

The Opal Express

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



**Volume #36 Issue #08
 August 2003**

In This Issue:

President's Message	3
Opal Workshop	3
Archived Newsletters Available	4
Book Review:	4
"Determined" by Stephen Aracic	4
Creating An Effective Exhibit Case	4
Bang! Splat! Tunguska!	4
Idaho Fire Opal (and Triplet Making)	5
Factoids: Diamonds	6
Feldspar	6
What's A Slab Worth?	7
"Opals are Bad Luck" Myth	8
Lost? No Compass? Make One!	9
Did You Know...	9
Tips for Purchasing Estate Jewelry	9
August Gem & Mineral Shows	10

TO:

General Meeting: August 14th
Topic: How To Identify Created Opal

Important Dates:

Board Meeting: August 11

7:00 PM - Location to be Announced

General Meeting: August 14

**Speaker: Mike Kowalsky on
 How To Identify Created
 Opal**

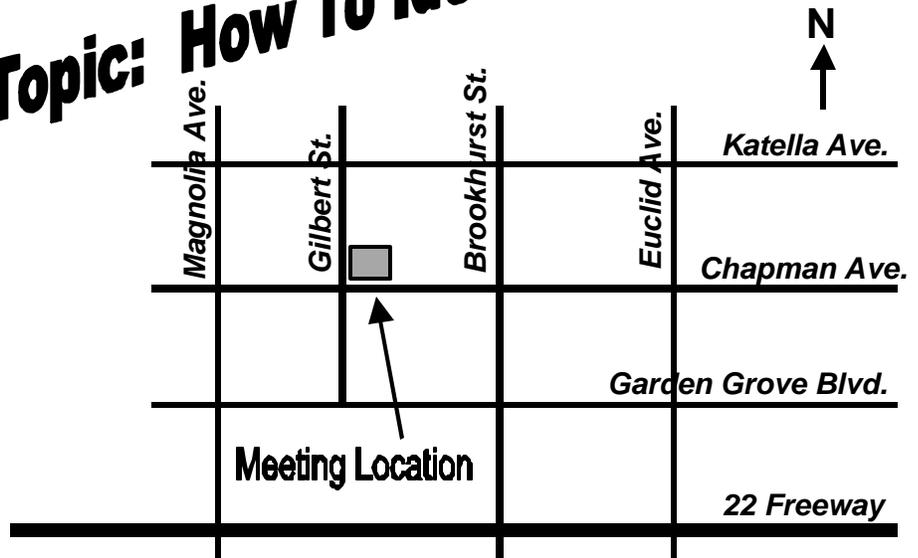
— **GENERAL MEETINGS** —

2nd Thursday of the Month
 7:00 pm - 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>

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American Opal Society Membership Renewal

Thank you for continuing to support your American Opal Society!

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		DUES / FEES)	AMOUNT PAID
DUES: SELECT ONE	All <u>US</u> Addresses including Alaska and Hawaii	\$25.00	
	International Members = All addresses <u>outside</u> of US Addresses	\$30.00	
ADDITIONAL BADGES = \$5.00 each (First Badge <u>free</u> when joining)		\$5.00	
ONE TIME INITIATION FEE = All <u>New</u> members		\$10.00	
SENIOR DISCOUNT = Age 65 or over deduct \$5.00		-\$5.00	
TOTAL PAID – DUES, less Senior Discount plus Badge plus Initiation Fee (if Applicable)			

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HOBBIES AND INTERESTS:		

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.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER & DEALERS LIST: The AOS publishes a membership directory once per year in its Newsletter, the *Opal Express*. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information that you want listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

Address Phone E-mail Website

Include my name & address on a list provided to the Dealers selling at our Annual Opal & Gem Show.

If you checked any box above, please sign here: _____ Date _____

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

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Email: webmaster@opalsociety.org
Article Deadline is the 20th of the month prior to each issue

Are Your Dues Due Now?

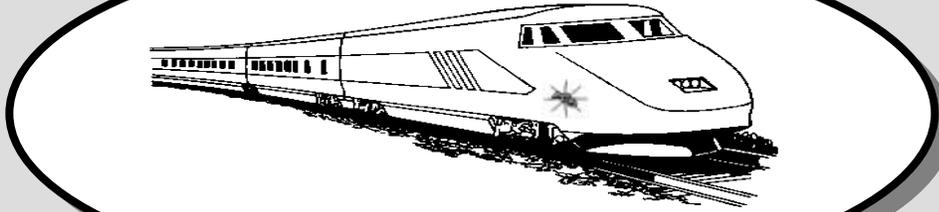
PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL. If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.

A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. Please note, however, that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be AUTOMATICALLY dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.

Thank you,
The Editor

The Opal Express

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Opal
Society



August 2003

Volume 36 Issue 8

President's Message

By Pete Goetz

HI FOLKS,

This is August, November coming up. That means Opal Show. still need some volunteers. Contact a Board member if you can help.

As you have read in the last several issues of the Opal Express, I really would like to see larger crowds at the monthly general meeting. Those of you who live a distance from Garden Grove and would like to come to the meetings, let us know (i.e. a Board member).

