

# The Opal Express

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Merry Christmas

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## President's Message

Merry Christmas Opalholics!

Can you believe it's almost Christmas? This certainly has been a year for the record books! Let's hope that next year brings good news and perhaps a bit of normalcy. I hope the holidays will bring joy to you and your loved ones. Please remember those less fortunate and help where you can. This has been a difficult year for many of us and we can all use a little kindness and holiday cheer.

As always, please stay safe, stay healthy and keep busy! And please continue to social distance and wear your masks!

Stan McCall  
AOS President  
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

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**Member area access is available only to members in good standing. Any other entry is unauthorized.**

**USER NAME: member**  
**PASSWORD: Freeform27 (case sensitive)**

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## -- December General Meeting --

Due to the on-going pandemic stay-at-home order, we are not planning on a General Meeting for December.

Stan McCall, AOS President



Let's extend a hardy AOS welcome to our new members!

Jim Hazen  
Wendy Holder  
Donn La Tour  
Michael Mawn

Thank you Jim, Wendy, Donn and Michael for joining the American Opal Society!

## A Special Thank You

A special thank you is in order for Jim Hazen. While paying his membership dues online, he discovered a problem with our PayPal account. He brought the problem to the attention of our Treasurer, Russ Madsen, who enlisted the help of our talented webmaster and internet guru, Bart Gampe. Bart had the problem fixed in no time, and we were up and running once again with our PayPal account. Thank you Jim and Bart!

# ~ Bench Tips ~

This page will be dedicated to bench tips and techniques from our readers. If you have bench tips you'd like to share, let us know! Bench tips can be anything - metal work, lapidary, wirework - anything creative that you would like to share. Send your tips to: [aos.editor.02@gmail.com](mailto:aos.editor.02@gmail.com)

## TEMPLATES

by Brad Smith

Whenever I have to make more than 2-3 exact copies of a sheet metal component, I think of making a template. Templates let me easily draw the shape of an item to cut out.

Art stores or online sources like [cooltools.us/](http://cooltools.us/) and [kingsleynorth.com/](http://kingsleynorth.com/) sell templates for common shapes like circles, ovals, hearts, etc. but for nonstandard shapes, I make my own out of a scrap of sheet plastic or sheet metal. My preference is brass. I carefully lay out the shape using a steel ruler, a set of dividers, a scribe, and a fine center punch.

One example is the brass template in the pic below that let's me quickly trace the design of ginkgo leaf earrings onto silver sheet. Another is the nickel template which makes it easy to drill a pattern of holes for pin inlay into wooden handles.



## OCHRE APPLICATOR

by Brad Smith

Yellow ochre is used when you want to be sure the solder won't flow on an area of your piece while you're soldering another area. The only problem with ochre is coming up with a good way to store and apply it.

I use recycled nail polish bottles. They seal well and have a built-in brush applicator. Just clean them out with a little acetone or nail polish remover, and they're ready to go.



