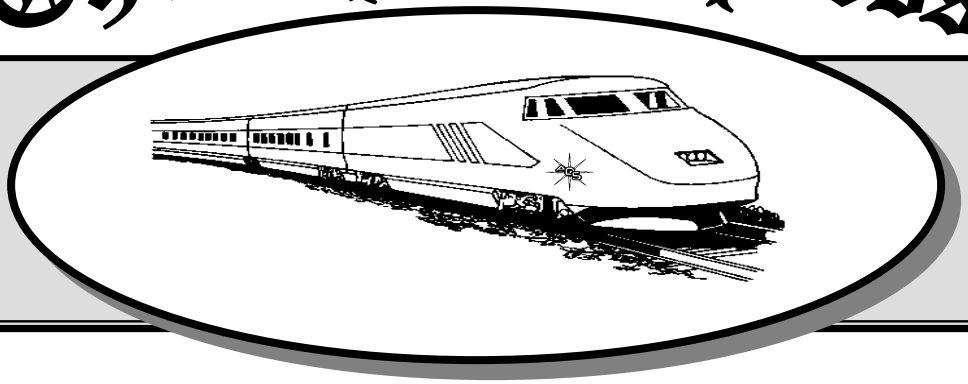
The Opal Express



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Members Only Website Password

AOS website's members only area: Name: "member" and Password: "opalbug".

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Words to Dig By

Fossil: Farmers in medieval Europe dug trenches and ditches to drain rainwater off their fields. These trenches were called "fosses" after the Latin expression meaning "to dig." Often enough, the ditch diggers uncovered what appeared to be ancient bones, teeth, or shells and called them "fossils" because they came from a fosse.

Erosion: Mice and other gnawing animals plagued the ancient Romans, and it is from their term rodere, "to gnaw," that we derive the word "rodent." Later, the alchemists experimented with acids and discovered that they would attack metals, slowly dissolving them. This slow corrosive action was labeled "erosion." Geologist then adopted the term erosion to describe how glaciers, streams, and rivers gnawed away sediments and rocks.

Goldbrick: Goldbricking is the shirking of one's duties, but the term had its origins during the Gold Rush days. An unscrupulous promoter would cover a block of lead with a layer of gold and offer it at a "discount" to unwary investors. The man who bought the "goldbrick" was cheated and the word came to be a verb meaning "to swindle." During World War I, however, the term acquired a somewhat different meaning. A soldier who avoided doing his duty was called a "goldbrick." The term retains its original meaning as a secondary definition.

Bonanza: Bonanza is another word that entered general use during the Gold Rush days. Derived from the Latin bonus for "good," the work bonanza was coined by Spanish sailors to describe days of clear weather coming on the heels of a storm. The term came to mean any good fortune and was applied to very rich gold discoveries. Today, the term is applied to any source of great wealth.

Source: Ref.: Garrison, W., 445 Fascinating Word Origins (Galahad Books, N. Y. 2000) 248 pp. ©2011, An-drew A. Sicree, Ph.D. via The Rockhounder

From Moroks newsletter 2/2014

American Opal Society Calendar

Date	*General Meeting Topic / Speaker*
01/09/14	Gregg Bunch on Lab Created Quartz Crystals
02/13/14	Video of "Gem Hunt" on Welo Opal
03/13/14	Gabriel Mosesson on Ethiopian Welo Opal
04/10/14	Jim Bowden on Rattlesnake Awareness
05/08/14	***Jim Pisani on an Introduction to Metal Detection***
06/12/14	**Live Opal Auction**
07/10/14	*To Be Announced*
08/14/14	**Opal Cutting Seminar**
09/11/14	*To Be Announced*
10/09/14	**Opal & Gem Show Work Session**
11/08/14	**47th Annual Opal, Gem, & Jewelry Show**
11/09/14	**47th Annual Opal, Gem, & Jewelry Show**
11/13/14	**Opal Show Recap / Possible Speaker**
12/11/14	**AOS Christmas Party Potluck**

ng the color.

Jim Bowden

Last Month's Speaker – Jim Bowden on Rattlesnake Awareness

Freeze-dried rattlesnakes that Jim had for display

By Veronica Purpura

The AOS had guest speaker Jim Bowden return for April's meeting with a special presentation aimed towards all rock hounds; Rattlesnake Awareness. Jim presented an interesting slide show about the various snakes that inhabit the California area and how to identify which were threats, which weren't and which ones to flat-out avoid. He described the difference between a legless lizard and a snake, followed by the variations between a venomous and non-venomous snake.

He provided up-close photos of the various rattlesnakes one can encounter in the wild here in California, which regions they inhabit and some pointers on their behaviors. He followed this with basic safety advice on what to do when encountering or bitten by a snake, along with recommendations for obtaining help and first aid. The presentation was followed by Q & A and a cool table display of various freeze-dried snake specimens and equipment used in the field. Jim Bowden always brings an interesting display and an in-depth knowledge of the subjects he presents, making for an interesting talk that's enjoyed by all in the club.