We (The Board) have talked about matching members with other members in the same area. Maybe you can car pool to the meetings. If there is any interest in this, let us know. We would love to see you at the meetings.

The shop is open. Not many takers so far. The shop is a little rough (no pun intended) around the edges, but useable. The last of the hurdles will be cleared this week. So, come on down, cut some opal, and swap some opal stories or any stories for that matter... good therapy.

In the interest of developing the overall 'opal knowledge' of our society, the Board has made some preliminary plans to start a new feature during the general meetings. We would like to spend 15 to 30 minutes of every meeting in the pursuit of OPAL KNOWLEDGE. This would include any and all topics that pertain to opal. Some of the classed will be given by Board members and hopefully, other members with expertise or interest will volunteer to give classes on areas they are interested in. More on this later.

For the September meeting we are going to try starting our new feature. We invite members to bring in an opal for evaluation. Using criteria, mostly from Paul Downing's book and the old AOS opal grading sheet, the members present will have the opportunity to grade the opals. This is the plan...

Opal Workshop

The AOS opal workshop is at **Ball Jr. High School** on 1500 W. Ball Road, Anaheim, CA. It will be available for AOS members on Wednesday. Contact **Stan McCall** for details at **(714) 220-9282** if you plan to attend a session.

August Snippets

by Barb Whyre

Matt the Yank appeared in Lightning Ridge the other day. He had a look around the 1932 miner's hut that we call Heritage Cottage, reminiscing in every room. He pondered over the photo of Sid and George Graham, long-time residents, amazed at how memories of 35 years ago slipped to the fore. His Alsatians, Lady and Brudo; his horse Milo, were back at his side. Yes, he still had a few black opals... from the late 1960s at the famous Berlin Rush.

Matt looked out the back door and saw more buildings. "Hey, where's the "Library"? I thought I had heard this educated man incorrectly but he repeated his question. "You know, "the Library" he insisted. "That's what the Graham Brothers used to call it - the dunny (outdoor toilet) down the back!"

I assured Matt that "the Library" was still there and currently used as a garden shed for our lawnmower. He seemed pleased with that news. Do you suppose that's where the opals are?

great opal... great prices

Black
White
Boulder
Rough

www.opalshop.com.au

OpalShop

Archived Newsletters Available

The Opal Express Archives are up and running again. These archives go back from the present to 1998 and in PDF file format. A account name and password and required to get into the protected area. This password will change monthly and will be in the Opal Express.

The link for the archives is:

http://www.opalsociety.org/aos_member_login.htm

To login into the protected area, type the following on the Login page:

Name: member

Password: 3opals

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Book Review:

“Determined” by Stephen Aracic

By Mike Kowalsky

I met Stephen Aracic and Mary Aracic at my trip to the Australian Opal fields in what we refer to as ‘The Grand Tour’. I didn’t know them very well until my second trip in 2001. By that time I had discovered his very excellent book about Opal Mining, “Rediscover Opals in Australia”, and then his earlier version “Discover Opals” Before and Beyond 2000. I have heard many compliments on these books from other Opal Lovers.

His latest book “Determined” co-authored by Mary Aracic, tells the story of his life, including his youth in socialist Yugoslavia, his adventures and struggles to leave for a better life. It describes his life growing up under socialism, his attempts to escape and how on his third try he escaped to Italy. I have had some interest in the lives of people in central Europe under Communism. The story is more vivid when you know the person and its not just a interesting tale. Stephen later was able to obtain approval to emigrate to Australia. His book describes the early years in Australia when the country was emerging from a agrarian economy and developing into an industrial economy. He was very versatile and tackled many different jobs with great enthusiasm. He would become proficient and that was not always welcomed by is co-workers. Throughout his trials and tribulations, Stephen kept his ethics even though that did not help him in certain situations.

As I was reading the book, I kept thinking back about my long conversations with Stephen and Mary Aracic and finding much more about them thru the book. Some of these findings correlated with my observations. One thing I vividly remembered was that they were the first ones on the dance floor and the last ones to leave the floor. Stephen does write about his love of dancing and how he met Mary. It is very nice to see them continue their love of dancing as they grow older.

One thing to remember, is while the book describes his adventures and toils in the Opal mining fields, this book does not the describe the Australian Opal fields. It does describe the difficult life of miners with the problems with other miners and the long droughts of finding opal. His other books such as “Rediscover Opals In Australia” are the treasures, which describe opals and opal mining in Australia.

I was amazed to read of his attempts to publicize his baby carriage brake design by making a trek from Lightning Ridge to Sydney. That was my highlight, which really made the book title “Determined” very appropriate. I also was impressed with his determination to overcome some of the health situations that he encountered through his lifetime.

I would highly recommend obtaining this book to see how a determined individual, Stephen Aracic, was able to make it from a eastern European beginning to a famous writer of books about Opal and Opal Mining.

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Creating An Effective Exhibit Case

This shop page is going to be “Tips & Hints” on creating an effective exhibit case! With the fair at hand and “everyone” getting their cases and material ready, these could be of help! These were taken from “THE NUGGET - June, 1998” bulletin. They and Rockhound Rambling do not vouch for any of these hints and advise caution when trying new procedures or materials. Original credit and date is given when possible.

