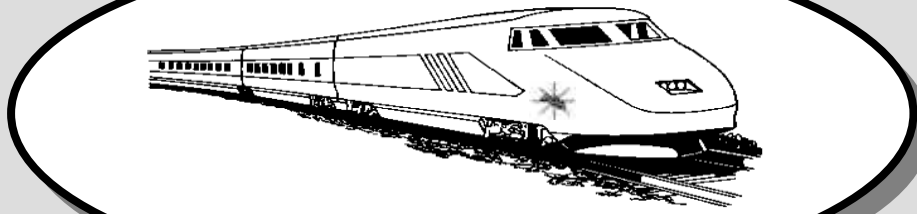


The Opal Express

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also quite attractive, having had a complete renovation this past year and has just reopened for business as an event center. See the website for photos of the interior and exterior, showing its classy modern design.

I need people to assist me with this show!

Call me at 562-208-7494 or E-mail me at fineblackopal@sprynet.com

Thanks,

Gene LeVan

President's Message

By Jim Lambert

Thank you Stan McCall for your impromptu presentation fabricating wax molds at the last general meeting in April. We are excited about our upcoming new venue for our Opal & Gem Show at the White House Event Center at Hobby City. Be sure to remind your friends and neighbors about the change from Clarion.

We always have difficulty finding speakers for our monthly meetings. If anybody has interesting gem, mineral, mining, etc., presentations, or know someone who does, please let us. We always interested new and different speakers for our members.

Let's give a big thank you to Jim Pisani for representing the American Opal Society by giving a talk at the South Coast Lapidary Society in Torrance, CA.

Message from Gene LeVan, Show Chairman 2009

The American Opal Society is pleased to announce their 42nd Annual Opal Show on November 7 & 8, 2009. Show times will again be 10:00 AM -6:00 PM Saturday and 10:00 AM -5:00 PM Sunday. Set up will be Friday night starting at 6:00 PM.

After several years of holding the show at the Clarion Hotel in Anaheim, the show committee has decided to obtain a new venue for this year's show. Restrictions on available show dates, rental price increases, and advanced booking limitations have made it advisable to find another show location. Fortunately, we were able to secure a new and hopefully permanent location at the White House / West Wing Event Center (<http://whitehouseeventcenter.com>), located at 1128 S. Beach Blvd., in Anaheim, California, which is about 5 miles from the previous location. The "White House" is located within the Hobby City / Adventure City complex.

The new location offers several advantages over the old location, including unlimited free parking, more available dealer and demonstrator space, and a more favorable rental rate. The facility is

Lost Opal Mine

In 1877, a party of prospectors seeking gold in the Horse Shoe Mountains found a rich opal deposit somewhere south of the Duncan-Lordsburg Road. They staked a claim and took some samples but later sold their rights rather than work the mine themselves. Later they heard that the pair to whom they had sold the claim had worked it pretty regularly for two years before the Apaches got to them. As usual, the Indians hid the mine probably by causing a landslide. Between the landslide and the Indians, no one figured it would be worth their while to try to relocate a claim that had already been worked pretty hard for two years.

In addition to the fact that opals today would be worth a good sight more than in 1877, an additional incentive to search for this one might be the claim that the two gem miners only sold a few of their stones in Lordsburg during the entire two years they were working the mine. The rest were obviously cached for retirement day. The Indians sent them to early retirement, and the cache is probably still hidden somewhere in the vicinity of the mine.

SOURCES:

- Cushman, Dan, The Great North Trail, McGraw Hill, 1966.
- Horgan, Paul, The Conquistadore in North America, Fawcett Publications, 1963.
- Terry, Thomas P, U.S. Treasure Atlas, Specialty Pub., 1985.

From http://www.lostgold.us/html/new_mexico1.htm



Opals along the Tequila Road

By Jordan Clay

Mexico has become the world's second most important producer of opal after Australia. So we sent our trusty travel correspondent to visit the country's main beehive of mining and buying activity.

Time crawls in the small Mexican town of Magdalena, Jalisco. Shops open late and close early. In the evenings, Gustavo rolls his taco

stand into the square and sets up in front of the bank. People gather round for what are allegedly the best tacos in town, and to drink beer and gossip. Gustavo might set out a few plastic chairs but most people just sit on curb. It makes for easy conversation. Magdalena's a friendly place and when I joined the crowd on the curb they had a pretty good idea of why I was there: opals. That's why most strangers come to Magdalena.



A makeshift opal stand in Magdalena's town square.



Senor Martin Castillo Carrillo at La Sorpresa

"In Magdalena you'll find the best Mexican opals of all colors and grades," Martin Castillo Carrillo, owner of La Sorpresa, tells me. La Sorpresa, just a block from the town square, is like most of Magdalena's opal shops, a family affair. His sons, Edgar and Alex are co-owners, and the day I visited, Edgar was cutting and polishing stones.

La Sorpresa, which sits on top of a flight of concrete stairs, feels like stepping into a treasure trove. Small boxes filled with opals of all colors and grades crowd the shelves. The highest quality ones are a clear, fiery red or orange;

these are the fire opals that are most well-known to the outside world. Carrillo also sells blue, green, black and white stones. Jewelry fills another case— opal in gold and silver pendants, earrings, rings and bracelets. Carrillo sends the stones out to factories where they are set and returned. Behind the counter, on a low shelf, is a random display of clay figurines, glass jars filled with water and rough opal and religious artifacts. Above it, on another shelf, hand-carved



Cristela Castillo Carrillo holding opal in matrix

obsidian statues of ravens, turtles and Aztec chieftains in high addresses keep watch over the shop. The obsidian is also mined locally in nearby La Joya. The walls are plastered with black velvet paintings of Indian maidens in the arms of braves, calendars from years past and an old magazine photo of Pope John Paul II. Wooden crosses and crucifixes dangle from nails.