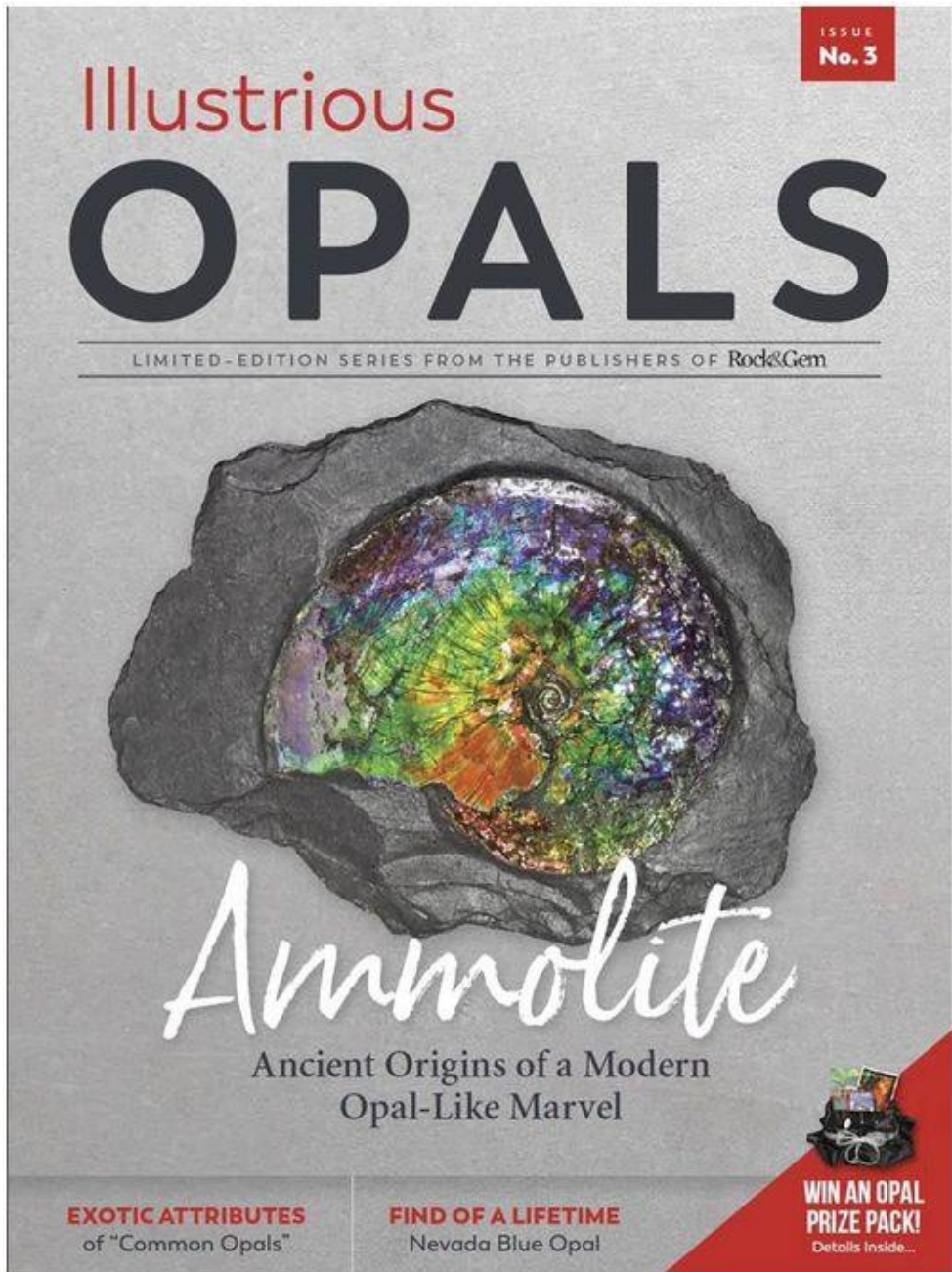
Work Smarter & Be More Productive with Brad's "How To" Jewelry Books on [Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

# *It's Here!*

Check out the third issue of Illustrious Opals published by Rock & Gem Magazine! The pdf download is free! Here is the link to their website:

<https://www.rockngem.com/illustrious-opals-library/>

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, check the Rock & Gem website again for the fourth and final issue of Illustrious Opals. Use the same link as above.



# Rockhound Finds Ice Age Tusk in Perris Flood Channel

by Julissa Mckinnon  
The Press-Enterprise  
21 January 2009

What started as an afternoon of rockhounding in the riverbed behind his Perris home ended with Greg Riecke discovering a tusk that experts say likely dates back to the last Ice Age -- 16,000 to 2 million years ago.

Upon inspection, an archaeologist and paleontologist from a Hemet museum believe the 4-foot long tusk belonged to either a mammoth or a mastodon, two extinct ancestors of the modern-day elephant.

Riecke, a part-time plumber who regularly combs the flood channel for gold with a metal detector, said in the past he has found oyster shells, coral and what he believes might be a dinosaur or shark tooth.

But he said the ancient tusk and a nearby tusk tip that he unearthed Monday is by far "the biggest thing I've ever found."

"I get bored and come back here and scoot around," said Riecke, who describes himself as a geologist at heart. "I find glass and trash, but every once in a while you find something that was a piece of the environment thousands and thousands of years ago."

The fate of the fossil lies in the hands of the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, which owns the drainage channel that stretches from Moreno Valley to Perris, where it empties into the San Jacinto River.

Steve Stump, the district's chief of operations and maintenance, said although the county would likely be in favor of studying the fossils, he needs to check with county attorneys to determine the district's responsibility.



*Greg Riecke, a part-time plumber who says he regularly combs the riverbed behind his home with a metal detector, inspects the tusk he found that experts say may date to the last Ice Age. Frank Bellino / The Press-Enterprise*

In his 30 years with the flood control district, Stump said he has never heard of a fossil surfacing in a drainage ditch.