The foremost display rule is... Your display should enhance your specimens, not the opposite. Use plain, light-colored lining material for finished stones and jewelry. Ironed white cotton sheeting gives a good background. For large or dark-colored minerals, fossils, artifacts, etc., rough, textured, darker material may be suitable. Cloth, paper or wood liners may enhance the large colorful specimens. If the lining becomes the most conspicuous, eye-catching part of your display, it's time to change it.

The case should never be crowded and there should always be a point of interest. An odd total number of specimens is good. When you first look at your case, your eye should focus on the point of interest, e.g., the largest specimen or the most beautiful or brightest specimen; then your eye should follow to the other material in the case. The most common mistake of beginners is to crowd their showcases, trying to display all their best work. Leave some for the next show.

Lighting is important so place your finest specimens where the illumination is best. Opal, fire agate, faceted stones, etc., especially need good lighting. Long pins and T-pins used to hold specimens in place should be colored like the lining (dipped in paint) so they are inconspicuous. Labels should be clear and sharp and readable without pressing your nose to the glass. - By Margery W. Horsfall circa 1981 from The Rockhounder 2/98. (Margery, who passed away in January '98, was a member of the Whittier Gem & Mineral Society for nearly 35 years!)

Great looking display labels can be made by typing the descriptions (with a computer so the font size can be made large enough to read easily) on ordinary paper and then having a print shop duplicate them on clear acetate film. You then cut them to size and place them directly on your case liner so the liner fabric shows through. - *Contributed by Beth Rosengard, CCR&MC*

To display large rocks on pedestal, remove the top and bottom of a tuna can and spray the can black. - *Rock Chip Reporter 8/92 via Breccia 1/98*

Don't discard the inner plastic rings from scotch tape. They make handy stands for spheres. - *Source unknown via Breccia 2/98*

From The Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, Inc. (VGMS) 6-1998

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Bang! Splat! Tunguska!

On June 30, 1908, a horrendous explosion occurred in the sky above the central Siberian wilderness near the Tunguska River. The concussion from the blast, estimated at 20 megatons of TNT, leveled trees in an area nearly 40 miles wide. Oddly, the detonation produced no crater nor other evidence of impact.

Over the past 80 years, dozens of explanations for the Tunguska Event have been proposed. These varied explanations have suggested comets, black holes, nuclear explosions, antimatter, asteroids, and even alien spacecraft as the cause.

Recently, Christopher Chyba (now at NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center), Paul Thomas (University of WI at Eau Claire), and Kevin Zahnle (NASA-Ames Research Center) conducted a

off with a rag. Now you are ready to place the quartz cap on the opal start.

Clean the quartz caps with acetone. But not the opal. Mix the epoxy and coat the start with it. Examine under the light to be sure you haven't missed any spots. Drop the cap straight down onto the start, press firmly. If there are any air bubbles (they will look like silver spots) lift the cap, apply more epoxy and replace cap on the start. Press firmly.

Once the cap has dried onto the start dop the stones on top of the caps.

Grind the excess backing away on a grinding wheel rather than a disk. If you hold the stone at a 20 degree angle to the grinding wheel you can undercut the backing slightly without touching the quartz cap. The stone will fit into a mounting better if it is slightly under cut. Grind the backing down to a little less than 1/16th of an inch. You are finished.

If you wish to make free formed opal triplets use slabbed optical grade quartz and cab it as you would an agate. For variety try using red jasper, white common opal, or any other opaque stone for a backing. Or don't put a backing on it and you have a doublet. Try Quartz on both sides of the opal for a striking pendant or small sphere that can be worn and turn or twirl around.

The biggest enemy of an opal triplet is oil. Clean all surfaces with acetone. Once the surface is cleaned do not touch with your fingers. Your fingers have oil on them.

From <http://www.kountinghouse.com/>, Kounting House Rock & Gem, 503 West 8th, Jerome, ID 83338

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Factoids: Diamonds

Did you know...?

- Diamonds are the hardest natural substance on Earth.
- Carbon dating has established that diamonds are, on average, 3.4 billion years old.
- Diamonds were formed approximately 100 miles beneath the earth's surface.
- Diamond crystals are brought closer to the earth's surface through volcanic activity.
- 250 tons of earth must be mined to produce a single one-carat diamond.
- Less than 20 percent of the diamonds mined worldwide are gem-quality.
- The earliest written account of diamonds dates back to around 500 B.C.

Did you know...?

- In their pure state, diamonds are colorless.
- Blue and pink are the rarest colored diamonds.
- Yellow and brown are the most common colored diamonds.

Did you know...?

- Diamond is the hardest natural substance on earth.
- Diamonds are virtually fireproof. To burn a diamond, it must be heated to 1292 degrees Fahrenheit. (The typical house fire reaches a temperature of approximately 1100 degrees.)
- Only one polished diamond out of a thousand weighs more than one carat.
- The word carat comes from the Carob Mediterranean tree whose seed was used for centuries as the standard of weighing precious stones.
- 1 carat = .2 grams or .007 ounces.
- The largest rough diamond, discovered in 1905, is the Cullinan diamond, weighing in at 3,106 carats (2.8 pounds)!