Carrillo's eyes light up when he talks about stones— whether they are opals or obsidian. "Look," he says to me, holding up a large piece of obsidian that has been sawed in half. "See the colors when the light shines on it. Now, come outside." I follow



Mexican Opal at La Sorpresa.

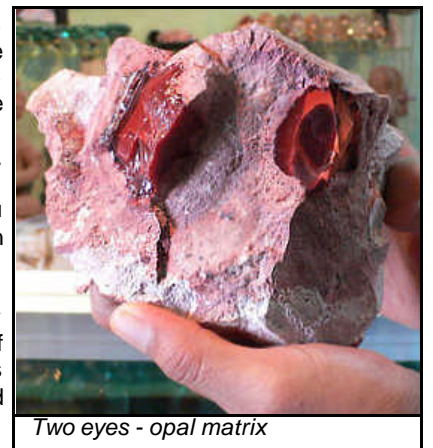
him to the landing where he holds it so the sunlight reflects on the surface. "See how the colors change. These stones make you feel the presence of God.

More than 80 opal mines are spread out around Magdalena. The area's first mine was discovered in the late 1950s, but according to legend, opals have a long history in Mexico. The Aztecs used a stone called "vitziztecpal," or "hummingbird stone" for ceremonies and rituals. The stone is described as a glittering gem that resembles the feathers of the hummingbird. After the Spanish conquest, many of the localities of the "hummingbird stone" were lost until 1840 when don José María Siurab discovered opal deposits in Esmeralda, Querétaro. Today Mexican opals come primarily from the three states of Querétaro, Nayarit and Jalisco.

On the second day of my visit, Carrillo's daughter, Cristela, and Teresa Omelas from Magdalena's Department of Culture, took me to visit some of the mines. Our first stop was the Santa Rosita mine.

More than 30 years ago Hector Healy staked his claim and began digging the Santa Rosita mine. He's been working it ever since, patiently carving out new tunnels using nothing but a bulldozer and hand tools. Some years are better than others. In the past he sometimes hired outside workers but the truth is he doesn't really trust them so mostly he works by himself or with his son, Catarino Tamayo, when he's in town as he is on the day we visit them. Tamayo tells us that the problem is not just that it's hard to trust workers, but these days it's hard to find workers. More and more young men are moving to the large cities to find work, leaving a dearth of qualified workers in the rural areas where the mines are. He says that as Mexico's economy improves, there are better job opportunities to be found elsewhere. Mining is not as attractive as it once was unless you own the claim to your own mine.

Healy works all year, even during the rainy season when the danger of cave-ins is great. "It takes a lot of patience and courage to mine for opals," says Tamayo. "My father has more patience than I do.



Two eyes - opal matrix

Sometimes we dig all day and don't find anything. But when you find a valuable stone, it makes it all seem worthwhile."

Tamayo leads us to one of the recently excavated shafts. Swallows dart in and out among the crevices and the air has a slightly amber look from reddish hue



Hector Healy, owner of Santa Rosita Mine.

of the rocks. It's a pleasantly mild day in late May. In a few weeks the temperatures in this high desert will probably soar to 100 degrees or more. We climb down the tunnel and Tamayo points the beam of his flashlight at a pool of water. "We find most of the opal on the floor so we have to pump the water out first," he says.



Mining for opals at Huejelica.

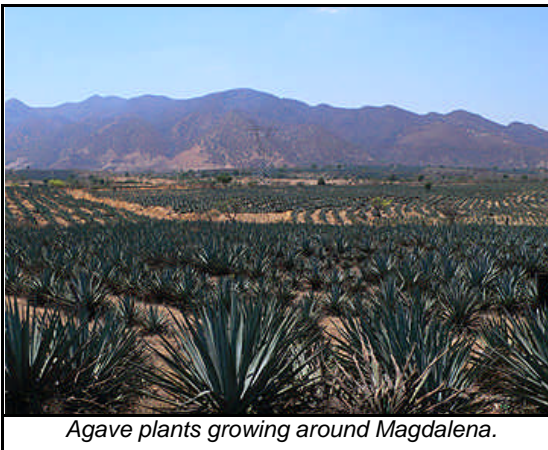
Rough opal from the Santa Rosita mine goes to cutters all over the world, especially Japan. "The Japanese are good businessmen," says Healy. "They appreciate opals. They know a good stone and they know the

market. I think the opals must look good on those kimonos they like to wear."

Tamayo agrees that Japan is the largest buyer, although he says that India is rapidly catching up. "India is quickly becoming a world gemstone center and they are buying more rough every year. China, too, has begun buying. Some European countries, such as Germany, also purchase from us. And, of course, we sell domestically. We have very few customers from the United States."