After Riecke and a few neighbors worried about rain forecast for Thursday damaging the fossils, they covered the tusk and tusk tip with the same dirt Riecke had removed earlier using spoons and his hands.

Two scientists from the Western Center for Archaeology and Paleontology said either their museum or another organization will likely be interested in surveying the surrounding area for other bones from the same animal and other skeletons.

"To a certain extent it's cost versus benefit to figure out the best spots to target," said Doug John, a paleontologist who visited the riverbed bones within hours after the Western Center received a call from Riecke's boss and landlord, Patrick Bellows.

Continued next page . . .

John said mastodons and mammoths were among dozens of mammals that roamed the Inland valleys during the Pleistocene period, just before the arrival of humans.

Other resident beasts could have included lions, camelops (ancestors of modern-day camels, llamas and alpacas), bears and sloths.

"Camels and horses were the major large mammals," John said. "You would have seen herds of wild camels and horses and a few odd mastodons and mammoths."

He and archaeologist Darlene Harr said scientists would need to see teeth from the specimen whose tusks were found to determine whether it was a mastodon or a mammoth.

Apparently, both animals were grazers, but mastodons had more teeth with more cusps that helped them eat twigs and leaves whereas mammoths dined mainly on grass, Harr said.

Mammoths had more hair and were more closely related to modern-day elephants, John said.

"Mastodons were a little smaller and stockier, about the size of today's Asian elephant," John said.

John and Harr said the last find of intact fossils they recall dates back to 1999 when thousands of prehistoric skeletons turned up during the excavation for the Diamond Valley Lake Reservoir.

Riecke said he is certain that there are more fossils waiting to be found in his beloved wash.

"I think I know of another dinosaur right over there," he said, with a vague wave downstream.

<https://www.enworld.org/threads/mastodon-tusk-found-in-flood-canal.249147/>

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# Gem of a Find in Tip Mulch

*Ian Beynon with the opal he found in council garden mulch.*

*by Mike Knott  
24 June 2011*

When Kepnock man Ian Beynon decided to do some gardening while he was on leave on Monday, he didn't expect to find hidden treasure.

But that is exactly what happened when he put part of a load of mulch he had bought from the Bundaberg Regional Council around a tree in his garden

Mr. Beynon noticed something glinting in the sun, and when he took a closer look he saw it was a stone he recognised as an opal matrix.

"It was just a surprise," he said. "I was overjoyed." Mr. Beynon said he recognised the stone because his older brother used to collect gems back in the '70s.

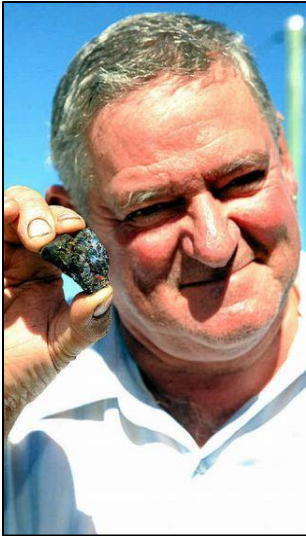
But he is still trying to work out how it got into the mulch. "I'm surprised they didn't notice it when the stuff went through the mulcher," he said. Mr. Beynon said the stone had obviously once been part of a larger piece. "It's got a flat bit on the side where it has obviously been cut off," he said.

"Somebody must have thrown it out with the rubbish." Mr. Beynon said while he did not think the stone would be very valuable, he hoped to have it made into some sort of jewellery for his partner. "I could get it made into a pendant or something," he said. "I would like to see if there's more opal inside. "I've got a friend who works with gemstones, I might see if he can do anything with it."

Mr. Beynon said a neighbour of his said they should get a 10-ton load of mulch and go through it with a sieve.

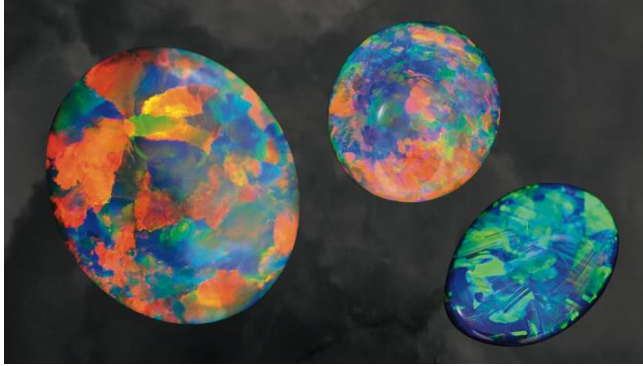
An Australian boulder matrix opal is precious opal mixed with the parent rock, ironstone, rather than having been deposited in seams or patches, like boulder opal. The parent rock contains iron, and the opal matrix is only found in Queensland.