Did you know...?

- Even though the U.S. only accounts for less than one percent of total global gemstone production, America buys more than half of the world's gem quality diamonds –



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making it the world's largest diamond market. (Consumers in the united states alone purchased \$9 billion worth of loose gem-quality diamonds in 2001.)

- Australia produces the most diamonds by volume.
- Until the 18th century, the only diamond mines were in India.

Courtesy of the Gemological Institute of America.

<http://www.gia.org>

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Feldspar

By Anita D. Westlake <libawc@emery.edu>

The word feldspar literally translates to "feld" meaning field, and "spar", meaning, easily cleaved material. It refers to any of several crystalline aluminosilicate minerals found in abundance in the earth's crust.

Minerals in the feldspar group are found in many places throughout the world, in pegmatite, even meteorites, and pass through all rock and ore-forming processes: igneous, metamorphic, hydrothermal and sedimentary, yet only rarely do they occur as gemstones. Feldspars are the most diversified and the most extensively investigated minerals on earth, though they only recently commanded the attention they deserve. It wasn't until the middle of the eighteenth century that minerals in this group were even vaguely mentioned in Wallerius's popular work "Mineralogy" written in 1753. They were briefly described as varieties of a "spar

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Via Flatirons Facets, March, 2000, via the Littleton Gem & Mineral Club, Inc., September 2001

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What's A Slab Worth?

By Don Parsley

dense and lustrous" distinguished only by their colors of white, gray, and the occasional red. It wasn't until the end of the 18th century that serious crystallographic and chemical research began. Today, at least 40 varieties of feldspars have been identified, with a dazzling array of colors and distinctive features.

Feldspars have a specific gravity that varies between 2.5 to 2.7 depending on the chemical composition. The hardness ranges from 6 to 6.5. Its fracture, other than along the cleavage planes, is subconchoidal to uneven. Most feldspar crystallizes from a melt in igneous rocks. Their crystals are tabular, flattened and most are complexly twinned.

All feldspars have certain physical characteristics in common: they have 2 good easily developable cleavages. One cleavage, usually known as the basal plane, is perfect. The luster is pearly and if the cleavage cracks parallel to this face, brilliant iridescent colors are sometimes reflected. The second cleavage, less perfect than the first, is parallel to the pair of faces that truncate the acute sides of the prism.

The cleavages of monoclinic and triclinic feldspars are essentially the same with the following exception: the monoclinic crystals have cleavage planes that are exactly perpendicular to each other, giving them the name "orthoclase" which means "cleaving at right angles." In triclinic feldspar, the two cleavage directions are not quite at right angles. These are referred to as "plagioclase", meaning obliquely cleaving.

Popular Stones In The Feldspar Group

Amazonite: Light green, blue-green or bluish with a mottled appearance. It is found in metamorphic rocks, intrusive magmatic rocks and pegmatite. The finest examples of Amazonite in the United States are found in Amelia Courthouse, Virginia. Pikes Peak, CO, also boasts a variety of Amazonite found in cavities in coarse pegmatite granite with smoky quartz crystals.

Moonstone: Almost colorless, tinged with yellow, whitish to silvery white with a blue shimmer. The finest specimens in North America come from Allen's Mica Mine in Amelia Courthouse, Virginia.

Sunstone: Specimens are commonly colorless or a straw yellow. Sunstone is found in a basalt flow near the Rabbit Hills in Lake County, OR, as well as Siberia, Norway, and Statesville, NC. A rare variety of green sunstone is found in Media, PA.

Feldspar, in all its chemical compositions, habits and colors, is a fascinating mineral group to study and collect. In its most mundane usage, it is ground up for a polishing agent in toothpaste. In its highest and most noble form, it is faceted as a rare and beautiful gem. It is at once simple and sublime. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: "A man is like a bit of Labrador Spar, which has no luster as you turn it in your hand until you come to a particular angle, then it shows deep and beautiful colors."

I love to buy rough rocks and cut them into slabs. I purchase rough material at major gem and mineral shows each year. In the past, I have purchased material through the mail but do not do so anymore as I like to see what I am buying. You can return material purchased through the mail, but the cost of shipping both ways may be as much as the cost of the rough itself. When you are cutting the rough rock in the diamond bladed saws, you never know what the next slab will look like. A percentage of the rough rocks that I buy look just awful when I cut them. The slabs from these rough rocks wind up on the scrap pile because they are not saleable. The majority of the slabs are good with some being great and some just exceptional.

I have had a number of people tell me that my slabs that I sell are priced too high. But then another buyer comes through our booth and buys over two hundred dollars worth in a single purchase. Many individual hobbyist's have an aversion to paying very much for a slab of material to make a cabochon. The following are a couple of examples outlining the costs involved in producing those slabs that you see for sale at a dealers booth.