Carlos Cabral, a jeweler from Guadalajara buys rough opal from Magdalena. "Years ago I started to investigate which were the most representative gems in Mexico, the ones with more history, the ones rooted in Pre-Hispanic Mexico," he says. "I chose Cortez Sea Pearls, Chiapas Amber and Jalisco Opals. Although, I may use some other gems in my pieces, these three are my favorites." Cabral's customers, who are mostly international, are attracted to his designs that evoke Mexico's rich history while combining it with a modern vision. His

favorite Jalisco opals are the fire opals. "Their intensity what I love the most," he says. "They are full of fire, full of life, their inner color sparkling, a whole rainbow immersed



Agave plants growing around Magdalena.

within the gem."

About a mile up the road from Santa Rosita the Huejical mine spreads out over a quarter mile. Unlike Santa Rosita, the owners of Huejical use explosives so there are warning signs posted along the way. A couple of miners are sitting on top of a stone pile sifting through the loose rock. "Are you finding anything?" I ask them. They shake their heads. "Not today."



Senor Gonzalo Manuelo at his shop in the Hotel de los Opalos

Still, Magdalena's economy is largely dependent on opals and obsidian according to Ornelas. As well as La Sorpresa, a number of opal shops cluster around the downtown area. Even the hotel where I'm staying, Hotel el Opalo, has a small shop in the lobby where Gonzalo Manuelo buys and sells opal and other gemstones. Ornelas tells me the region is trying to promote another business venture, as well: tequila tourism.



Opals in the Hotel de los Opalos

Magdalena is one of six small towns along what is known as The Tequila Road. The majority of the world's tequila is produced and exported from this area, especially from the town of Tequila about 20 kilometers from Magdalena. Agave cactus, from which tequila is derived, grows throughout the area, including around

the mines we visited. Ornelas says that they are trying to publicize food and tequila tours, similar to wine country tours in northern California, and hope that the opals are also a draw. At least one entrepreneur, Javier Lopez Mata of Opalos de Mexico, has begun organizing tours where visitors can sift through the dirt and look for their own opals. It's an ambitious, but promising enterprise. There are over 100 local tequila distilleries, many of which provide tours. The opals are certainly stunning. The local restaurants cook up plenty of rich, spicy tacos, quesadillas and enchiladas, and, as I can personally confirm, some very smooth tequila can be found in this area.

There's no doubt that Mexico's fire opals have distinctive look, and for lack of another word, 'feel' to them. Maybe it's their association with the ancient Aztecs or maybe it's simply the fire inside them that makes them such an apt metaphor for Mexico. As The Tequila Road attracts more U.S. visitors to Jalisco, maybe their opals will become



Opuntia, Jewelry by Carlos Cabral.

better known and more popular in the U.S. as well.

From <http://www.colored-stone.com/stories/sep08/opals-along-tequila-road.cfm>

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New Play-of-Color Opal from Welo, Ethiopia

A new source of high-quality play-of-color opal was discovered in early 2008 in Welo Province, Ethiopia, about 500 km north of Addis Ababa. This deposit is geographically distinct from the Mezezo deposit in Shewa Province, which was discovered in the early 1990s (see, e.g., Spring 1994 Gem News, pp. 52–53).

These contributors examined a parcel of about five rough and 30 cut Welo opals supplied by Opalinda and Eyaopal, the main distributors of this material. The cabochons showed good play-of-color (figure 1); the vast majority were white and transparent, but some had a bodycolor varying from light yellow to dark "chocolate" brown. Compared to Mezezo opals (e.g., J.-P. Gauthier et al., "L'opale d'Ethiopie: Gemmologie ordinaire et caractéristiques exceptionnelles," Revue de Gemmologie a.f.g., No. 149, 2004, pp. 15–23), those from the new deposit generally appear much whiter. We noted all spectral colors in the play-of-color in our samples. Most of the cabochons were similar in appearance to opals from Australia or Brazil. However, many samples displayed a columnar structure of play-of-color opal within common opal (figure 2), as first described in material from Mezezo (again, see Gauthier et al., 2004). This feature is only very rarely observed in opals from sources outside Ethiopia.



Figure 1 - Welo Ethiopian Opals

The hydrostatic SG of the opals ranged from 1.80 to 2.10. This broad range is in part due to the high porosity of some samples, as

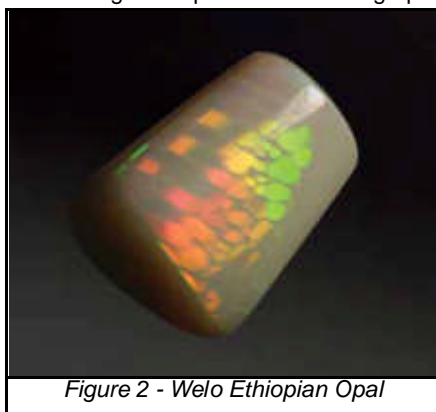


Figure 2 - Welo Ethiopian Opal

revealed by a significant weight increase after immersion in water (up to 8%). Fluorescence varied from inert to moderate yellowish white to both long- and short-wave ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Samples that were inert displayed an unexpected greenish phosphorescence of moderate intensity. No luminescence was observed in the opals with a yellow-to-brown body color, even the light ones; these darker body colors are probably due to the presence of iron, which quenches luminescence. The yellow-to-green luminescence is likely due to the presence of uranium (E. Gaillou et al., "The geochemistry of gem opals as evidence of their origin," Ore Geology Reviews, Vol. 34, 2008, pp. 113–126). Fourier-transform Raman spectra were obtained for several samples using a Bruker RFS 100 spectrometer. All spectra were consistent with opal-CT, with Raman bands at about 1070, 780, 670, and 345 cm⁻¹, and water-related bands at about 3200 and 2950 cm⁻¹.

