

The Opal Express

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



Will Not Be
Delivered
Without
Postage

Volume #35 Issue #3
March, 2002

In This Issue:
Arizona Blue Opal
Okanagan Opal

Board Meeting-Monday, Mar. 11
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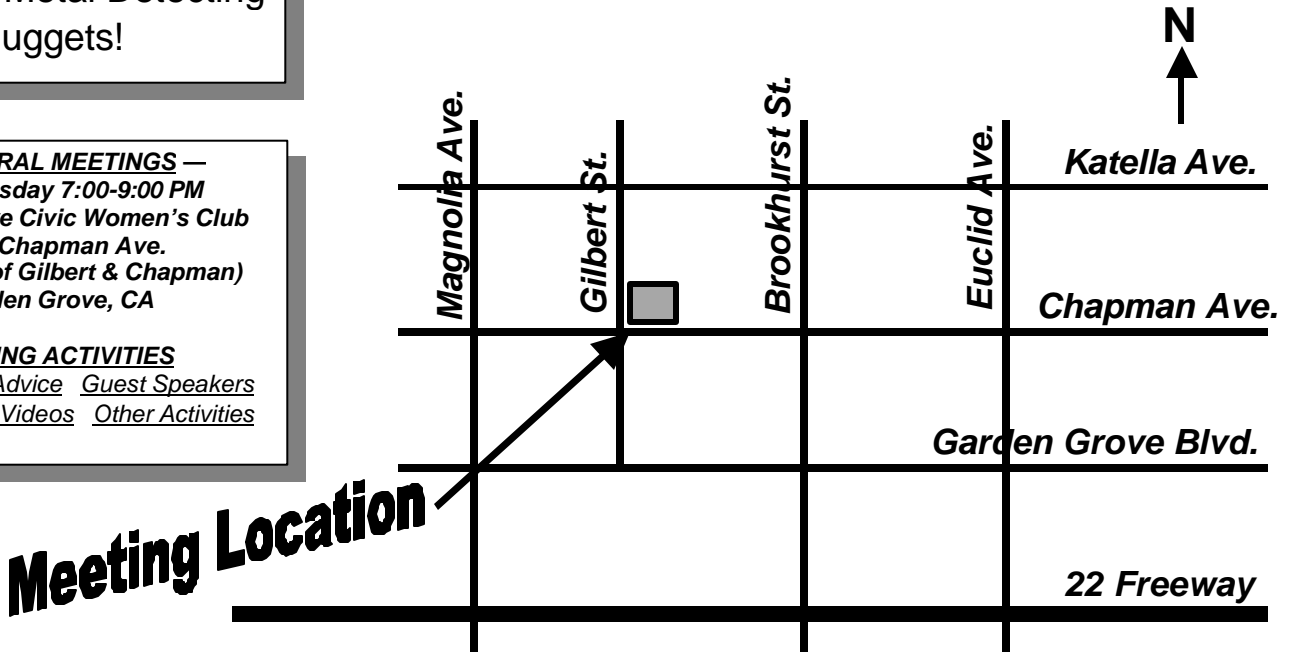
General Meeting
Thursday, Mar. 14

Speaker: West Coasters
Expert on Metal Detecting
for Gold Nuggets!

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://opalsociety.org>

Mike Kowalsky	President	(714) 761-4876	email: mykowalsky@aol.com
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Carol Bova	Editor	(818) 951-1402	email: editor@bovagems.com



American Opal Society Membership Renewal

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP (Select one)	DUES / RATES* (select one)**	AMOUNT PAID
1) All US Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$25.00	
2) International Members = All addresses outside of US Addresses	\$30.00	
3) Additional Badges/each	\$5.00	
** <u>SENIOR DISCOUNT</u> = Age 65 or over deduct \$5.00	-\$5.00	
Name badge (optional) \$5.00 each -includes engraving (Badge free when joining)	\$5.00	

**Please make check or money order payable to "American Opal Society". Mail payment and application to:
American Opal Society; PO BOX 4875; Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875**

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER: Yes, include my name and/or address and/or phone information in a published AOS membership directory
(Please circle any of these → NAME / ADDRESS / PHONE / E-MAIL / WEBSITE if you prefer a partial listing)

(If yes please sign here) _____ Date _____

Without your signature here you will not be included in the member info list.