MEXICAN CRAZY LACE AGATE

Rough material cost is approximately \$6.00 per pound. Assume a cutting loss for ends and width of the diamond blade amounts to about 25% and increases the cost to about \$8.00 per pound. Assuming a junk loss of about 25% increases the cost to \$10.66 per pound. Figuring the weight of the rough material at about 110 #/cubic foot and slab thickness at about 1/4 inch will give us about 63 square inches per pound. Therefore at \$10.66 / # a 4" X 4" slab costs about \$2.70. Added to this cost is the depreciation and maintenance on the saw, the wear on the saw blade, cutting oil, hazardous material disposal costs, and electricity cost. These costs probably don't seem like much. However when you figure that a 24" saw costs about \$5,500.00 new and maintenance costs are about \$250.00 per year, a new 24" diamond blade costs about \$600.00, Texaco Almag costs about \$28.00 per five gallons, oil and sludge must be delivered to a hazardous material disposal site, and electricity costs are through the roof in California it all amounts to about \$1.00 per slab.

We now have the cost (my cost) of a 4" X 4" slab of Mexican crazy lace agate at \$2.70 + \$1.00 or \$3.70 / slab. Figuring a 100% overhead and profit this means that I must sell the slabs at about \$7.40 each.

Another example is:

RHODOCHROSITE

Rough material cost is \$19.50 per pound. Assuming the cutting losses for ends and blade width at about 25% increases the cost to about \$26.00 per pound. The junk loss for this material is quite low or about 10%, which increases the cost to about \$28.90 per pound. Figuring the weight of this material at about 130 #/ cubic foot and slab thickness at about 1/4 inch will give us about 53 square inches per pound. Therefore at \$28.90 / # a 4" X 4" slab costs about \$8.72. Adding a cost of \$1.00 per slab for cutting makes a slab cost \$9.72. Adding 100% overhead and profit gives us a selling price of \$19.50 per slab for rhodochrosite.

You are probably going to take issue with my 100% overhead and profit, but I can assure you if you had to pay \$300 for a booth at a Gem and Mineral show, 8% sales tax on all sales,

gasoline, meals, motel rooms, etc., this is not very much. Assuming a show that brings in about \$1000 / day this means that I make about \$250 net.

You should also keep in mind that you can probably get four good 30 X 40 cabochons out of the Mexican crazy lace agate and 6 good cabochons out of the rhodochrosite which will make your cost about \$1.81 for the lace and about \$3.25 for the rhodochrosite. Look in the major catalogs for the rhodochrosite cabochons in 30 X 40 size and you will find that they will cost about \$15 each. You pay about \$20 for the slab and save about \$70 for the six by doing them yourself.

So next time you are looking over a dealers inventory for a slab to purchase, keep in mind his costs and how much each cabochon will cost after you are done.

From the Palomar Gem & Mineral Society, 11-2002

“Opals are Bad Luck” Myth

Here is a thread of messages that I found in the Orchid Digest from <http://www.ganoksin.com> concerning the myth of bad luck and opals. They were published from 2-06-03 to 2-17-03. The Ganoksin Project provides an information forum on the Internet free of charge for all things connected with jewelry and jewelry making. Visit it and see! Printed with permission of Ganoksin. The Editor

From: Sarabeth Carnat

Hello all, Could someone please tell me where the "opals are bad luck" myth came from.

I would also like some history on opals if it is accessible.

Thanks Sarabeth Carnat

From: Tony Konrath

The opal myth seems to date back to Victorian England. Probably because the opals coming from the new world (specifically Australia 1868 onwards) were notoriously unstable, cracked and lost color.

Tony Konrath

From: Island Gold Works

I once read the bad luck myth with opals came from cutters of the stone. They would expose it's beauty, and one more swipe on the wheel, poof, it was gone. My 2 cents.

Thomas Blair

From: Cathy Gaber

In Kunz' The Curious Lore of Precious Stones, he cites the novel by Sir Walter Scott, "Anne of Geierstein" as the source of the superstition. The life of the heroine was bound to the gem in her hair, an opal, which shot red fire when she was happy and caused her reduction to ashes after the stone was doused with holy water.

Cathy

From: scollier

Here are just a few links I found by doing a search using Google.com. Enjoy!

- <http://www.rocksonfire.com/About-Opals.htm>
- <http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/6225/86852>
- <http://www.cedarseed.com/air/gemstones.html#opal>
- <http://www.iorio.com/learning/myth/>

Terri Collier Dallas, TX, scollier@sbcglobal.net

From: kpkelly

I think Cathy is right. Also, when the diamond people saw what was coming out of Australia they felt they couldn't compete and therefore waged a propaganda campaign.

I've been cutting and using opal for over 25 years and selling retail for most of that time. I've heard the most outrageous stories about opal. One was "My mother told us we couldn't wear opal because we're Irish".

From: adriana beniscelli

I heard, like the opals are very fragile and could break when manipulated them; bench jewelers invented the bad luck myth to avoid setting them. Regards Adriana

From: Douglas Turet

<"I heard, like the opals are very fragile and could break when manipulated them; bench jewelers invented the bad luck myth to avoid setting them.">

Hi Adriana, Actually, believe it or not, the whole Opals-as-bad-luck myth got it's start about 300 years ago, when a "novelist" famous for the equivalent of dime store romance novels (Sir Walter Scott, I believe) wrote a widely-read piece of rubbish called either "Anne of Gierstein" or "The Legend of..." (I don't recall which). Prior to that, as Pliny the Elder wrote, Opals were seen as "the Queen of all gems, vastly superior to all others because, in the Opal are the colors of all other stones" (I'm paraphrasing Pliny, but that was the gist of it).