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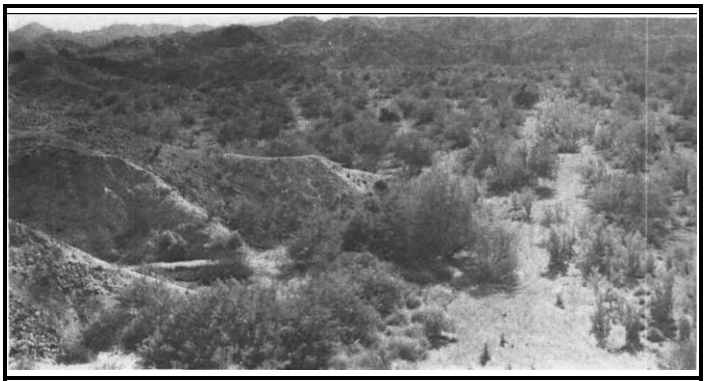
I just love these "lost gold" stories from the old Desert Magazine. May have to go look for it! JJP – The Editor

Lost Mule Shoe Gold

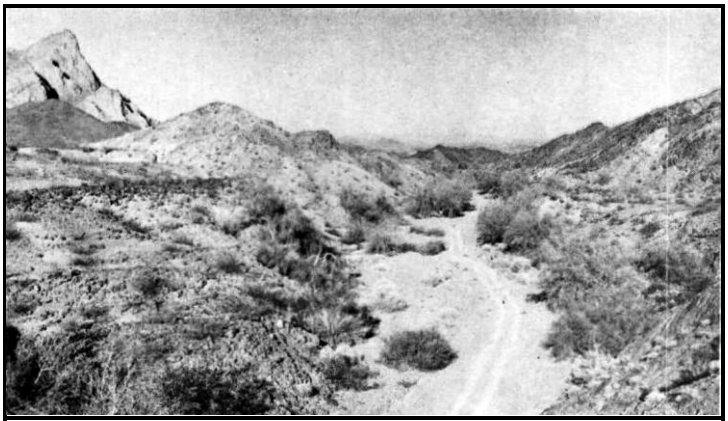
The desert surrounding California's Picacho Peak is confusing, dangerous, waterless country—no place for the inexperienced desert traveler. It was across this maze of washes and mesas, canyons and mountain ridges that the lone prospector, violently ill with dysentery, struggled on his way to Dos Palmas Oasis. Somewhere along his ill-marked route he stumbled upon a rich gold ledge. Unable to return to his bonanza, he gave instructions to William Smith, who for more than 20 years carried on an intensive search for the gold. Just recently did Smith's friends, doubtful whether the old man still lived, offer Harold Weight the complete story of the Lost Mule Shoe Mine, for publication in this issue of Desert Magazine.

By Harold O. Weight
Photos by the Author
Map by Norton Allen



In the maze of buttes and ridges of Parra Wash?

Is 40 years or more since the man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold rode from Picacho on the Colorado River 25 miles north of Yuma into that maze of cragged mountains, volcanic flows, rock-paved mesas and great washes to the northwest. He was seeking the most direct possible way to the oasis of Dos Palmas, almost 90 airline miles distant. It would have been foolhardy for a healthy man to strike out thus, alone, across an empty and jumbled and almost waterless land. This traveler was almost too ill to ride. But in time he reached his destination—and on the way he stumbled upon a ledge



Off the lonely jeep trail which threads down Gavilan Wash?

Old Indian trail into Indian Pass. The man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold may have taken this very trail out of the country beyond the pass where he found his rich ledge.

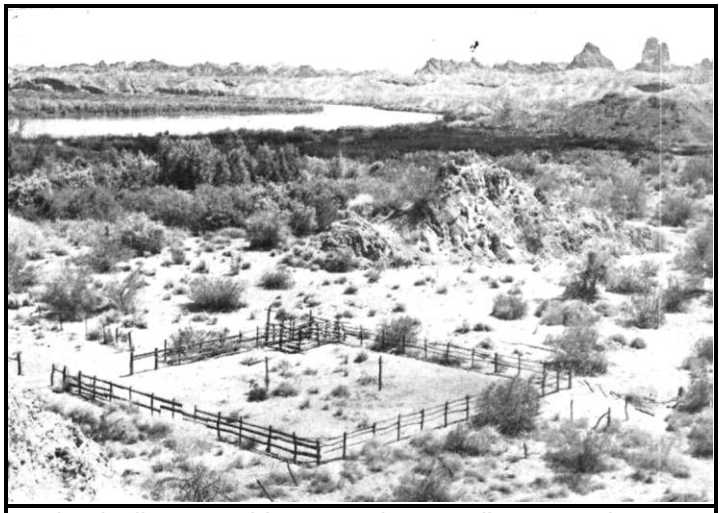
so richly laced with yellow metal that the rock would scarcely fall apart, even when broken.

Unfortunately, the man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold never returned to his golden bonanza to reap its reward. Nor was he able to describe his route so others could trace it out —though at least one man spent the greater part of a lifetime in the attempt. Possibly he failed because it was no real trail he had followed, but part road and part ancient Indian pathway and part, perhaps, the ways of wild game to watering places, and part a trail less trek up sandy washes and over a multitude of look-alike ridges. The man had been ill with dysentery when he was ferried across from Arizona to Picacho. Nonetheless, he was desperately determined to press on to Dos Palmas. He did press on, but four and a half hours after he had left Picacho, he was so sick and so weak that he could continue no farther. At that time he was crossing a saddle between two low hills. He dismounted and sprawled on the ground.

After a few moments he felt better, and as he lay there, his eyes wandered over a ledge which cropped out nearby. Even in his semi-conscious condition he saw the golden streakings in the rock and was excited by them. He made his way to the ledge. The ore was rich beyond anything he had ever seen. Should it continue to any depth, here was a fortune! And spilling down from the ledge was the dull gleam of placer gold that had been eroded from it.