DEALER LIST: Yes, include my name/address on a list provided to Opal Dealers selling at the most recent Opal Show.

(if yes, please sign here) _____ Date _____

Without your signature here you will not be included in the dealer roster.

NAME		
BUSINESS NAME		
ADDRESS		APT #: or PO BOX
CITY	STATE	ZIP or POSTAL CODE
COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)		
PHONE: Home ()	Business ()	FAX ()
E-MAIL	WEBSITE	

NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:
PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WISH IT TO APPEAR ON YOUR BADGE using up to two (2) lines of text for your name, nickname, or name of your opal related business.

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Acting Editor-Jim Pisani
Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:

**The Opal Express C/O
Jim Pisani
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
Email: webmaster@opalsociety.org**

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

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!

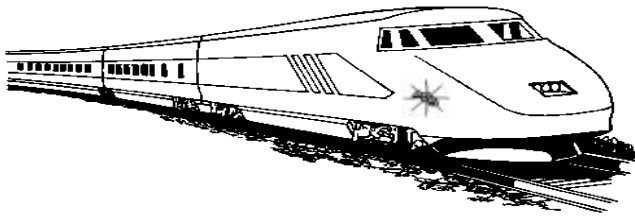
The Opal Express

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Published
monthly
by the
American
Opal
Society

Volume 35, Issue 3



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *Mike Kowalsky*

This was an exceptional year for The American Opal Society and myself at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. With the House of Tibara; long time members of AOS, we were co-hosts of the Opal Seminars at the Holidome G&LW Show. The Tucson Show Calendar had descriptions of my presentations in the directory, which was read by many people that I talked to. Tim and Barbara Thomas have long been supporters of AOS and when they invited me to present seminars about my visits to Yowah Festival and Lightning Ridge Festival, I accepted knowing all the support they had given AOS through the years and past seminars. I also participated in a discussion on opal pricing which was one of Tim's Seminars. The main theme was the difficulty in arriving at a price for opal. The major effect on price is the market situation and the opal miner's situation, which varies throughout the year. There are attempts to develop some standards such as the blackness of the background of black opal. I think some other standards could be developed by using devices that perform measurements of the brightness of opal, which is difficult to ascertain by the eye. In fact the eye and memory differs between individuals so that it is difficult to develop a standard by that method. Most of the evaluation methods use the eye as a method of measurement but without a visual standard to refer to, it isn't very consistent.

Another nice part of Tucson this year was that several AOS members were there and John Hall from Ruidoso was at my presentations. I had met John and Evelyn the evening before and gave him the times of my seminars. John Hall and Jake Schmidt have been members of AOS longer than I and I will be a member for 30 years this fall. It seemed like old times but also new times with AOS members attending the Opal Symposium this year.

One of my goals was to obtain some specimens of Arizona Blue Opal. It is a strange story on how I located the shop, which I will tell in another article in this issue. I was able to obtain some nice samples of Arizona Blue Opal that we plan to display in our case of Opal of the Americas. We still need more states represented in our Opal from the Americas display. We are planning to have the display at the Searchers Show in early May. I added some opal from Peru and another sample of opal from Alpine Texas. We need to think about another display,

which will have opal from around the world. I have samples of opal from Indonesia and Ethiopia. We have heard from someone who found some opal off the shore of Turkey. I'm sure we can put together an interesting display with opal from around the world.

It was nice to see many of my friends from Yowah and Lightning Ridge as well as other areas of Australia at the Tucson show. I didn't have time to see many of the venues. I'm sure that I needed more days than I had to see more of the shows. I estimated that I saw about 20% of the venues. Maybe next year I'll plan better using the directory to be more efficient.

As usual, Mattie Tikka signed up to be at our show this Nov 2nd and 3rd. Remember to reserve those dates for the annual AOS show. It will be held in Anaheim at the Quality Hotel Maingate where it was the last number of years.

Hope to see you at the meeting this month.

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Workshop Notice

Construction work at Walker Junior High has temporarily closed the Opal Society Workshop and it is not known when it will open.

Please call Stan McCall at Gems & Opals (714) 827-5680 to find out the status.

Safety Report

Are You Ready?