Welo opal is found in volcanic rock, possibly a rhyolite. The rough samples we examined consisted of opal (either common or play-of-color) cementing fragments of the host rock. By contrast, The Opal Express

The American Opal Society

opal from Mezezo fills cavities in rhyolite, forming nodules. Despite these differences, the fact that columnar structures are seen in opals from both deposits (but very rarely from elsewhere) seems to indicate similarities in the conditions of their formation.

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Francesco Mazzero, Opalinda, Paris, France

Eyassu Bekele, Eyaopal, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Jean-Pierre Gauthier, Centre de Recherches Gemmologiques, Nantes, France

Emmanuel Fritsch

From <http://www.gia.edu/research-resources/gems-gemology/spring2009-contents/spring2009-featuredqni-ethiopian-opal.html>

This is Australia Calling!

By Richard W. Holmes

I have been to Australia seven times in the last twelve years

and am planning another trip to Lightning Ridge in 2010. I find Australia and particularly the Outback enchanting. What first comes to mind is the music of John Williamson, one of if not the best current Australian country western singer. One of his most popular songs is "This is Australian Calling." I however own just about all of his music and have attended a packed live concert in Australia. In September, 2007 I stayed out in the bush for two months. Once you become friends with the Australians they take you in like family – I could have stayed for six months and my Australian friends would not have cared. During that time my Australian "mate" and I mined opal about three times a week leaving at noon for the mine and ending our dig at 4:00 P.M. Hey, we had put in a full day of opal mining! On the back of my fourth book – "Ben's Revenge" I have included the pictures of two pockets of gem opal before my mate and I removed the opal from the wall of the mine. Out of the first pocket of opal I found, I was able to cut three outstanding harlequin/flagstone green gem opals (in my twenty-nine years of opal cutting, this is the first harlequin I have personally had the pleasure of cutting).

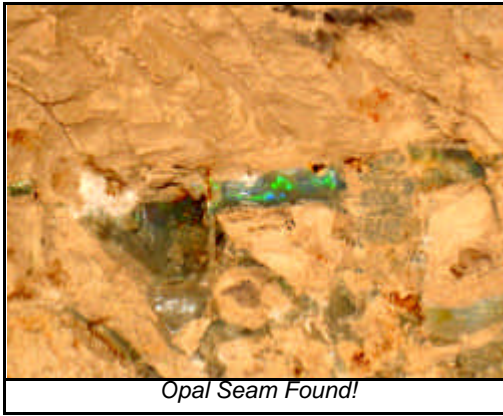


Richard Holmes in the mine.



Pillars in Mine

Attached are pictures of the opal in the mine wall and the three finished opal stones. However, foolish me, I got so excited about the incredible petrified wood I was finding in a gravel pit out in the bush (I carried more than twenty pounds home in my luggage), I



Opal Seam Found!

send my opal discoveries home in the Australia/US mail posted to a friend back in Charlotte where my mail had been forwarded and other packages coming up from Australia. Well, the long and the short of this story is that the local postman in the US pinched one of my opal parcels that contained even better opal than the finished three opals mentioned above. I filled a fraud claim with the US Post Office, had several meetings with the head postal people in Charlotte who did nothing (and by-the-way the postal carrier where my mail was being send had the audacity to tell my friend that he had a friend that loved opal). (I know where that parcel went).

That is why in my first book – “The Ratters of Lightning Ridge” I tell the reader the following:

Rating can come in many forms. A miner rats on a friend. A neighbor rats on his neighbor's claim by mining into it. People come in secret by day or by night and gouge out opal ratting a friend's claim. A miner rats on his partner. Maybe a miner finds opal and never lets his investment partner know, or just shorts him with junk opal and none of the good stuff. A miner can be out of money and have to sell his good opal to someone who says it is cracked and worth nothing. There is no end of ways people dream up ratting for valuable opal when it comes into their possession.

In 1999 I got so excited about mining gem opal, I found a partner in Santa Barbara, California and we jointly formed a company to mine opal in Lightning Ridge. Jointly we invested \$200,000 US. The fellow, next to our claim, who had been mining for over twenty years, told us it was “a glory hole.” He said that the opal in that claim alone was worth over a million dollars. Unfortunately, I had an eccentric Canadian as a miner who ripped off my partner and I in every way one could think of. Thus, the reason for writing my first fictional book – “The Ratters of Lightning Ridge.”

All I can say regarding my adventures in Australia is that it has been worth every penny. It's not what I have lost, but what I gained in adventure and the wonderful friends I have found in Australia. That's why I find John Williamson's music so enchanting. Williamson truly captures the magic of Oz.

I thought this might have some interest for some of our members! Does anyone know what a “grape otter pop” is? The Editor.

Black Opal Recipe

- 1/2 oz vodka
- 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 oz rum
- 1/2 oz triple sec
- 1/2 oz blackberry liqueur
- 1/2 oz Blue Curacao liqueur
- 1 oz 7-Up® soda
- 1 1/2 oz sweet and sour mix

Stir all ingredients together in a beer glass. Garnish with a cherry and lemon wedge. When done right it should taste like a grape otter pop.