Here was the realization of every prospector's dream—if he could stake out claims and file upon them. But he was too weak even to build a stone discovery monument. Finally he removed his vest, folded it and laid it on the ledge. Then he took a spare mule shoe from the load on his pack mule and placed it on the vest to hold it in place. With samples from the ledge, and one last look at the terrain to fix it in his mind, he rode on. The vest and mule shoe, he hoped, would be there to identify the spot when he returned.

But when he reached the coast, his illness continued and in time became infinitely worse. He was in the veterans' hospital at Sawtelle when William M. Smith learned from him the story of the golden ledge he had seen so briefly. Smith's relationship to the man is uncertain. One says a brother-in-law, another a son-in-law, a third no relation. But Smith visited the man in the hospital over a period of

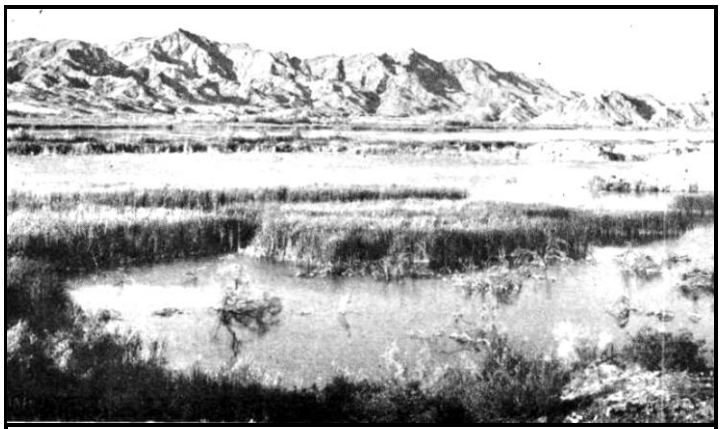


Or, ironically, near old 4S Ranch at Gavilan's mouth, headquarters of William M. Smith, the mine's most persistent searcher? Wetback trail, extreme right, Picacho Peak right background.

two years. And at last the old prospector gave Smith a map of the route he had followed, as he remembered it.

"I'll never get back now," he said. "If you find it, send me just enough to make me comfortable." So the man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold passes from the story. Today not even his name is remembered by those who have heard of h s strike. Even the date of his discovery is indefinite. According to Carl Walker, of Gold Rock Ranch near Ogilby, California, who heard the story often from Smith, the ledge was found while the American Girl and Hedges mines in the nearby Cargo Muchacho Mountains were still operating. Hedges, later Tumco, was worked quite steadily from 1892 to 1909 and intermittently, 1910-16. The American Girl was active from 1892 to 1900, and 1913-16.

There was no doubt in William M. Smith's mind that the strike was a real one. Probably he saw some of the ore. At any rate, in 1927 he bought one time or another, but back from the river there are no habitations. West from the river no road has touched the most of it, and probably no road ever will. It was lonelier when Smith hunted the ledge from the 4S than it was when the sick man first found it. It was lonelier when that man crossed it than it had been a decade or two before, when prospectors were numerous. And it is even more lonely today than it was when Smith started his search, and just as dangerous as it has always been for the careless or inexperienced.



The main streets of old Picacho, just beyond the tides, are now under the water backed up by Imperial Dam. The man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold was ferried across the Colorado from Arizona at this point and 4V2 hours by horseback to the northwest of the old camp he made his strike.

All of the land where the Lost Mule Shoe Gold may be hidden is considered a part of the Chocolate Mountains. On the river side, above Picacho, at least a score of giant washes drain these mountains, and have cut their foothills and mesas into thousands of ridges and buttes—and probably into thousands of low hills connected by saddles. Among them are White Wash and Bear Gulch and Carrizo, Gavilan and Julian Parra washes, in that order, and far to the north, Vinagre. In most of these washes, placer gold has been found.