By Cathy Gaber

Have you ever taken a first aid course? If you have, good for you! If you haven't, what are you waiting for? Even if you have taken a first aid course, keep in mind what my CPR teacher told us. We were certified to perform CPR, but if we were the ones who NEEDED CPR, we had better make sure that those around us had also been certified. Otherwise, we were not protected at all. I would urge all of you to encourage your friends and family members to sign up with you for first aid classes as soon as possible.

The American Red Cross has chapters and classes around the country, and so does the American Safety and

Health Institute. For more information try <http://www.ashinstitute.com>. Their class offerings include:

- * Basic First Aid
- * Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
- * Bloodborne Pathogens
- * Automated External Defibrillators
- * Emergency Oxygen Administration
- * Child And Baby-sitter Safety (CABS)
- * Hazard Communications
- * Emergency Response - coming soon
- * Safety Training & Aquatic Rescue Program
- * Driver Safety Program

Any of these could save our own or our loved ones lives.

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

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Lightning Ridge – Yowah**

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E-Mail – TomQuiring@earthlink.net

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NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES ONLINE

There is one password for all members: "opalsrus".

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CARATS AND KARATS:

**KNOWING THE DIFFERENCES MAKES YOU A
BETTER SHOPPER**

By Frank Rowley

CARAT: Gemstones, such as diamonds, emeralds, rubies, etc. have their weights stated in carats. A carat is equal to 1/5 gram, or you can state 5 carats – 1 gram. There are 28.35 grams in an ounce. If you have 141.75 carats of diamonds, you would have 1 ounce of diamonds. A gemstone weighing less than 1 carat is expressed in "points." 100 points = 1 carat; therefore a 25 point stone would be one quarter of a carat in weight. If I haven't lost you or put you to sleep try this one.

AVOIRDUPOIS (AV) OUNCE VS. TROY OUNCE: The "Noble Metals" – gold, silver and platinum – are usually sold by the ounce, not our everyday Avoirdupois ounce, but the Troy ounce. (1.097 AV ounce = 1 Troy ounce.) If silver wire is listed at \$10 per ounce (Troy) it would cost 10% less, or \$9, if we think of it in terms of the common every day AV ounce.

KARAT: Karat is used to express the percentage of pure gold in an article. Karat is abbreviated as "K". A 24 K gold article would be pure gold (100%). A 12K gold article would contain 50% gold, and an 18K article would be 75% pure gold. The alloying metals used with gold are usually silver, copper and zinc, unless it is white gold, where the alloying metals are nickel, copper and zinc.

Excerpted from The Polished Slab 11/98

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My Arizona Blue Opal Adventure

By Mike Kowalsky

It started in Tucson at suite 209 at the InnSuites Inn off Mary Road. I had been visiting with Gwen Burney and Barbara McCondra from Yowah and also Dan and Pat Tucker from Mintabe. Dan and Pat are the AOS representatives in Mintabe. Well, I was listening to the conversations and at one point I mentioned that one of my objectives was to purchase some Arizona Blue Opal for our showcase of Opal of the Americas. I knew that Barbara had only a small sample for her personal collection. There happened to be a lady, Mary Snyder, who joined in my conversation. She and others mentioned that the Arizona Blue Opal mine hadn't been at the Tucson show for a few years. She knew that they had a shop somewhere east of Tucson but she didn't know where. She then had a suggestion that she knew of an old rock shop that she felt might know more about the mine. She knew that the shop was located in Green Valley. We decided to look up lapidary and rock shops in the Tucson yellow pages and found a place called Kino Rocks & Minerals located in Green Valley and on the Old Nogales Highway. Sounded about right, so on my first day with some optional time I called Kino's asked their hours and more specific directions from Tucson. It turned out to be near the Tucson Airport. But it wasn't as easy to find as I thought. I found the Nogales Highway but missed the shop because it was behind the house and wasn't clearly visible as I drove by. I came back and did locate the small sign showing the way to the back of the house where the acres of rock and the rock shop were located but shielded from the main highway. I met Tony Amshoff and asked him if he had any Arizona Blue Opal. He had me come in the shop as he hunted for his small stash of rough opal. I selected several pieces and started a conversation about the location of the Arizona Blue Opal Shop or mine. He said he didn't know where the mine was located but that he had been to the shop many years ago and had a rough description where it was located. He had map and pointed to where Hwy 90 crossed Hwy 10 about 60 miles east of Tucson. The he showed me where Hwy 82 crossed Hwy 90 and estimated that it was about 16 miles south of Hwy 10. After that Tony knew that I should turn right but did not remember how far I needed to go to locate the shop. I decided that it was doable in the time I had available for this adventure.