From <http://www.drinks.mixer.com/drink11225.html>

Iolite – A Gemstone Used in Ancient Navigation

By Gary Hocking

A stupendous stone in my opinion! Its colours range from yellowish grey all the way through to the most magnificent deep blues and violet and that is the colour which particularly mesmerizes me. It is often confused with sapphires and tanzanites. It is plentiful and relatively inexpensive but do not write off its high gemstone quality.

It is found in Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia, the USA, Sri Lanka, India and Australia as well as many African states. It is also called cordierite.

Iolite comes from the Greek “ios” meaning violet. It was also called diochroite another Greek word which means “two coloured” stone.

On the Moh's scale used for measuring hardness with diamond being the highest at 10 Iolite comes in at 7-7.5 which means it is about mid range for your usual high quality gemstones. That is significant as it will chip and scratch but will also stand up to normal wear and tear. It seems that it is one of the few stones that is not treated or enhanced. For reference, something like ninety percent of all rubies are heat treated and many other stones such as topaz are irradiated.

The Vikings knew about as it was found in Scandinavia. They knew a secret about Iolite which may have changed the course of history. They used it as a navigation tool. By looking through the crystal they could see the direction of the sun on overcast days. This was a function of its pleochroism which means that it changes colour when you look at it from different angles. To understand that better imagine that you can hold it and look at a magnificent deep blue and just by turning it around the colour stars to disappear until you cannot see any colour at all! This is pleochroism and Iolite has pronounced pleochroism.

It is a cutters' nightmare. Well, at least it is not an easy stone to cut and get the most from even though it can be cut into the standard facet cuts such as emerald, marquise, trillion and can also be made into beautiful cabochons.

As the carat size increases Iolite generally gets darker and less attractive. The smaller stones are often the most attractive. The lighter blues and greys are less expensive with the richer the blue colour being the more expensive. It is not a birthstone and as a significant gemstone perhaps Iolite's time has not come yet but it is getting more and more popular every day so expect to see it become very popular in coming years. I heartily recommend it to you. A yellow gold ring with diamonds and a central Iolite is simply adorable.

Author: Gary Hocking is an Australian manufacturing jeweller and he has his own website: <http://www.jewelleryexpress.com.au> Please feel free to copy and use this article as long as you keep the bio and attached live link to his website.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Gary_Hocking

Foundations of Opal Value

This article was written by one of the customers of the Opal Gallery who is an opal cutter and investor. It offers an explanation for the intrinsic value and market price for the opal. (He owns and cut most of the stones seen in the [Opal Gallery](#).)

In the Beginning...

Many books and stories have been written about the opal, how it is formed and where it is found. But there can never be enough said about the rigors of opal mining and the process by which it comes to market. For not only is it the intrinsic rarity and beauty of

the opal that determines its price; it is the danger, and the risk at every stage of the process.

There are 'authorities' in the mining areas that appraise rough opal for tax purposes, and there are individuals whom the miners seek to have it appraised before it is offered to a buyer.

Depending on the quality of the parcel, the miner seeks out a buyer who will most likely be able to offer him the best price, in cash. The sale of a parcel is often something akin to a sumo wrestling match of wits and experience.

The buyer considers the current market, the quality (kickyness) of the stones, and his previous experience with the miner. If the miner is known to be shady, it is most likely that the best buyers will just pass up the parcel.

One of the most important considerations is the source of the parcel. If it is from a field that is known for producing 'healthy' opal, and the buyer is confident of the honesty of the miner, then a sale is imminent.

If the buyer thinks that the miner is not being truthful, or the parcel is from a field that is known for producing opal that will crack or craze after cutting, then either he will pass up the parcel, or offer a very low price for it.

It should be noted that both dishonest miners, buyers, and poor fields are well-known, and none will last long in the trade.

But it is the buyer who suffers most if he sells poor quality opal. The miner may be just a weekend warrior, or maybe mines only once a year on vacation. But the buyer must maintain a reputation both for being fair with the miner (or he doesn't get offers), and for never knowingly selling 'cracky' opal.

So what's this about 'healthy' Opal ?

The opal has been known for thousands of years. But up until the discovery of opal in Australia, all sources of opal were prone to producing material that most often cracked or crazed or turned cloudy within a short time after it was mined or cut. Such opal is often said to be 'unhealthy'.

One can imagine the source of the myth about 'unlucky opal' as springing from the fact that an opal cutter might well lose his head should an opal 'die' after having cut it ...

The most important thing about Australian opal is that for over a hundred years, it has been known to be very stable. This does not mean that there is no unhealthy opal in Australia, but rather that a great percentage of its opal is healthy. More so than from any other source in the world.

At the Field

The government of Australia estimates that only one out of a hundred miners finds a significant parcel in any year.

The miner normally chooses to dig in known-good fields. Not only is it likely that he will find opal that has been missed by other miners, but also it is extremely risky to strike out into areas that have not been proven.

This is not an inexpensive or easy enterprise. If he chooses to mine alone with hand tools and dynamite, he is in for a long and punishing task. If he chooses to partner with others and employ large earth-moving equipment, a find is still not guaranteed, and when found, the profits must be split many ways. The staggering cost of the equipment, fuel and repairs often outweighs the gains.

Although luck plays a large part in the treasure hunt, it is said that the only way to find the opal is to "move the dirt". And over a long period of time, the miner learns how better to read the signs in the earth, and at least know when to quit in one spot and try another.