From <http://www.news-mail.com.au/story/2011/06/24/gem-of-a-find-in-tip-mulch>



# The Art of Opal Cutting

7 October 2010



Images from Cody Opal Australia

Australia's national gemstone is also one of the most complicated to cut. GAA opal experts Anthony Smallwood and John Krook explain why it is an art form in its own right.

The cutting and fashioning of gemstones is an art. It is often forgotten that while there is an inherent beauty in the crystal nature of transparent gemstones, this is not always present in the opaque or translucent gemstones. Non-transparent stones – even those of great beauty or value such as opal – are often mistakenly referred to as ornamental or semi-precious gems.

Opal is such a mysterious gemstone that often its beautiful play of colour is hidden. Only an experienced opal cutter can produce an exquisite gemstone. So the opal cutter is an artisan of great importance, who alone can reveal an opal's hidden beauty.

So how does an opal cutter begin? An examination of the rough is key, as the origin and variety of opal will often determine what a cutter does; in this way opal is like no other gemstone.

A cutter working on a Lightning Ridge (NSW) black opal will require a different skill to a cutter who is about to produce a gem from Queensland boulder opal, who again will

treat the rough material differently to the cutter of a superb South Australian Andamooka or Coober Pedy crystal opal. Each variety possesses its own unique challenge for the cutter in terms of the thickness of the opal and the material that forms the back of the gem (ironstone for boulder, black potch for black opal, and so on).

Once the opal cutter has established the thickness of their opal they can assess what shape will produce the best gem from the rough and show the best "face".

Generally, the cutter's biggest focus is to create a full-faced gemstone of the most vibrant colour and to polish it to a mirror finish. Every opal is unique, so a cutter's experience and intuition are important to success.

When it comes to boulder opal, the cutter must first assess how thin the opal veneer on the ironstone might be.

There's often not much to work with here. Often less than a millimetre in thickness, the cutter won't want to waste any precious opal. So they will intelligently expose the layer of colour and follow it or trace it in an undulating nature to expose the vibrant colours. To allow this, boulder opal gems will often have an irregular surface and be cut in a free shape or free-form with irregular outline.

The opal cutter working with Lightning Ridge black opal, however, will often have the benefit of a thicker colour bar (as compared with boulder opal), so may choose to create a cabochon; cutting a high-domed precious gem if the colour bar agrees, or a lower-domed cabochon if that's all that is available.

It is likely he will produce an oval-cut gemstone as this is generally the most commercially viable shape. But free-form and irregular shapes are also produced for exotic designer jewellery.

Continued next page . . .

Crystal opal and Light opal may be used to create both standardised-sized opal cabochons for jewellery and for more individually shaped free-form and opal carving.

Much of the commercial grade opal jewellery with standardised, calibrated sizes is cut from Light and Crystal opal from the South Australian fields. That's not to say plenty of these stones aren't still available for more exquisite shapes and carvings.

In considering the 'face' of the opal the cutter also takes into consideration the possibility of finding one of many named opal patterns – including 'butterfly wing', 'Chinese writing', 'harlequin' (often miss-used), 'rolling flash' and 'flagstone' among others.

Opal folklore is as vibrant as the stone; unique to Australia and to the outback regions of Australian pioneers from the 19th century. As world renowned Australian opal expert Len Cram says, "Opal is like gold, once the fever is in your blood you can never get it out". Any opal cutter knows how right he is.

From <http://www.jewellermagazine.com>

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## Leopard Opal – A New Type of Mexican Opal

*From the Ancient Mines of the Aztecs  
Single Source Rare Variety of Opal*

Leopard Opal is a variety of opalized vesicular basalt or Matrix Opal where the vesicles in the basalt have been filled with precious opal showing a strong colour pattern. Leopard Opal is a term that was coined during its reintroduced to the world gemstone markets by R. T. Boyd Limited at the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show in 1996 (Gems & Gemology, Gem News, Spring 1996, pp 54-55). Prior to 1996 Leopard Opal was known to only a select few individuals and has not been commercially available to the world markets. In the mid 1960s Leopard Opal was sold as Basalt Opal with modest acceptance by the North American gem and mineral community. In Mexico it is erroneously referred to as Opalo Negro or Black Opal but is not at all like Australian Black Opal.