I remembered that Mary Snyder had mentioned that she had seen some exceptional beautiful finished opals at Kino's but they weren't in her price range. That had

piqued my interest so I asked Tony if he had any opals that fit her description. Tony pulled out a small tray, which I examined closely. I knew that these were exceptional opals. Tony said he did not know their pedigree but they came from an estate sale, which had some very fine stones. Later we identified them as Mexican opal doublets but a quality I had never seen before. I did purchase a small two-carat stone to add to my collection. I would never have seen them if Mary had not remembered seeing them. Of course once you have examined one of these opals you would not forget the viewing.

Well I was off to find the Arizona Blue Opal Shop. The trip on Hwy 10 was uneventful but as I traveled east the road gained elevation and became more scenic and green. It was about 60 miles east of Tucson where I came to Hwy 82. At the junction there were some restaurants and other shops. I stopped and had a leisure lunch. I was told about a new set of caverns south of Hwy 10, which I will have to plan to visit. I understand that these new caverns have strict limits on the number of visitors and reservations are required. Sometimes the reservations must be made several months ahead. Next Time!

I found the first discrepancy on my directions. Instead of 16 miles it was closer to 30 miles to Hwy 82. The highways were recently upgraded to 4 lanes. At the junction of Hwy 82 I turned west and looked closely for signs of a shop. I didn't see any but continued on for about 15 or 16 miles. It was pretty scenery with mountain ridges all around. Where I chose to turn around was a sign to a winery. The sign said it was 8 miles of dirt road so I chose not to visit it this time. I returned to the junction of Highways 90 and 82 looking closely for a possible location of the shop. I had come this far and didn't want to be disappointed. However I didn't identify any local as the shop. At the junction were two gas stations and a hardware store. I stopped in the hardware store and asked a gentleman there. He immediately said he knew of the Arizona Blue Opal Mine shop. But he didn't know the name of the street. However, I knew some landmarks and was able to pinpoint the location to two streets past the turnoff to a church sponsored school. With that information I went almost directly there.

I turned right on the street and located a building which could be the location of my quest; The Arizona Blue Opal Gallery. I parked and went over to the newly remodeled house type building, which had no sign, but I was positive was the Gallery. My heart sank when I saw a small sign saying that it was closed. I stood there for a few minutes thinking of how I had overcome all the difficulties and now the shop was closed. I knew my itinerary wouldn't allow me to return this trip. I decided to leave a card in the door and info on how to contact me. As I turned I saw a lady leave the nearby International Trailer and start to come over to me. She identified herself as Cheri Saunders and an owner of the Arizona Blue Opal Mine (Now called the Jay-R Mine). She said she had just returned from visiting people at the Tucson Show. Now I knew that my perseverance had paid off. I introduced myself and of my quest for some specimens of blue opal for the AOS display of Opal from the Americas. We had a very nice conversation about the AOS and her challenge to continue the mining venture after her husband had passed away. I was treated to some newly mounted specimens of opal and purchased several with fire to add to the AOS display. I was able to take a

number of pictures of the opal specimens and the shop and Ms. Saunders. I had a number of different types of opal specimens with me, which I was able to show to her. We had our own opal show that afternoon at the Blue Opal Art Gallery. I felt very lucky that I was able to be there at the time Cheri Saunders returned from Tucson. The Gallery has quite a few samples of rough opal and polished cabochons available for collectors and others.

Please send inquiries to:

Mike Anderson or Cheri Saunders:
<http://www.theblueopal.com>. If you are in the area, there will be a sign identifying the Gallery. It was taken down during the refurbishment of the Gallery.

My determination to find the Gallery was well rewarded by the time two opalholics spent looking a opal neither had seen before. And thanks to Mary Snyder's clues on where to start looking for directions to the Blue Opal Gallery. I'm looking forward to the time I can return to visit the Gallery near the Mustard Corners just short of Huachaca. And though its about 90 miles from Tucson, it is very pretty there with a view of a snow capped mountain in February and well worth the scenic ride.