Most often, mining yields only a meager amount of lower grade opal, just enough that the miner can live to dig another hole. If he can stick it out, and develops a good reputation, he will be invited to join partnerships with others. Although there is still no guarantee of success, at least the mining goes faster, and much more safely.

Of course, if he becomes known as devious and untrustworthy, he will be shunned. Not only will he have difficulty finding partners,

but reputable buyers will avoid him. Finding the opal is one thing. Finding a buyer is another.

To the Buyer

The first-level buyer must be very familiar with the miner and be able to appraise the value of the opal in the rough. This is very difficult because it is offered to him in a form which has often simply been tumbled and washed. The 'skin' of clay or sandstone is still present, and often obscures both the quality of the opal and possible cracks or imperfections. With hundreds of thousands of dollars at stake, a buyer can not make a mistake more than once...!

All buyers are middle-men, but many are specifically interested in only a few second level buyers such as large consortia in the far-east who buy mostly lower-quality opal for the production of inexpensive jewelry or the making of triplets.

There are only a few first-level buyers who specialize in the higher-quality opal, and selling to individual jewelers, cutters and lapidarists. It takes decades of experience to develop a reputation for providing good quality opal. Good luck helps at first, but everyone knows that luck can only last so long.

The first-level buyer is not an investor, but rather more like a banker. The investor plans on keeping the opal until a better market affords percentage gains. The buyer must sell the opal as quickly as possible, and thus always have the cash on hand to purchase the next parcel. The percentage gain is less, but the profit is returned thru rapid turnover.

The buyer's life is not easy either. Caught between the need to maintain large cash stores, and having to wait sometimes months for payment. Although often living in a nicer home, the fact that it's known that "that's where the money is", is not conducive to a good night's sleep!

Micro-Mining, or The Great Treasure Hunt

Although there are many investors who put away stones and parcels in anticipation of a higher return, the most exciting and most perilous task is that of the cutter.

Whenever the miner finds a truly great parcel, he knows it. Even from the edges of the stones, the fire and color are obvious. These parcels are usually small, but sell on the field for between \$5,000 and \$50,000 per ounce!

But, below that point there are parcels that include stones that are truly great, and will not be discovered until the cutter puts a blade and wheel to the stone.

This is perhaps the greatest treasure hunt in all of the lapidary world!

Whether the parcel costs \$100 or \$5000 per ounce, there is nothing more exciting than putting the wheel to the stone. No one can have known before what beauty is inside.

To the true opaholic, nothing is more satisfying than to give birth to an opal. Skinning off the outer clay and seeing the color burst forth, makes your heart race and your hair stand on end!

But this is just the beginning, for now you must decide how best to shape the stone.

Smaller stones are the easiest, often dictating their final form simply by their size. Larger stones are more difficult, but offer the possibility of choosing the final shape and orientation for that perfect 'face'.

Herein lies the rub. A larger stone will often have variations of color and patterns from one end to the other, and it must be decided whether to cut or grind away the lesser parts in order to expose the greater.

It is a subject of great debate whether to cut away the lesser parts, leaving only the finest part, or to leave some of the lesser as a 'frame' for the better. Some would argue that it is sinful to do anything but polish up the whole stone and keep it intact.

It is extremely rare to find a large stone that possesses a uniform balance of color and pattern throughout. Most often the stone must be cut so that the different patterns and color are isolated, each to a single stone.

In higher grade material, the loss from just the 'kerf' of the saw blade can waste well over \$100! And the stone still has to be rounded, smoothed and polished, wasting even more carat weight. Only experience can teach you how to estimate the potential yield of finished carat weight in a rough stone or parcel.

Thus it is always advised that you gain experience cutting the lower grades of rough, or be certain of the one who you choose to do your cutting.

If the cutter is not skilled, the stone might be overheated, perhaps cracking in the process, perhaps crazing some time later.

It is the cutting of the rough that carries the greatest risk, for once you put a blade or wheel to the rough stone, no dealer will take it back. It's yours.

Lower grade rough often yields great surprises as well as disappointments. Sometimes you will find a great stone in a parcel that cost only \$100 per ounce. Sometimes you will find that you have to cut 'free-forms' and spend a lot of time digging out clay and sand spots and then polishing the uneven surface.

Of course the more time you have to spend goes into the equation of profit. So, as you gain experience and confidence (and the lust!), you will want to buy rough material where it is evident that it will be an easy cut, and offers a better yield.

As the cost of the rough goes up, so too does the probability of getting better stones. But even with the highest quality rough, there can be no guarantee that you will not find flaws that force you to cut smaller stones and lose precious material in the process.

It has been a matter of honor among cutters and sellers of cut stones that a stone should not be offered for sale for some time after it is cut. The American Gemological Society suggests that a guarantee should offer money back or replacement should the stone die within a year of purchase.

Of course, rough opal cannot be so guaranteed because it still has to be cut and set into the final piece of jewelry. Although the opal is easy to work, it can easily be mistreated or overheated in the cutting, and then can be over-stressed in the process of setting.

The cutter and the jeweler are the ones who take the greatest risk, and therefore deserve to earn the highest percentage return on their investment!

Properly cut and polished, it is not uncommon to realize two to three times your original investment!

You will always run the risk of getting unhealthy material. You will always take the risk of botching the cut. The only thing you can do to protect yourself is to buy from a reputable dealer, and practice, practice, practice!