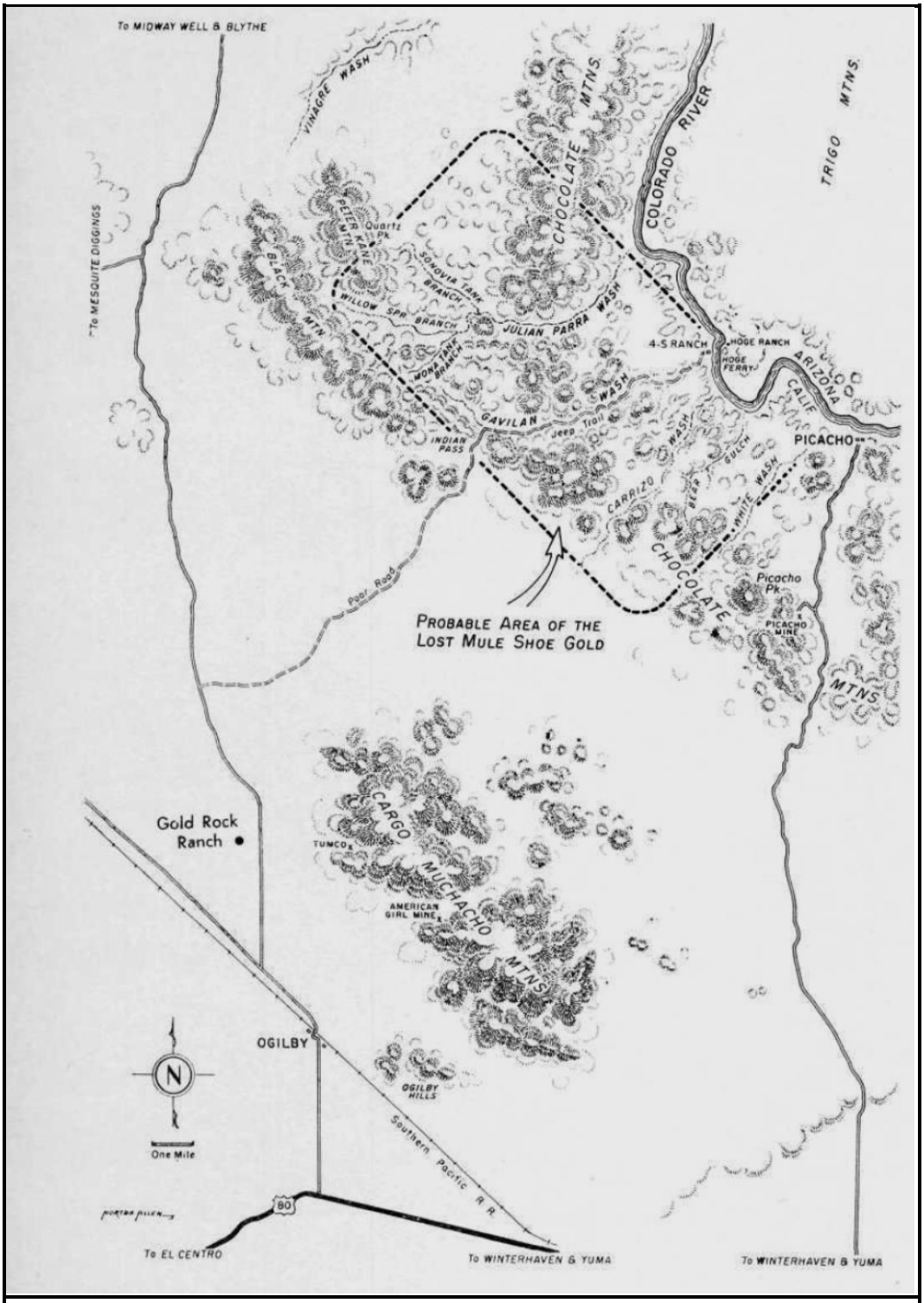
When the discoverer of the lost golden ledge rode through this country, the river road from Picacho crossed the mouths of all these washes. There also was the road Hoge built up Gavilan Wash to Indian Mesa, along which he once trail-herded hogs from his Arizona ranch. There was the road Julian Parra roughed out from an upper tributary of the wash that bears his name to Mesquite Diggings, which he discovered. And many were the deep-rutted Indian trails, leading to watering places and through the easy passes, still used by Indians and Mexican and American miners.

Today the river road lies submerged by backed-up waters of Imperial Dam, and Parra's mining road has almost vanished. The Indian trails are broken and weathered and unused. Between Picacho and Vinagre Wash — more than 20 miles by the river—the only road which enters this lonely land is the jeep trail successor to the one Hoge made up Gavilan Wash.

But which of the great washes did the man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold enter? Which of the old roads or trails did he follow even in part?

"I feel," says Carl Walker, "that the maximum a sick man could make in four and one-half hours, riding a horse and leading a pack mule, would not be over 16 miles. If I were trying the property at the old Hoge ferry landing, at the mouth of Gavilan Wash, about seven miles above Picacho. Later he frankly stated that he had bought the ranch to be in a position to hunt for the lost ledge, which he was certain would be found within a few miles of that point. He put up new buildings beside the river, named it the 4S ranch, moved his family in, and began the quest which was to continue the rest of his active life. And even after he had given up the ranch, more than 10 years later, and moved back "inside," Smith returned again and again to hunt for the Lost Mule Shoe Gold.

If it does exist how could Smith, aided by the map and the directions given him by the original finder, have searched for more than 20 years in vain? Anyone who knows the Picacho country can answer that. Above the old gold camp is mile upon mile of desert-mountain wilderness which has never been tamed by man. Prospectors have been through most of it, at to retrace that man's steps; I would do just as he did. I would start from Picacho, riding a horse and leading a mule and remembering that he was sick, and take the shortest route to Dos Palmas. That would establish his speed and the approximate area in which he could have made his discovery." But what was the shortest route to Dos Palmas, as the man who found the Lost Mule Shoe Gold knew it? That would depend upon his knowledge of the land—or lack of it. The course he followed could shift, by several miles, the place where the search for the lost ledge should begin. A mile, or even a square mile, does not



Area Map

look large on the map. But when one attempts to explore it on foot or horseback, the area becomes immense. Particularly is this true in broken country like Picacho, where a square mile spread out flat would probably equal ten square miles.

Walker thinks the sensible route would have been along the river road to Gavilan Wash, up it to Indian Mesa, across to Mesquite Diggings, then down to the Southern Pacific Railroad where water would be available. Smith's map must have led him to the same conclusion, for this is the line along which he began his search. But through the years, his quest widened. When Ed Rochester, who has prospected all of the Picacho country, first heard of the Lost Mule Shoe Gold from Smith, about 1932, the latter was concentrating his hunt for the ledge between the 4S Ranch and Midway Well, especially in the area where Parra Wash heads, east of Imperial Gables. Ed thinks that Carizzo, Gavilan and Parra washes are all possible locations for the lost ledge, with Parra most likely.