Anyhow, as the story of Anne develops, she's an illegitimate child who's unfortunately been marked for life, as a result of her philandering father's ways, and subsequently becomes the recipient of a witches' curse (like I said, great writing, here...), through which she's forced to wear a magical Opal brooch from early childhood until adulthood. This Opal, according to the book, had fire which mirrored Anne's mood swings, such that the Opal glowed brightly when she was happy, but "shot out baleful sparks of colour" when she was angry or melancholy. (Aha: our plot thickens!) Pivotal to the tale, Anne was specifically ordered never to allow water to come in contact with either her own body or that of the Opal... "or else". As the story progressed, Anne was swept off her feet by a handsome prince, who asked for and received her hand in marriage, BUT... while at the altar, the priest accidentally sprinkled his Holy Water on both Anne and her magical Opal, which apparently shot out it's "most baleful spark" ever, then went colorless! Suddenly, Anne passed out and collapsed, whereupon her groom and handmaidens carted her off to a side chamber, to rest. When they returned, several minutes later, all that remained of either Anne or the Opal were her clothes and a small pile of ashes!

Like I'd said when I began the retelling of this "legend", it's pretty far-fetched stuff, by today's standards -- a real "believe it or not" story. Unfortunately, the ladies of the 17th century weren't quite as well educated or worldly as those of today, so a great many of them took this book at face value, and the Opal immediately fell out of favor. Ironically, since this "tragic tale" became a best-seller at just about the same time as the original (comparatively, rather dull) European sources for precious Opal played out, but before the Australian finds were discovered, there weren't many reasons to argue the book's point (other than its blatant stupidity). All of which may go a long way towards explaining the uphill battle that fine Opal miners still face, on occasion, when trying to market their goods. It's absolutely ridiculous, but that's the reasonably unvarnished -- except by memory's tricks, since I haven't read that book in over 25 years -- and historically true reason behind Opal's lack of popularity!

Go figure.

All my best, Doug Douglas Turet, GJ Lapidary Artist, Designer & Goldsmith

Turet Design P.O. Box 162 Arlington, MA 02476

From: kpkelly

What is your support for the phrase "lack of popularity" ? For the last several years I have earned my living sell my work at art fairs with my designs that feature opal almost exclusively. Previous to the last several years I did whatever was necessary in the jewelry business.

The thing with opal is that you have to educate yourself and do a knowledgeable presentation for your potential customer. The most common thing I hear from people is "I didn't know that opal looked like that". My assumption is that most people have only seen low grade white base opal in commercial settings. Like many other things there's an enormous range in quality. Properly set quality opal does n't break. By properly set I mean designs that are appropriate to the stone. When a potential customer makes a "weird" comment it's often an opportunity to educate them and perhaps make a sale. Often the comment is the customer's way to engage you in conversation. They want to know more and if the stone (opal) didn't attract them in the first place they probably would have passed by without comment. KPK

From: charles b buckman

All, Has anyone commented about the work of Allan Eckert and others on the history of opal? Evidently, the bad luck reputation goes back to the Middle Ages. The stone was associated at the time with a particular writer. He called the stone "patronus furnum" meaning protector of thieves. This sprung from the belief that the stone gave a thief lightning speed so as to allow them to perform their trade undetected even in broad daylight. Not much earlier the stone had a wonderful reputation, as the Romans valued it over almost all other stones, evidently. I think rightly so, since what other gemstone has the beauty of quality opal. Many other stones in a way simply look like glass!

The name "Oculus Mundi" or "Eye of the World" was applied to the hydrophane varieties. I think a lot of the bad associations with evil with the stone, probably had their root with that medieval writing. That source is quoted in the Eckert book "Opal". That book is very excellent is discussing in painstaking detail opal history.

Anyway, my two cents.
Blaine

Lost? No Compass? Make One!

To make a shadow compass follow these instructions:

In an open area, drive a straight stick into the ground. The stick should be at least 3' long. Mark the shadow of the tip of the stick with a small rock or stick. Wait about 10 minutes and mark the new shadow position.

A line drawn between the two shadow markers is always oriented in an east-west direction. This works any time of day or year. North can then be determined by bisecting the east-west line.

Via Breccia 6/97

Did You Know...

- If all the diamonds mined in the world were fused into a cube, how big would it be? Answer: About 10 cubic feet
- Half the silver ever mined was mined in this country.
- Half the gold ever mined lies at the bottom of the oceans, in the holes of ships.
- Lake Erie differs from the other Great Lakes in that the bottom is above sea level.

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From The Rockwood Rockhound News, May 1999

Tips for Purchasing Estate Jewelry

Carlsbad, Calif. – If your pulse quickens at the site of an antique Victorian-era cameo, if an Art Nouveau pastel enamel and pearl pendant piques your nostalgic interest, or if a retro 14-karat gold bracelet seems irresistible, then you're part of the increasing number of those buying estate jewelry. From the bold geometric shapes of Art Deco to the lacy romanticism of the Edwardian style, estate jewelry offers a wide array of choices for the discerning collector. For those interested in uncommon designs and materials (and the occasional "good deal"), buying jewelry second-hand can be a rewarding experience – especially for the informed shopper.