From <http://www.shed.com/aom/storyfile/aboutprices.html>

Chrysoprase Jewellery – Australia's answer to Jade

By Gary Hocking

When the mineral Serpentine weathers down we end up with one of the rarest of the chalcedony gemstones Chrysoprase.

It is rare, valuable and a gorgeous green! It is so close to Jade that it has been marketed as Australian Jade. The colours vary from an apple green to a very deep rich green. It has a bright an even colour a lot like Jade does. Chrysoprase has a long history and goes well back to the days of the Romans and Greeks. The Romans would make lovely cameos from this stone.

Chrysoprase was very popular in Europe over the centuries and mined in Silesia, which is now part of Poland, where the supplies were finally exhausted in the twentieth century.

Frederick the Great of Prussia is said to have had a walking stick with a solid Chrysoprase handle. It was certainly one of his favourite gems and when you can have anything that you like then what you choose certainly must have interesting qualities.

The name is a little complicated as it derives from two Greek words chryso meaning golden and the word for leek prason.

Today the gem is almost entirely an Australian gemstone mined mostly in Queensland but there are some deposits in the Ural Mountains, Brazil and the USA.

As a stone for jewellery it is excellent coming in on the Mohs' scale with a hardness of between 6 and 7 which allows it to be easily cleaned in ultrasonic cleaning devices used by jewellers.

Like in Roman and Greek times it is suitable for carving even though the source of the stone has changed the wonderful jewellery making properties remain. It is well suited for earrings, pendants and rings. It looks fantastic in white or yellow gold and set with diamond accents. Most will probably prefer it in a white gold or platinum setting. But don't forget Palladium as an alternative to these two white metals.

The stone will lose its water content and the colour may fade a little so it is okay to put it in water to revive it at times.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Gary_Hocking

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May 2009 Gem & Mineral Shows

1-3--BISHOP, CA: Show, "Eastern Sierra Gem & Mineral Show"; Lone Pine Gem & Mineral Society; Tri-County Fairgrounds; Fri. 6-10, Sat. 9:30-4, Sun. 10-3; free admission; door prizes, raffle, field trips, demonstrations; contact Jeff Lines, (760) 872-6597; e-mail: rockmun@hotmail.com; Web site: <http://lpgms.org>

1-3--VALLEY SPRINGS, CA: 35th annual show, "Snyder's Valley Springs Pow Wow"; The Snyders; 1290 Paloma Rd.; Wed. 5-8, Thu. 8-5, Fri. 8-6, Sat. 8-6, Sun. 8-5; free admission; more than 200 vendors, gems, minerals, fossils, crafts, dealer day Thu., kids' day Fri.; contact Diana Gigliotti, P.O. Box 1777, Valley Springs, CA 95252, (209) 772-9977; e-mail: dcgig@caltel.com; Web site: www.valleyspringspowwow.com

2-3--ANAHEIM, CA: 50th anniversary show; The Searchers Gem & Mineral Society; Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 W. Crescent Ave.; Sat. 10-5:30, Sun. 10-4:30; free admission; lapidary and jewelry-making demonstrations, dealers, club member displays, door prizes, gold panning with Route 66 Gold Miners, silent auctions; contact Clarke Benich, 18661 Silver Maple Way, N. Tustin, CA 92705, (714) 639-9927; e-mail: clarkebenich@yahoo.com; Web site: www.searchersrocks.org

2-3--WALNUT CREEK, CA: Show, "The Great Contra Costa Crystal Fair"; Pacific Crystal Guild; Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. at Broadway; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5, children under 12 free; gems, jewelry, crystals, beads, psychics; contact Jerry Tomlinson, (415) 383-7837; e-mail: sfxtl@earthlink.net; Web site: www.crystalfair.com

8-10--COSTA MESA, CA: Gem Faire OC Fair & Event Center/Bldg. 10, 88 Fair Dr. Gem Faire hours: Fri. 12pm-7pm, Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Admission \$5 weekend pass. For more info, contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300 or e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

13--McCLELLAN (SACRAMENTO), CA: Wholesale show; Rings & Things; Lion's Gate Hotel Sacramento (Garden Pavilion), 3410 Wover St.; Wed. 12-4; contact Dave Robertson, (800) 366-2156; Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/

14--SAN MATEO, CA: Wholesale show; Rings & Things; San Mateo Co. Expo Center Meeting Pavilion, 2495 S. DE St.; Thu. 1-5; contact Dave Robertson, (800) 366-2156; Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/

15-17--ANDERSON, CA: Show; Superior CA Gem & Mineral Association; Shasta Fairgrounds, 1890 Briggs; Fri. 9-5, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; tailgaters, indoor dealers, demonstrators, gold panning, wire wrapping, soapstone carving, cabochon making, flint knapping, raffle, displays, free door prize drawings, dealers, gems, gold and silver jewelry, fossils, minerals, beads, supplies; contact Bill Seward, (530) 365-8641; e-mail: kstoltz13@rontinet.net

15-17--COSTA MESA, CA: Show, "West Coast Gem & Mineral Show - Spring"; Martin Zinn Expositions; Holiday Inn - Bristol Plaza, 3131 S. Bristol; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; 120 wholesale and retail dealers, open to the public; contact Martin Zinn Expositions, P.O. Box 665, Bernalillo, NM 87004-0665, fax (505) 867-0073; e-mail: mz0955@aol.com; Web site: www.mzexpos.com