When Clyde Stewart of Picacho, who also has prospected this country thoroughly, talked to Smith in 1937 about the ledge, Smith was searching for it in the main northern tributary of Parra Wash, where the great Sonovia natural water tank is located. Julian Parra Wash — Julian wash on some maps, and invariably called "Hoolihan" by the old timers—has three chief tributaries, the left with Mona Tank, the center with Willow Spring, and the right with

Sonovia Tanks. Julian Parra, who had a ranch at the mouth of the wash, was placering gold near Sonovia Tanks 65 years ago. Stewart believes that the lost ledge is in or near this branch.

"Every wash that comes in to Parra from the north side will pan gold," he declares, "but Sonovia has the most. And this is the way the old main Indian trail went, right past Sonovia Tanks. They never go dry."

Myself, I wonder—since Dos Palmas and not Glamis, Amos, Niland or any other railroad station was given by Smith as the sick man's destination —if it is not possible that he kept south of the Chocolate Mountains all the way. He may have traveled on a northwest line, past Midway Well and on until he struck the old Bradshaw or Chuckawalla Trail, then followed it past Canyon Springs to Dos Palmas. This could have placed him north even of Parra Wash in four and one half hours.

When Smith last visited Ed Rochester at Picacho—Ed believes it was in 1948 or 1949—he had been up Parra Wash in the vicinity of Mona Tank on another hunt for the lost gold, and he kept Ed up all night talking about it. His search had failed again, but he blamed the wetback Mexicans for it. They had been in the area in such numbers that he was afraid to go farther or stay longer. Unfortunately that is true today.

You cannot go anywhere along the river—or often many miles back from it—without seeing some of these border- jumping laborers—the *braceros*— or evidence of their recent presence. When we jeeped down Gavilan Wash and over the ridges to Parra Wash this spring, we passed several of them. Their trail along the river, pounded to deep, white dust by thousands of poorly shod feet, can be seen miles away and is so well marked it can be followed by starlight. Frequent graves —often low mounds of gravel in desert washes, with half-gallon water bottles as the only markers—are poignant evidence of their desperate determination to achieve their golden dream— common laborers' jobs in the United States. Most of them are honest and friendly, but it would be foolhardy for lone or unprotected persons to chance the bad hombres among them, or the vicious ones who sometimes travel with them.

After his visit with Rochester, William Smith made one more attempt to locate the Lost Mule Shoe Gold — probably his final one—late in the winter of 1949. He was alone this time and he stopped, as he often had in the past, with the Walkers at Gold Rock Ranch. And that night the old man was certain of success.

"I know exactly where it is," he insisted. "I'm going right up there and find it tomorrow." Then he urged Carl Walker to come with him. "I'll fill that box with gold for you," he said, pointing to the old trunk the Walkers used as a wood box.

But that same night he made the only change in his lost mine story that they remember. Walker mentioned the low hills with the saddle between. "Oh, no!" Smith corrected him. "It was a saddle between two high hills!" Later—they talked most of the night —he broke off in his enthusiasm to smile sheepishly at Margaret Walker. "I guess I've got the gold bug," he admitted.

In the early morning they saw him off up the road toward Indian Pass. "Be careful!" Mrs. Walker warned. "Don't get your car off the trail. You're too old to be able to work it out of the sand."

That evening he had not returned by the time he promised, and the Walkers set out to look for him. Not many miles from the ranch they found him. Shortly after he had left them in the morning, he had attempted to drive up a big sandy wash. The sand trapped him, and there he had been sitting all day. He returned to the coast the next day, but as he left he assured them, grimly, "I'll be back."

The next year, the Walkers told me as much of the story of the Lost Mule Shoe Gold as they knew. "But you mustn't print it yet!" they said. "It's really William Smith's lost mine—and he said he was coming back." But in the four years since, Smith has not come back and they have heard no word from him. Late this spring, sitting on the big porch of Gold Rock Ranch and staring moodily at the somber lava flow through which Indian Pass enters the country of the Lost Mule Shoe Gold, Carl Walker said: "1 guess it's anybody's story now —and anybody's gold."

That is only partly true. It is still the desert's gold — and the desert knows how to guard it. The country above Picacho is as merciless toward the careless or the inexperienced as it was half a century ago. The heat in summer is just as deadly. It has killed before, and it will kill again—given the opportunity.

Someday, perhaps, that fabulous ledge in the saddle between two hills —low or high—may be found again. But my guess is that its discoverer will be a man who knows what he is looking for and how to protect himself while he is looking.

From Desert Magazine, Sept. 1954

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Russia Pulls Huge 'Chelyabinsk Meteor Chunk' From Lake

Oct 16, 2013 by Dmitry Zaks

In this Friday, Feb. 15, 2013 file photo provided by Chelyabinsk.ru, a meteorite contrail is seen over the Ural Mountains' city of Chelyabinsk, about 1500 kilometers (930 miles) east of Moscow, Russia. Scientists on Wednesday recovered what could be the largest part of this meteor from Chebarkul Lake outside the city. They weighed it using a giant steelyard balance, which displayed 570 kilograms (1,256 pounds) before it broke. (AP Photo/Chelyabinsk.ru, Yekaterina Pustynnikova)

A police officer stands near a six-metre hole in the ice of a frozen lake, reportedly the site of a meteor fall, outside the town of Chebakul in the Chelyabinsk region on February 15, 2013

Russian divers Wednesday pulled from a murky lake in the Urals a half-tonne suspected meteorite said to have been part of a meteor whose ground-shaking shockwave hurt 1,200 people in February.