Leopard Opal

There is anecdotal and physical evidence in the academic literature that these Leopard Opal deposits had been worked in the State of Hidalgo in pre-Columbian times - possibly by the Aztecs.

In 2006 a comprehensive scientific article on Leopard Opal was written by Coenraads & Zenil (Gems & Gemology, Winter 2006, Vol XLII, pp. 236-246) that discussed the geology and mode of formation of the opals on the original discovery deposit in the State of Hidalgo in Mexico. Subsequent to this discovery in 1965 other occurrences and potentially economic deposits of Leopard Opal have been discovered and are presently being exploited in the same vicinity.

In 2008 R. T. Boyd Limited has become part-owner of the only known commercially producing Leopard Opal mine located in the State of Hidalgo in Mexico. This is a gemstone of significance because it occurs in substantial size blocks in volcanic rock making the Leopard Opal amenable to both polishing or faceting as well as suitable for gemstone carving and design work.

The Leopard Opal deposit is also associated with rarer quantities of high quality solid precious opal similar to the traditional Mexican and Australian opal.

From

[http://rtboydlimited.com/web/page.php?page=Leopard Opal - New!!](http://rtboydlimited.com/web/page.php?page=Leopard%20Opal%20-%20New!!)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

Reader: If your organization has an opal or rockhound-related event, please email particulars to [info@opalsociety.org](mailto:info@opalsociety.org). Upcoming Event listings will be included at the discretion of The Opal Express editor as space and scheduling permit.

### February 20-21, Antioch

Antioch Lapidary Club  
Jewelry, Gem & Rock Show  
Contra Costa County Fairgrounds,  
1201 West 10th St., Antioch  
Hours: 10 am – 5 pm daily  
Admission \$6, Children 12 and  
under/Scouts in uniform – Free  
Active Military with ID – Free  
Contact: (925) 301-6957,  
[brenda.miguel@yahoo.com](mailto:brenda.miguel@yahoo.com)

### February 27-28, Vallejo

Valejo Gem & Mineral Society  
56th Annual Gem & Mineral Show  
Solano County Fairgrounds, McCormack  
Hall, 900 Fairgrounds Dr.  
Hours 10 am-5pm  
Contact: (415) 254-1506,  
[dduhonvgms@gmail.com](mailto:dduhonvgms@gmail.com)

### March 13-14, 2021, Arcadia CA

Pasadena Lapidary Society  
“Inspiration Unearth”, 62nd Annual Tournament of Gems  
Arcadia Masonic Center, 50 W. Duarte Rd., Arcadia  
Hours: 10-5 Daily  
Contact: Ellen Ferrell 1-727-512-0381  
Email: [ellenbf207@aol.com](mailto:ellenbf207@aol.com)  
Website: [pasadenalapidary.org](http://pasadenalapidary.org)

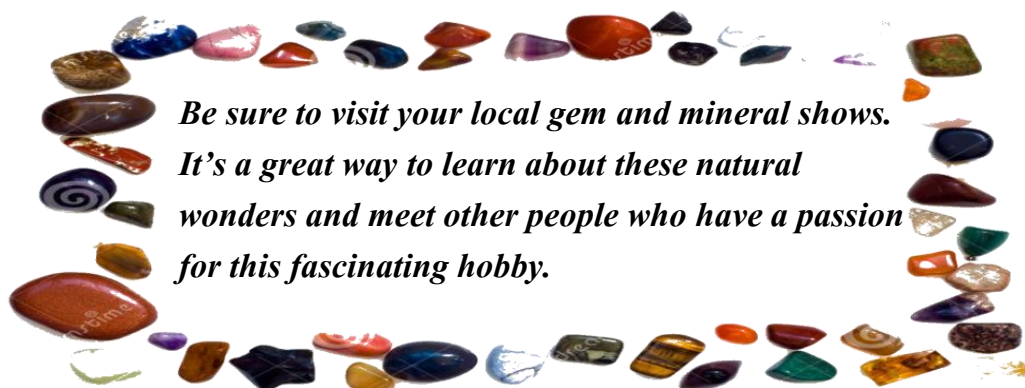
### June 12-13, 2021, Escondido CA

Palomar Gem and Mineral Club  
340 N. Escondido Blvd., Escondido CA 92025  
Saturday – 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM-4PM  
Palomar Gem and Mineral Show – presented by the  
Palomar Gem and Mineral Club. Held in the California  
Arts Centers museum and ballroom. A beautiful indoor  
facility. Secure for vendors and comfortable for attendees.  
30-35 dealers.  
Website: [pgmcshow@palomargem.org](mailto:pgmcshow@palomargem.org)