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Blue Opal Art Gallery

Mike Anderson Cheri Saunders
P.O. Box 4951 520-456-9202
Huachuca City, AZ 85616 <http://www.theblueopal.com>

*Corner of Hwy 82 and Hwy 90 (Mustard Corners)
Hours 12-5 Sun., 9-5 Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat., Closed
Mon. & Tues.*

This deposit of Blue Opal was discovered and located the winter of 1969-70 by Jim and Cheri Saunders. They were on a camping trip and were avid prospectors. The Opal is an unusual and rare variety with a pale to deep blue background color. Displaying a wide variety of "play of color" from broad flash, pinpoint to rolling flash, its unique color and delicate to brilliant fire pattern make it extremely beautiful.

The Saunders located the original claims and stated to develop the property. Living near the mine in a tent and under primitive conditions, they started mining Opals. Disaster struck when Captain Saunders was diagnosed as terminally ill with cancer, dashing all hopes and plans.

Little though was given the mine during this long period of illness and part of the property had to be sold. For several years Cheri Saunders did only the required assessment work to keep the property valid and up-to-date. Slowly a decision and determination was reached to try to continue developing the property, fulfilling the plans she and her husband had made for their Opal Mine.

With the help of a friend, Michael Anderson, they formed a partnership and began work on the Jay-R Mine. Mike and Cheri cut and polish the Opals and she designs sterling silver jewelry pieces to complement and set off these lovely gemstones. The results are handcrafted and individual pieces of jewelry in which unique and lovely Opals are set. On the back of each piece, a small "JR" is inscribed indicating the silversmith and the mine from which the Opals are mined.

These are the details of the Blue Opal Art Gallery and its history mentioned in Mike's Opal Adventure - editor

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MARCH GEM SHOWS

1-3--COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA: Show; Gem Faire; Orange County Fairgrounds, Bldg. 12, Arlington Ave.; Fri.

12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

1-3--HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA: 55th show; Mineral & Gem Society of Castro Valley; Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; admission \$5, children under 13 free with paying adult; more than 50 dealers, hourly door prizes, two raffles, live auction; contact Cheryl L. Archer, (510) 889-7808, e-mail: CLAJewel@aol.com; Web site:

www.geocities.com/mgscv.

1-10--IMPERIAL, CALIFORNIA: 53rd annual show, "I.V. Expo"; Imperial Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Imperial Fair Grounds, 220 N. 2nd St.; Mon. 4-10, Tues. 4-10, Wed. 4-10, Thu. 4-10, Fri. 10-10, Sat. 10-10, Sun. 10-10; adults \$6, seniors, students and children \$4; dealers, demonstrations, gold panning, geodes, gem ID, faceting; contact Jeep Swerdfeger, P.O. Box 1721, El Centro, CA 92244, (760) 355-3816.

2-3--ARCADIA, CALIFORNIA: 43rd annual show; Monrovia Rockhounds; The Arboretum, Ayers Hall, 301 N. Baldwin Ave.; Sat. 9-4:30, Sun. 9-4:30; admission to Arboretum grounds; 12 dealers of jewelry, rough material, cut stones, specimens, lapidary equipment, wire-wrap jewelry, supplies; treasure wheel, grab bags, dinosaur dig, geode cracking, displays; contact Kris MacFarland, (626) 337-8596.

2-3--VENTURA, CALIFORNIA: 40th annual show, "Artistry from Nature"; Ventura Gem & Mineral Society; Seaside Park, Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; gems, minerals, rocks, fossils, jewelry, exhibits, displays, demonstrations, prizes, video presentations, dealers, kids' activities; contact Jim or Nancy Brace-Thompson, (805) 659-3577; e-mail: jbrace@juno.com.

8-10--DEL MAR, CALIFORNIA: Show; Gem Faire; Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

8-10--SPOKANE, WASHINGTON: 43rd annual show, "Petrified Woods of the World"; Rock Rollers Club; Spokane Fair & Expo Grounds, Broadway and Havana; Fri. 10-7, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; dealers, demonstrations, movies, swapping, grab bags, silent auction, door prizes; contact Dee Schwendiman, P.O. Box 307, Valley Ford, WA 99036, (509) 892-1621.

9-10--SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA: Show, "Tournament of Gems"; Pasadena Lapidary Society; San Marino Masonic Center, 3130 Huntington Dr.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; free admission; special crystal exhibits, dealers, displays; contact Alex Sergienko, P.O. Box 5025, Pasadena, CA 91117, (323) 258-1394.