The public's interest in estate jewelry has grown steadily over the last few decades, translating into increased sales at auctions and retail jewelry stores nationwide, according to professionals in this industry. Television programs dedicated to antiques and collectibles have further helped to fuel interest in estate jewelry. By definition, estate jewelry is a term used loosely to mean any previously owned jewelry. But the most sought after estate jewelry typically features fine workmanship and high quality stones, as well as one-of-a-kind pieces. To be dubbed "antique," a piece must be more than 100 years old.

"Because there is a limited supply and it's usually irreplaceable, (high-end) estate jewelry is often called the 'caviar of the jewelry business'," said Michael Kazanjian, chairman of Kazanjian Bros. Inc., a Beverly Hills, Calif. firm specializing in high-end estate jewelry. "These days, the public is more sophisticated about quality jewelry, and they want original pieces," said Kazanjian.

Elise Misiorowski, G.G., museum director for the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) in Carlsbad, Calif., said the profile of estate jewelry has grown as auctions became more popular. Through her research activities and book acquisitions in a previous position at the GIA Research Library, Misiorowski became widely known as an expert on estate jewelry.

When purchasing estate jewelry, Misiorowski advises checking for dents, deep scratches, or missing stones. This examination can be done with the naked eye, or by using a jeweler's loupe (a 10-power magnifier), which can be purchased inexpensively. If you're not that much of a "do-it-yourselfer," Misiorowski suggests finding a trained gemologist to examine the piece for you.

Misiorowski also recommends looking for evidence of repairs, such as unlikely solder joints. And be sure to ask for a receipt that includes a written description of the piece – including materials and approximate age. This is important, especially when getting an appraisal for insurance purposes. Finally, if a piece contains diamonds or gemstones, ask for an

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accompanying grading or identification report issued by an independent laboratory, such as the GIA Gem Trade Laboratory. "Being armed with knowledge will definitely help you make better buying decisions," said Misiorowski.

Whether one appreciates estate jewelry for the fine workmanship, vintage styles, or good deals, it's wise to be educated before buying. For those looking to become an even more savvy estate jewelry buyer, training in gems and gemology is available. For a free catalog, call GIA at 800-421-7250, ext. 4001, or go to www.gia.edu.

From <http://www.gia.org>

August Gem & Mineral Shows

27-3--SPRUCE PINE, NC: 19th annual Grassy Creek Mineral & Gem Show; Parkway Fire & Rescue Dept.; Parkway Fire & Rescue, Hwy. 226S; Sun. 12-6, Mon. 10-6, Tue. 10-6, Wed. 10-6, Thu. 10-6, Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-6; free admission; outdoor show, open to the public; contact Roger Frye, (828) 765-6884, or Donna Collis, (828) 765-5519, e-mail: collisrescue@aol.com.

1-3--NEW CARROLLTON, MD: 54th annual show; Gem, Lapidary & Mineral Society of WA, D.C.; Ramada Hotel and Exhibition Center, 8500 Annapolis Rd., Exit 20B off I-95/495 Capital Beltway; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; contact Russ Shew, 301-493-8936.

1-3--PASCO, WA: Annual show and convention, "Trail of Gems--Following Lewis and Clark"; Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Lakeside Gem & Mineral Club; Trade, Recreation, Agricultural Center, 6600 Burden Blvd; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, 3 days \$12; seniors \$4, 3 days \$10; students \$3, 3 days \$7; children under 10 free with adult; dealers, demonstrations, competitive and noncompetitive displays, silent auction, fluorescent minerals, workshops, local area tours; contact Larry Hulstrom, 5409 W. 26th Ave., Kennewick, WA 99338, (509) 783-6210; e-mail: lchulstr@bossig.com.

2-3--ARLINGTON, TX: Show, "Rockhound's Paradise"; Arlington Gem & Mineral Club; University of Texas at Arlington, Herford University Center, S. Oak St. at W. 1st St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$4, children 6-12 \$1; contact Carl Wells, 5605 Atlantis Terrace, Arlington, TX 76016, (817) 451-7861; e-mail: cwells5431@ev1.net.

2-3--COOS BAY, OR: 30th annual show; Coos Bay Gem & Mineral Club; SWOYA Tennis Club, 3333 Walnut Ave.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; admission \$2; dealers, demonstrations, silent auction, junior activities, door prizes; contact Duane Davis, 261 S. 9th St., Coos Bay, OR 97420, (541) 267-0190.

2-3--SAN FRANCISCO, CA: 49th annual show, "Golden Gateway to Gems"; San Francisco Gem & Mineral Society; San Francisco County Fair Bldg., Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. and Lincoln Way; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$6, seniors \$5, children under 12 free with adult; contact Ellen Nott, (415) 564-4230; e-mail: ellen_nott@yahoo.com.