### March 6 – Ventura, CA CANCELLED!!!

Ventura Gem & Mineral Society  
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd,  
Ventura 93001  
Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 10 am-4 pm  
A So-Cal tradition for 59 years! (Note: this listing is  
tentative and is conditioned upon conditions of the  
moment at the Ventura County Fairgrounds due to  
the COVID-19 pandemic.)  
50+ exhibits of gems, fossils & lapidary arts; demos;  
raffle silent auctions; flea market & plant sale; 15  
dealers; kids booth & free resources for teachers.  
Contact: (805) 312-8467, [info@vgms.org](mailto:info@vgms.org)

As information becomes available, we will  
post updates to these and upcoming shows  
in future newsletters.



*Be sure to visit your local gem and mineral shows.  
It's a great way to learn about these natural  
wonders and meet other people who have a passion  
for this fascinating hobby.*

# American Opal Society Membership Application

| FILL IN APPLICABLE INFORMATION                                                  |                  | DUES / FEES | AMOUNT PAID |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| DUES:                                                                           | RENEWING MEMBERS | \$35.00     |             |
| SELECT ONE                                                                      | NEW MEMBERS      | \$45.00     |             |
| INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses <u>outside</u> of USA)              |                  | \$15.00     |             |
| PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail) |                  | \$10.00     |             |
| ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your first badge is <u>free</u> when joining)                |                  | \$15.00     |             |
| TOTAL PAID DUES plus International, Print or Badge Fees if Applicable:          |                  |             |             |

Please make check or money order payable to "American Opal Society". Mail payment and application to:

American Opal Society: PO Box 4875, Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

An optional quicker method of payment is via the internet. To pay via PayPal, please visit the membership page on our website at [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_application\\_by\\_web.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm) to complete the form and make your PayPal payment. You may pay with a credit card or via PayPal account. The transaction is completely secure and the AOS never sees your credit card number. The AOS PayPal account is [membership@opalsociety.org](mailto:membership@opalsociety.org).

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| NAME                |                          |
| BUSINESS NAME       |                          |
| ADDRESS             | APT # or PO BOX          |
| CITY                | STATE                    |
| ZIP OR POSTAL CODE  | COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA) |
| PHONE - Home (    ) | PHONE - Business (    )  |
| E-MAIL              |                          |
| WEBSITE             |                          |
| OCCUPATION          | 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:** The AOS publishes a membership roster once per year in its newsletter, The Opal Express. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information you listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address    ☐ Phone-landline    ☐ Phone-cell    ☐ E-mail    ☐ Website

Please sign here: \_\_\_\_\_

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-Editor  
Please address all inquiries and exchange newsletters to:  
Editor - Kathleen James  
The Opal Express  
PO Box 4875  
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875  
E-mail: [aos.editor.02@gmail.com](mailto:aos.editor.02@gmail.com)

## Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL OR NEWSLETTER E-MAIL.

There will 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 Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, that as the system is 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

(revised 11/27/19)

# The Opal Express

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

Volume 53, Issue 12

## — GENERAL MEETINGS —

4th Wednesday of the Month  
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

**Anaheim Community Center**  
**250 E. Center Street**  
**Anaheim, CA 92805**



**TO:**



**No General Meeting  
for December**



**General Meeting Location at:**

**Anaheim Downtown Community Center**

**250 E. Center Street  
Anaheim, CA 92805**

Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Newsom's stay-at-home mandate, we are cancelling Board Meetings and General Meetings. If we find that using Zoom is a feasible alternative for our meetings, we will let members know the details.

## American Opal Society

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**YouTube:** [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber)

Stan McCall  
Russ Madsen  
Kathleen James  
Bart Gampe  
Veronica Purpura

President  
Treasurer  
Editor  
Webmaster  
Show Chairman

(714) 220-9282  
(562) 884-2254  
(714) 828-1251  
(310) 736-5528  
(714) 501-9959

email: [aos.president.01@gmail.com](mailto:aos.president.01@gmail.com)  
email: [aos.treasurer.01@gmail.com](mailto:aos.treasurer.01@gmail.com)  
email: [aos.editor.02@gmail.com](mailto:aos.editor.02@gmail.com)  
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