9-10--SPRECKELS, CALIFORNIA: Show, "Parade of Gems"; Monterey Bay Mineral Society of Salinas; Spreckels Veteran's Memorial Hall, Llano and 5th streets; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; show dealers, award-winning exhibits, lapidary demonstrations, fun for the whole family; contact Peter Sherrill, 18070 Damian Wy., Salinas, CA 93907, (831) 449-6242; e-mail: Petkatmat@aol.com.

9-10--TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA: Show, "Show Time 2002"; Mother Lode Mineral Society; Stanislaus County Fairgrounds; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; admission \$3, children under 12 free with adult; dealers, Touch and See table, demonstrations of jewelry making and design, stone carving, pearl and bead stringing, enameling, faceting,

silversmithing, cabochon grinding and polishing; contact Ted Magee, (209) 522-8231, or Bud McMillin, (209) 527-8000.

9-10--VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA: Show, "A Century of Minerals-2002"; Vallejo Gem & Mineral Society; Solano County Bldg., Solano County Fairgrounds; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; dealers, displays, exhibits, demonstrations, hourly door prizes and grand prizes, country store; contact Ed Hoffmark, (707) 642-8754.

16-17--HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA: Show; Northrop Grumman Gem & Mineral Club; NGRC Clubhouse, 12329 Crenshaw Blvd., Gate 16; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; lapidary displays, dealers, shop demonstrations, wire art, bead-knotting demonstrations, free hourly door prizes; contact Jimmy Lapham, (310) 769-4959; e-mail: lapham@earthlink.net.

16-17--SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA: 47th annual show, "Gemstones of Green"; Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; admission \$6, children under 12 free with adult; gems, jewelry, minerals, fossils, dealers, demonstrations, exhibits; contact Ruth Bailey, (408) 248-6195; e-mail: scvgsm@aol.com; Web site: www.slijp.net/~ccox/scvgms.

16-17--WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA: Show, "The Great Contra Costa Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. at Broadway; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; admission \$3, children under 12 free; up to 45 vendors of crystals, minerals, gems, jewelry, mystical and healing arts; contact Jerry Tomlinson, PCG, P.O. Box 1371, Sausalito, CA 94966, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: sfxlt@earthlink.net; Web site: www.crystalfair.com.

22-24--SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA: Show; Gem Faire; Fort Mason Center, Herbst Pavilion; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass \$5; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (760) 747-9215; Web site: www.gemfaire.com.

23-24--COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA: 26th annual show; Mingus Gem & Mineral Club (Cottonwood), Oak Creek Gem & Mineral Society (Sedona); Mingus Union High School, 1801 E. Fir Ave.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; admission \$3; contact Sam Ward, (928) 284-0484, or George Adams, (928) 646-0398.

23-24--COTTONWOOD, ARIZONA: 26th annual show; Verde Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Mingus High School gymnasium, 1801 Fir Ave.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; fabulous displays of rare and beautiful gems, minerals, fossils and dinosaur tracks, great sales, children's activities; guest shows for art, woodcarving and porcelain painters; contact George Adams, (928) 646-0398, or Sam Ward, (928) 284-0484; e-mail: collinsward@sedona.net.

23-24--LA HABRA, CALIFORNIA: "Jubilee of Gems"; North Orange County Gem & Mineral Society; La Habra Clubhouse, 200 W. Greenwood; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; free admission; lots of displays, fun for all ages, special event for children; contact Don or Jane Livezey, (714) 524-6280; e-mail: jdive27@aol.com.

23-24--TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA: 53rd show, "Nature's Treasures"; South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society; Torrance Recreation Center, 3341 Torrance Blvd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; no dealers; contact Doris Turney, (310) 322-2556.

30-31--ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA: Show, "Nature's Wonders"; Roseville Rock Rollers Gem & Mineral Society; Placer County Fairgrounds, 800 All American Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; contact Elton Dean, (916) 372-4766, or Betty Soper, (916) 969-6733; e-mail:

Precious Opals in Canada

*By Bob Yorke-Hardy
Okanagan Opal Inc., Vernon, B.C.*

October is Opal month and it has been interesting to read about various opal deposits from around the world in the October issues of the popular American published Lapidary Magazines. These articles have discussed various opal sources; however, there was no reference to an opal source in Canada. It would seem that there is little awareness of the Klinker Opal Deposit - Canada's first precious opal discovery being contemplated for commercial production - located near Vernon, British Columbia (B.C.). Perhaps in this short dissertation we can start to fill this information gap.