The dramatic recovery operation came eight months after a piercing streak of light lit up the morning sky in the central Russian region of Chelyabinsk in scenes some locals said made them think of the onset of a nuclear war.

The meteor broke up into myriad pieces—some no bigger than the size of a fingernail—that scientists are still finding across the remote region to this day.

Much of the debris landed in a local lake called Chebarkul that the divers entered on Wednesday in an operation covered live on national television.

Broadcasts showed a team pull out a 1.5-metre-long (five-foot-long) rock from the lake after first wrapping it in a special casing while it was still underwater.

The boulder was then pulled ashore and placed on top of a massive scale for the all-important weighing—an operation that quickly went partially wrong.

The rock crumbled into several chunks as scientists began lifting it from the ground with the help of levers and ropes.

Divers retrieve what is believed to be part of the Chelyabinsk meteor from Chebarkul Lake near Chelyabinsk, some 1500 kilometers (930 miles) east of Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2013. Scientists on Wednesday recovered what could be the largest part of this meteor from Chebarkul Lake outside the city. They weighed it using a giant steelyard balance, which displayed 570 kililograms (1,256 pounds) before it broke. (AP Photo/Alexander Firsov)

The scale itself broke the moment it hit the 570-kilogramme (1,255-pound) mark.

"The rock had a fracture when we found it," one unnamed scientist told the lifenews.ru website in a live broadcast.

"It weighed 570 kilograms before the pieces fell off. And then the scale broke," said the scientist.

"We think the whole thing weighs more than 600 kilograms," he said.

Experts warned it will take time before scientists can certify that the rock they pulled from the lake did indeed come from outer space.

The Vesti 24 rolling news channel reported that divers had already recovered more than 12 pieces from Lake Chebarkul since the February 15 incident.

Only four or five of the pieces turned out to be real meteorites, the channel said.

People look at what scientists believe to be a chunk of the Chelyabinsk meteor, recovered from Chebarkul Lake near Chelyabinsk, about 1500 kilometers (930 miles) east of Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2013. Scientists on Wednesday recovered what could be the largest part of this meteor from Chebarkul Lake outside the city. They weighed it using a giant steelyard balance, which displayed 570 kilograms (1,256 pounds) before it broke. (AP Photo/Alexander Firsov)

But researchers at a local university seemed confident in their latest find.

Based on our initial observations... this is a part of the Chelyabinsk meteor," Sergei Zamozdra, a lecturer at Chelyabinsk State University, told the Interfax news agency.

"This is the largest fragment of that meteor," said the scientist.

"And most likely, it will be one of the 10 largest meteorites ever found."

The meteor weighed a whopping 10,000 tonnes when it exploded a few kilometres up in the air with the force equivalent to 30 of the nuclear bombs dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima during World War II.

US scientists said an object that large usually approaches Earth only once every four decades.

Residents of Chelyabinsk—once a part of the Soviet Union's industrial heartland that has seen a dramatic slide in living standards of late—have been trying to use the meteor as a way to draw tourists to their isolated part of Russia.

A special council made up of scientists and prominent residents this week urged the local government to erect a six-story-tall statue in honor of the space rock.

Chelyabinsk media reports said the council is also hoping to set up special hiking trails for foreign tourists interested in visiting the lake and other spots where debris was found.Read more at: http://phys.org/news/2013-10-russia-huge-chelyabinsk-meteor-chunk.html#jCp

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Be Different - Buy the Royal Newborn a Gemstone Rattle

By Fleta Page of the Canberra Times, July 22, 2013

Some babies may be born with a silver spoon in their mouth, but after decades in the jewellery business, Catherine Chapman has seen some far more extravagant baby gifts than polished cutlery.

While her business, Vangeli Jewellers, hasn't been asked to make any opal-encrusted baby rattles for royal children - yet - they have plenty of experience in valuable baby gifts.

From a bejewelled golden nappy safety pin, to gold baby shoes encrusted in sapphires and rubies, when it comes to gifts for newborns, the imagination is the limit.

"Godparents are more extravagant than parents a lot of the time, because they've been chosen and feel they want to give the baby something beautiful," Mrs Chapman said.

"We've had one guy spend $25,000 on a baby gift. [The] average for a baby gift for a christening would be $2000."

Diamond crosses on 18 carat gold chains are a reasonably common order and popular in the European community, whereas there would only be four or five "really extravagant or unusual" requests a year.

The Woden business, owned and run by Mrs Chapman and her master craftsman husband, Jeff, specializes in black opals, sourcing the rare gems from their own opal mines in Lightning Ridge.

They have sold their black opals to heads of state from around the world, including former US president George W. Bush.

While opals are not a common choice for baby gifts, Mrs Chapman believes incorporating the Australian gemstone into a gift for the baby of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge would be truly unique and fitting for the future king or queen.

Mr Chapman said encrusting Australian sapphires into a rattle would be a better idea because they were harder than the opals.

"It has got to be sturdy; now opals, if she hits it, they will crack, so the best way to [incorporate] the opal would be inside … and sapphires on the outside," he said.