2-3--WATERVILLE, ME: 33rd annual show; Water-Oak Gem & Mineral Society; Mount Merici School, 152 Western Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; demonstrations, lapidary, jewelry, specimens, books, magazines, gems, minerals, fossils, educational displays, fluorescent minerals, retail and wholesale dealers; contact William Longley, P.O. Box 565, Waterville, ME 04903-0565, (207) 873-4863, or Sonny Chavarie, P.O. Box 218, East Winthrop, ME 04343, (207) 395-4488.

8-10--NIPOMO, CA: 35th annual show, "Rainbow of Gems"; Orcutt Mineral Society; St. Joseph's Church, 298 S. Thompson Ave.; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; contact Wayne Mills, 502 Via la

Barranca, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420, (805) 481-3495; e-mail: wwmills50@hotmail.com.

8-10--SEASIDE, OR: 7th annual show; Jean Miller; Seaside Convention Center; free admission; books, tools, equipment, minerals, crystals, gems, jewelry mounting, findings, chains, fossils, demonstrations; contact Jean Miller, P.O. Box 136, Molalla, OR 97038, (503) 829-2680; e-mail: shadow92337@aol.com.

8-11--BUENA VISTA, CO: Show, "Contin-tail 2003"; CO Federation of Gem & Mineral Societies; Rodeo Grounds; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; contact Carolyn Tunnicliff, 122 Denman, Isabel, CO 67065, (303) 549-4858; e-mail: ctunnicliff@msn.com.

9-10--LAKEVIEW, OR: Annual show; Tall Man Rock Chippers; Fairgrounds, Hwy. 140; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; dealers, demonstrations, displays, field trips, silent auction; contact Tall Man Rock Chippers, P.O. Box 563, Lakeview, OR 97630.

9-10--WALNUT CREEK, CA: Show, "Great Contra Costa Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr., at Broadway; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; contact Jerry Tomlinson, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: sfxtl@earthlink.net; Web site: www.crystalfair.com.

15-17--COTTAGE GROVE, MI: Show, "Great Lakes, Great Rocks!"; Minnesota Mineral Club, Midwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies; Cottage Grove National Guard Armory, 8180 Belden Blvd.; Fri. 12-8, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; exhibits, programs, dealers, swap meet; contact Alan Olson, (612) 729-8331, or Sandy Fuller; e-mail: rockbiz8@cs.com.

15-17--LAKE GEORGE, CO: Show; Lake George Gem and Mineral Club; Hwy. 24, downtown Lake George, follow club signs; free admission; contact Ruth Cook, (719) 632-9686; e-mail: ruthcook@cs.com.

15-17--McMINNVILLE, OR: 2nd annual show; Jean Miller; Yamhill County Fairgrounds, 2070 Lafayette Ave.; free admission; books, tools, equipment, minerals, crystals, gems, jewelry mounting, findings, chains, fossils, demonstrations; contact Jean Miller, P.O. Box 136, Molalla, OR 97038, (503) 829-2680; e-mail: shadow92337@aol.com.

16-17--FREEPORT, NY: Annual summer show; Village of Freeport; Freeport Recreation Center, 130 Merrick Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; contact John Anderson, P.O. Box 551, N. Bellmore, NY 11710-0551, (516) 781-8410.

16-17--YELM, WA: Show, "Biggest Little Gem Show in the Northwest"; Nisqually Valley Rockhound Society; Yelm High School, 45 exit 111, Marvin Rd.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; silent auction, displays, door prizes, kids' area, tailgaters; contact Keith G. Greetham, 3838 Boston Harbor NE, Olympia, WA 98506-2433.

30-31--AUGUSTA, ME: Annual show; Kennebec Rocks & Minerals Club; National Guard Armory, Western Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; contact KRMC, (207) 873-6270.

30-31--CANBY, OR: 21st annual show; Jean Miller; Clackamas County Fairgrounds, Hwy. 99E; free admission; books, tools, equipment, minerals, crystals, gems, jewelry mounting, findings, chains, fossils, demonstrations; contact Jean Miller, P.O. Box 136, Molalla, OR 97038, (503) 829-2680; e-mail: shadow92337@aol.com.

29-1--CRAWFORD, NE: Swap; Northwest Nebraska Rock Club; Crawford City Park, 1st and Main; Fri. 8-6, Sat. 8-6, Sun. 8-6, Mon. 8-6; contact Wade Beins, P.O. Box 569, Chadron, NE 69337, (308) 432-8950; e-mail: crawfordswap@hotmail.com.

29-1--FORT BRAGG, CA: 41st annual show; Mendocino Coast Gem & Mineral Society; Town Hall, Main and Laurel; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6, Mon. 10-4; free admission; contact Don McDonnell, 643 N. McPherson, Fort Bragg, CA 95437, (707) 964-3116.

30-1--SILVER CITY, NM: 20th annual show; Grant County Gem & Mineral Society; Silver City Recreation Center, 1016 N. Silver St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6, Mon. 10-5; free admission; more than 40 dealers, 80 tables, rocks, minerals, gems, beads, jewelry, equipment, books; contact Jim Lett, 2213 Ponderosa St., Silver City, NM 88061, (505) 538-3216; e-mail: jameslett@zianet.com.