Discovery and Commercial Development

The Klinker Opal Deposit was discovered on October 14, 1991, our Thanksgiving Day, and has been technically reviewed in two articles co-authored by the Geological Survey of Canada and the B.C. Geological Survey. Also, there have been several articles in past issues of both Lapidary Journal and Rock and Gem about this deposit.

Since its discovery in 1991 extensive progress has been made towards commercial development of the property. Likewise, during the past three years there has been considerable activity and some success by others looking for additional precious opal deposits - yes! There is precious opal in British Columbia, Canada!

With determined effort beginning in 1994, Okanagan Opal Inc. has explored and developed the Klinker Property to the stage where adequate reserves of opal have been identified to support small-scale mine production provided that an adequate market can be developed. Since 1995, the company has been researched and developed various techniques for product manufacture. Market testing to assess consumer acceptance has been ongoing through its in-house retail outlet located near Vernon, B.C. The company is now preparing to expand its market base through a wholesale marketing distribution plan, the implementation of which is the final remaining hurdle to commercial production.

An introductory opal product line of a variety of gold and silver jewelry settings has been developed by the company in order to test the marketability of "Okanagan Opal" in its various forms. This effort is increasingly meeting with both success and amazement:

- Success in that, annual sales have been increasing through our retail outlet in Vernon, B.C. and success also in that, product quality and variety has been improving steadily. In addition, sales are developing at other shops displaying Okanagan Opal products.
- Amazement in that, as we introduce our product on a wholesale basis for sale through other retail outlets it is repeatedly viewed with surprise as to the colour brilliance, the variety in opal types and base colour variations. It is truly a unique Canadian product.

The most common statement made by consumers and wholesale buyers alike is: "This opal doesn't look like the Australian opal that I am familiar with!" Our typical response is: "No, you are right!"

Then we proceed to show these potential customers solid white to honey base colored opal from the Klinker

deposit that is very comparable or better than the average white opal found in many jewelry stores. We go on to explain that there are other "types of opal" which are not often seen in the average jewelry store - these other types of opal are generally more expensive.

Characteristics

Opal from the Klinker Deposit (and opal that we have seen from other more recently discovered opal occurrences in B.C.) would be generally classified as "boulder opal". This material exhibits variable base colours ranging from transparent, water clear to clear amber to translucent/opaque white to dark brown and exhibiting a variable intensity "play of colour" in a flash to broad flash pattern. The brightness and pattern of the play of colour in Okanagan Opal is second to none; often covering the full spectrum and covering the full brightness scale.

Yes, there is "solid" opaque to translucent, white base colored opal on the Klinker property; similar in appearance to Australian white opal. The Okanagan Opal found on the Klinker Property has a variable play and intensity "play of colour" and it generally exhibits "flash to broad flash fire patterns" rather than the more typical pinfire pattern found in much of the Australian white opal. In fact, on the Klinker Property there is solid opaque, solid semi-crystal and solid crystal opal; all with broad ranging base colours and broad ranging pattern and intensity of colour play. However, the economic potential of the Klinker deposit is at this stage reliant on the development of the "boulder opal" segment of the market because to date the volume of "solid" opal is not sufficient to justify commercial production on its own.

Perhaps this should be considered a blessing, because when comparing different types of opal, boulder opal is generally more highly valued than opaque white base colored opal. Although the Australians are still producing considerable quantities of white base colored opal it would appear that they are no longer producing the historic quantities of high quality solid black and crystal opal because it is becoming more rare. As an alternative, the Australians appear to be increasingly involved in marketing boulder opal to take up the slack. This should result in the increased awareness and value of boulder opal in the marketplace, which as a consequence will result in increased acceptance of precious opal from British Columbia.

Okanagan Opals are cut into 5 types of Gemstones

The manufacturing and cutting techniques used and the product produced by Okanagan Opal Inc. are similar to those found in the "opal industry" worldwide.