"Sapphires and maybe argyle diamonds … pink sapphires, pink diamonds if it's a girl. If it's a boy, [make] the sapphires blue."

Mrs Chapman believes opal rattles could become quite sought-after if the royal baby received one. "I'm sure that everybody would want one," she said. "Whether they could afford one is another story."

From http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/be-different--buy-the-royal-newborn-a-gemstone-rattle-20130721-2qcyh.html

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Million Dollar Opals

By Peter Blythe, 7/9/2010

In the past few months I have been approached by two separate opal miners for help in selling two unique but totally different opals. As yet both are unsold and still on the market.

The first started with a customer telling me about a friend who was an opal miner years ago who had a very nice opal for sale. He hadn't mined for many years so had lost contact with the industry. I gave the customer my number saying I would try to help the retired miner with some up to date contacts if he cared to ring.

I had a phone call from the miner and as with most miners I took what he said with a grain of salt. Most miners when talking about their 'special stones' tend to exaggerate. Over the phone he described an opal that just could not exist. I also thought the weight was probably exaggerated as he was guessing. He hadn't been to Canberra for over 30 years so he said he would bring it for me to have a look.

A few days later in walked this typical opal miner with a leather string pendant (Tanned kangaroo scrotum pouch). After introductions he took the pendant off his neck and mentioned it contained the crown jewels.

When he emptied the opal out my initial reaction was **WOW.** The opal was the most exquisite opal I have ever seen. The size was exactly the same as my palm and it was about 3 cm thick. It was a black opal nobby from Lightning Ridge polished except for the back. Predominantly green/blue it had a remarkable pattern and was brighter then most gem grade triplets. This was the best of several stones he found just before retiring. It was so wonderfully beautiful he did not sell it. Now he didn't want to burden his family with the problem of dividing it after he died. Consequently he was looking for a buyer. I asked him what he was thinking it was worth. His reply was he was looking for offers of over a million dollars. My opinion is it is worth every bit of that and is amongst the most beautiful things that have ever come out of the ground. I cannot put a picture of it here, but for anyone with money to burn this stone is a bargain.

The second opal came about by a financial guy contacting me on behalf of a client wishing to sell "a spectacular 73 kilo opal".

Opalised shell specimen

After a couple of e mails it turns out that this opal is a large specimen of opalised shells from Coober Pedy. Over the years I have seen several large groups of magnificent opalised shells. In particular, a few specimens from a small field a little out of Coober Pedy called 'Shell Patch were memorable. Some of these groups would have weighed at least as much as this latest offer. I was sent some pictures and accompanying them was a valuation from an opal business valuing the group at 5.1 million dollars. I think they were dreaming and picking numbers at random from a make believe hat but then you only need one fool with more money then sense.

Not to detract from this interesting group of opalised ancient history. It is an unusual specimen and it does have a lot of beautiful shells in it.

Close up of the shells

It is simply not worth anything close to the valuation. From our correspondence it is obvious the owner knows this valuation is a little fanciful so they would be interested in a realistic offer.
From http://mineshaft.com.au/blog/

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May 2014 Gem & Mineral Shows

More shows can be found at http://www.rockngem.com/show-dates-display/?ShowState=ALL

2-4—BISHOP, CA: Retail show; Lone Pine Gem & Mineral Society; Bishop Fairgrounds-Robinson Bldg.; Sierra St.; Fri. 5-10, Sat. 9-7, Sun. 10-3; free admission; demonstrators, displays, games and free rocks for children, field trip Sun., dealers, door prizes, drawing, information on rocks; contact Steve Mobley, PO Box 977, Lone Pine, CA 93545, (760) 793-6025

2-4—SANTA ROSA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Sonoma County Fairgrounds; 1350 Bennett Valley Rd.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass $7, children (0-11) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, hourly door prizes; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

3-4—ANAHEIM, CA: 55th Annual Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show; Searchers Gem & Mineral Society; Brookhurst Community Center; 2271 W. Crescent Ave.; Sat. 10-5; free admission; kids' jewelry making, dealers, exhibits, demonstrations, gold panning, silent auction; contact Sharon Burson, 11326 Candor St., Cerritos, CA 90703, (562) 706-2054; e-mail: bursonrocks@verizon.net

3-4—PASO ROBLES, CA: Annual show; Santa Lucia Rockhounds; Pioneer Park & Museum; 2010 Riverside Ave.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-5; free admission; dealers, kids' activities, demonstrators; contact Kim Noyes, (805) 610-0603; e-mail: kimnoyes@gmail.com; Web site: www.slrockhounds.org

3-4—YUCAIPA, CA: Annual show; Yucaipa Valley Gem & Mineral Society; Scherer Senior Center; 12202 First St.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4; free admission; more than 15 dealers, raffle, silent auction, kids' activities, in conjunction with the Yucaipa Music and Arts Festival; contact Lee Peterson, (909) 794-0731; e-mail: res09ayd@verizon.net; Web site: www.yvgms.org

9-11—COSTA MESA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; OC Fair & Event Center; 88 Fair Dr.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass $7, children (0-11) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, hourly door prizes; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

10-11—RENO, NV: Annual show; Reno Gem & Mineral Society; Reno Livestock Event Center; 1350 N

. Wells Ave.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults $6, seniors and students $4, children free; contact Steve Norman, 1653 Topeka Circle, Sparks, NV 89434, (775) 358-7322; e-mail: snorm11@hotmail.com; Web site: www.renorockhounds.com

