mexican	Northern states of Mexico	Clear jelly type in bubbles in rhyolite flow.	Mexican opal is found in volcanic rock, formed in gas pockets. It comes in any color, but is typically orange based. The opal often faceted whether it has color or not.
Honduras	Honduran		Basaltic Matrix	Honduran opal is usually in a black matrix. It typically has multi-color pin fire.