- **Solid Opal** gemstones are cut from the larger more competent pieces of precious opal. Smaller pieces and chips of opal are used in inlay jewelry.
- **Boulder Opal** gemstones are cut from the more competent pieces of opal bearing rock utilizing the natural rock as part of the body of the stone.
- **Black Backed Doublets**, which are composite gemstones, created by backing crystal opal (transparent to translucent precious opal) with black serpentine or other dark colored rock.
- **Boulder Opal Doublets** which are composite gemstones created by adhering quartz caps onto layers of opal which are still attached to the natural host rock. Boulder opal doublets are created using

the same techniques as are used to make Ammolite doublets.

Opal Triplets gemstones and opal chip inlay jewelry are also made.

Base Colours of Opal found on the Klinker Property

- Transparent to opaque common and precious opal in a broad range of base colours is found on the property.
- The transparent precious opal and non-precious opal ranges from water clear to light to yellow to amber to orange similar to Mexican "fire opal".
- Translucent and opaque types of opal range from white to honey to dark brown, gray-black, blue and salmon-pink in colour.
- In 1997 the first "Boulder Black" and "Boulder Brown" opal was produced from the Klinker Property. To date precious opal (opal with a play of colour) has been found in all of the various base colours except the gray-black types.
- To date no "precious black opal" has been found on the Klinker Property.

For more information about "Okanagan Opal" and the Klinker Opal Property, visit our website at www.opalscanada.com. While you are there, check out the "Fee Digging" section and look over our developing line of opal jewelry.

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Excerpt from the Canadian Rockhound Winter/Spring 1999 Volume 3, Number 1,
<http://www.canadianrockhound.com>

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Bowers Museum Presents a Gemstone Collection:

GEMS! THE ART AND NATURE OF PRECIOUS STONES
16 February - 2 June, 2002

Curated by Bowers President Peter Keller, Ph.D., this exhibit will feature some of the finest known gems in the world, including a 480-carat golden sapphire, 10-carat Burmese ruby, 60-carat fine blue sapphire and 250-carat tanzanite. "Gems! The Art and Nature of Precious

Stones" will answer the basic questions of gemology, present delicate and rare gems and portray gemstones as art, focusing on some of the most notable artists known today. Artists will include: Munsteiner and Dreher from Idar Oberstein, Germany; John Marshall from Seattle, Washington; and numerous anonymous Asian master carvers. One highlight will be a 220-pound rutilated Quartz carving by Munsteiner, know as Metamorphous.

Address & Directions

The Bowers Museum , 2002 North Main Street, Santa Ana, CA 92706

The **Bowers Museum** is located at the corner of 20th & Main Streets in Santa Ana – one minute from the 5 Freeway (Main St. South exit) and just minutes from the 57, 55, and 22 Freeways.

Phone 714-567-3600, website: <http://www.bowers.org>

Museum Hours

Tuesday - Friday: 10:00am - 4:00pm
Saturday & Sunday: 10:00am - 4:00pm
Closed Mondays, 4th of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day

Admission for Gem Presentation

Adults	\$16.00,
Seniors/Students	\$10.00
Children (5-18)	\$10.00
Children under 5	Free

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UNTRIED SHOP TIPS

Stabilizing: If you would like to try your luck at stabilizing a porous stone such as turquoise so that it can be cut and polished, then the Silvery Colorado River Club offers these instructions: Take a jar with a lid; add 1 pint acetone (do this outdoors!), add the contents of both the resin and the hardener tubes of epoxy glue, mixing well (suggest 330 water clear epoxy); add well-dried stones; cover and let remain at least 4 days; remove stones; allow a week to dry. They should now be stabilized and ready for working.

(Original source unknown, via *The Rockcollector* 12/00)

Final Polishing: You can completely finish your cabs in a tumbler after shaping and grinding on a wheel, but I primarily use the tumbler for polish only. The technique is relatively simple. Certain variations may be required for your particular tumbler. Fill the tumbler to the proper level with ground corncobs. Add 1 ounce of Fitz Final Polish Alumina per each 5 pounds of tumbler capacity. Add a few squirts of penetrating oil to help bond the polish to the corncobs. Check polishes daily and add a few more squirts of the penetrating oil each day. It may take up to 3 days to achieve the best possible finish.

(excerpted from article "More about Polishing" by Okley Davis in the *Rock Rattler* 12/98)

Both excerpts taken from *The Pegmatite*, 9/01, San Diego Mineral & Gem Society, Inc.