16-18—SACRAMENTO, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Scottish Rite Center; 6151 H St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; weekend pass $7, children (0-11) free; fine jewelry, gems, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, exhibitors, hourly door prizes; contact Yooy Nelson, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

16-18—SANTA ANA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Martin Zinn Expositions, LLC; Holiday Inn-Orange County Airport; 2726 S. Grand Ave.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; 80 retail and wholesale dealers, minerals, fossils, gems, jewelry, lapidary supplies, decorator items; contact Regina Aumente, PO Box 665, Bernalillo, NM 87004, (505) 867-0425; e-mail: mzexpos@gmail.com; Web site: www.mzexpos.com

23-25—SANTA BARBARA, CA: Wholesale and retail show; Gem Faire Inc.; Earl Warren Showgrounds; 3400 Calle Real; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults $7, children (0-11) free; fine jewelry, precious and semiprecious gemstones, beads, crystals, silver, rocks, minerals, on-site jewelry repair and cleaning, door prizes; contact Allen Van Volkinburgh, (503) 252-8300; e-mail: info@gemfaire.com; Web site: www.gemfaire.com

30-1—POMONA, CA: CA Federation of Mineralogical Societies Annual Statewide Show & Convention; Pasadena Lapidary Society; Fairplex, Bldg. 5; 1101 W. McKinley Ave.; Fri. 10-5, Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults $5 (3-day pass $12), seniors and military $4 (3-day pass $10), students (13-17) $3 (3-day pass $7), children (12 and under) free with adult; "CA's Gem & Mineral Bounty": displays, gems, minerals, beads, lapidary arts, fossils, competition exhibits, speakers, raffles, silent auctions, 50 dealers, children's activities, demonstrations; contact Marcia Goetz, (626) 260-7239; Web site: www.cfms2014show.com

31-1—ESCONDIDO, CA: Annual show; Palomar Gem & Mineral Club; CA Center for the Arts; 340 N. Escondido Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults $3, children free; dealers, rough rock, finished stones, jewelry, beads, free gem identification, lapidary and jewelry demonstrations, educational displays; contact Michael Bagstad, (760) 489-0809; e-mail: gemshow@palomargem.org; Web site: www.palomargem.org

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American Opal Society Membership Application

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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: 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.

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Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL. There should be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue. A warning will be stated if you are overdue.
A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. 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 #47 Issue #5
May 2014

TO:

Some Topics In This Issue:

- **Words to Dig By**
- **Last Month's Speaker – Jim Bowden on Rattlesnake Awareness**
- **Lost Mule Shoe Cold**
- **Russia Pulls Huge 'Chelyabinsk Meteor Chunk' From Lake**
- **Buy Royal Newborn a Gemstone Rattle**
- **Million Dollar Opals**

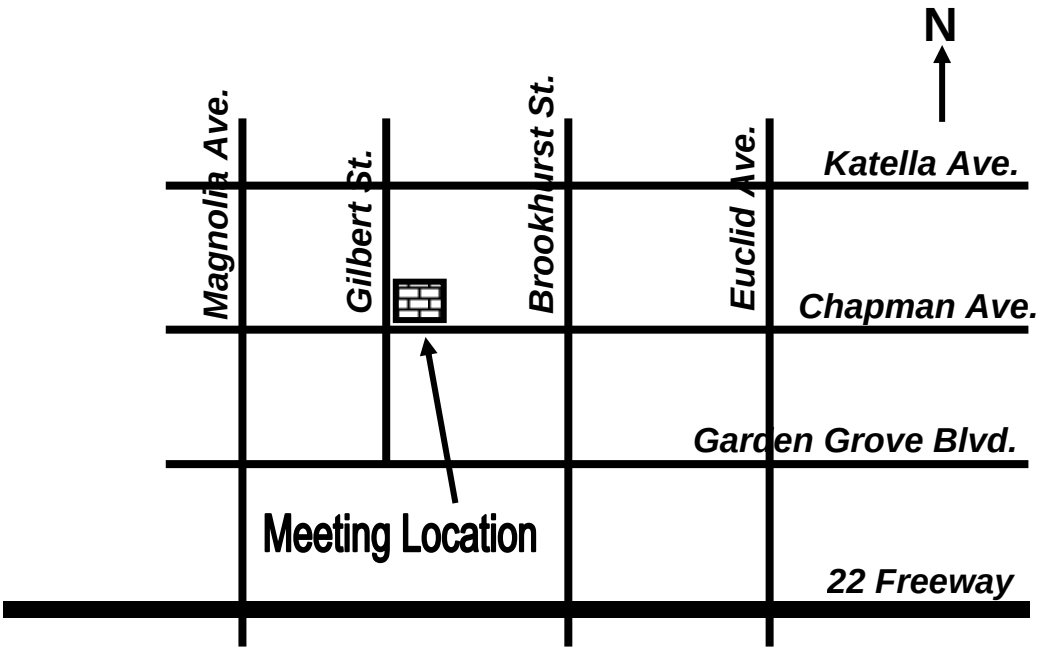
Important Dates:

May - General Meeting
Jim Pisani will give a talk on an Introduction to Metal Detecting.

May 8th Meeting:

Jim Pisani on

An Introduction to Metal Detecting



— *GENERAL MEETINGS* —

2nd Thurs. of the Month
7:30 pm - 9:30 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

The American Opal Society
http://OpalSociety.org

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