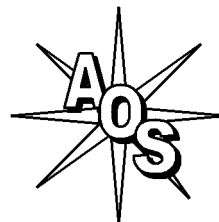
15-17--SACRAMENTO, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; Cal Expo/Bldg. A, 1600 Exposition Blvd.; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; \$5 weekend pass; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

16--BUENA PARK, CA: Wholesale show; Rings & Things; Holiday Inn Buena Park, 7000 Beach Blvd.; Sat. 10-2; contact Dave Robertson, (800) 366-2156; Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/

16-17--NEWBURY PARK, CA: 35th annual show, "Pageant of a Thousand Gems"; Conejo Gem & Mineral Club; Borchard Park, 190 Reino Rd.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4:30; free admission; minerals, rocks, fossils, exhibits, demonstrations, dealers, youth activities, door prizes, silent auctions, plant

sales; contact Robert Sankovich, (805) 494-7734; e-mail: rmsorca@adelphia.net; Web site: www.cgamc.org
 16-17--YUCAIPA, CA: Show; Yucaipa Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Yucaipa Community Center, 34900 Oak Glen Rd.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; 16 dealers, gems, rocks, children's rock Bingo, Spin the Wheel, demonstrations, wire wrapping, beading, sphere making, rock polishing, silent auction; contact William P. Jochimsen, 35525 W Ave., Yucaipa, CA 92399, (909) 790-1475; e-mail: bjm2285@aol.com; Web site: <http://mysite.verizon.net/yucaipagem>
 17--SAN BERNARDINO, CA: Wholesale show; Rings & Things; Hilton San Bernardino (The Inland Ballroom), 285 E. Hospitality Ln.; Sun. 10-2; contact Dave Robertson, (800) 366-2156; Web site: www.rings-things.com/Show/
 29-31--LAS VEGAS, NV: Retail and wholesale show; Bead Renaissance Shows; Palace Station Hotel/Casino, 2411 W. Sahara Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; bead artists, dealers, ancient, vintage, contemporary and designer beads, jewelry, tools, books; contact J&J Promotions LLC, P.O. Box 420, Williamsburg, NM 87942, (575) 894-1293; e-mail: beadshow@aol.com; Web site: www.beadshow.com
 29-31--SANTA BARBARA, CA: Show; Gem Faire Inc.; Earl Warren Showgrounds/Exhibit Hall, 3400 Calle Real; Fri. 12-7, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5;

\$5 weekend pass; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com
30-31--GLENDORA, CA: Show; Glendora GEMS; 859 E. Sierra Madre Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; contact Bonnie Bidwell, (626) 963-4638; e-mail: Ybidwell2@aol.com



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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

American Opal Society
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**Volume #42 Issue #5
May 2009**

TO:

Some Topics In This Issue:

- Message from the Show Chairman, Gene LeVan
- Lost Opal Mine
- Opals along the Tequila Road
- New Opal from Welo, Ethiopia
- This is Australia Calling!
- Black Opal Recipe
- Iolite-Gemstone in Ancient Navigation
- Foundations of Opal Value
- Chrysoprase Jewellery – Australia's answer to Jade

Important Dates:

May 5th - Board Meeting

May 14th - General Meeting
Show and Tell this Month. Bring in your favorite gem, specimen, or piece of jewelry for everyone to ooh and aaah over.

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

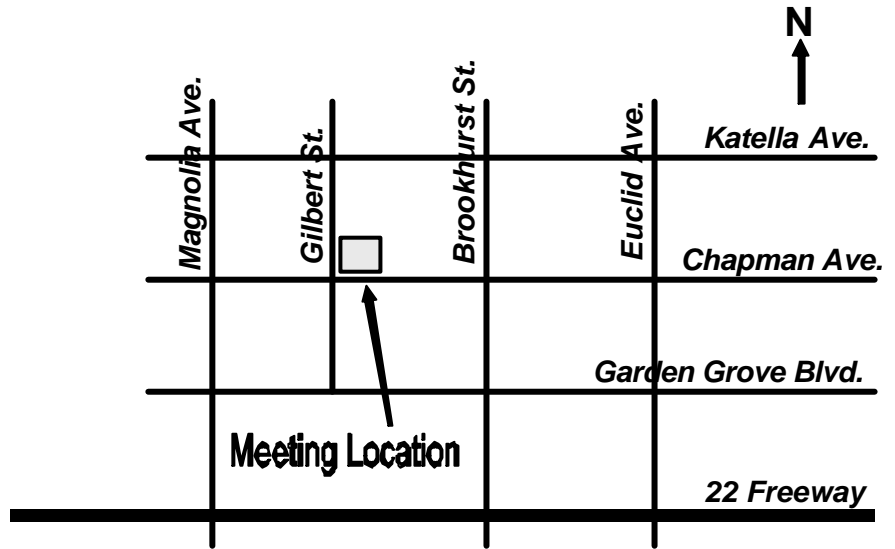
2nd Thursday of the Month
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

Garden Grove Civic Women's Club
9501 Chapman Ave.
Garden Grove, CA 92841
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

MEETING ACTIVITIES

Opal Cutting, Advice, Guest Speakers,
Slide Shows, Videos, Other Activities

May 14th - Show and Tell



The American Opal Society
<http://OpalSociety.org>

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