

The Opal Express

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

Happy Halloween! Are you ready for the little ghosts and goblins knocking at your door, demanding treats? Be sure to stock up on your favorite candy!

We're currently looking into getting our room back at the Anaheim Community Center so we can start up meetings again. This most likely will not happen until January. We'll keep you informed about the meetings, so stay tuned!

In the meantime, please stay safe, healthy and keep busy!

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

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

USER NAME: member
PASSWORD: 4BBluefiRE3 (case sensitive).

Did You Know?

Tourmaline is the modern birthstone for October. Opal is the traditional birthstone. Both tourmalines and opals have their aficionados, but opals just edge past them in popularity.

<https://www.gemsociety.org>

*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.*

Famous Opals: The Grawin Rainbow

Shining Seashell - The Grawin Rainbow is 505½ carats of fully opalized mussel shell and a blaze of prismatic colors.

by B. F. Parker



The Grawin Rainbow

The Grawin Rainbow was mined in 1986 at a level of 27 feet and is what is called a “floater,” meaning that there were no other traces of seam opal found when the specimen was discovered.

It is in two pieces, a result of the mining process. However, had the hammer that divided it not also exposed its brilliant color patterns, it might have been missed, because no other opal traces indicated its possible presence

Examination of the specimen, which is opalized all the way through, suggests that it is approximately 100 million years old. The solid opal, measuring 85.0 x 43.8 x 32.5 millimeters shows the full spectral range in a large, blocky pattern

of bars. It was found in the Grawin opal fields, New South Wales, and hence was named the Grawin Rainbow in honor of its locality and coloration. The Grawin opal fields are approximately 30 miles due west of the famous black opal mining fields of Lightning Ridge. Grawin has yielded other shell specimens, though not as large and not fully opalized. The area has been mined for opal since 1907. Another notable opal to come from Grawin was called the Light of the World, and many precious opals have been mined from this field.

New opal finds inspire rushes in the adjacent surrounding areas from time to time. The old time miners, though, say there is still opal to be found in the old diggings at Grawin. I thought they might be right - and discovered the Grawin Rainbow as proof that they were.

Collectors may write to Mr. B. F. Parker, Grawin Opal Fields, Via Walgett 2832, NS. W., Australia for information on acquiring the specimen.

From the article titled “Shining Seashell”, from The Lapidary Journal, June 1989, Page 31

DID YOU KNOW?

Opalised fossils form in ways similar to other fossils, except that here they are preserved in silica. ... When the silica solution fills an empty cavity left by a shell or bone that has rotted away – like jelly poured in a mould – it may harden to form an opalised cast of the original object.

<http://www.australianopalcentre.com › opalised-fossils>

~ 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

LAYOUT TOOLS

by Brad Smith

Dimensions on some features of a design can be fluid while others must be accurate for the design to work. When precision on a piece is important, good layout techniques are essential.

These are the tools that I rely upon to get holes in the right place, to achieve correct angles, and to cut pieces the correct length.

I like crisp, sharp lines to follow, so I often coat surfaces with a dark marker and scribe my layout lines onto the metal. A square makes quick work of checking right angles or marking where to cut, and the thin center punch helps me mark a place to drill holes exactly where I want them.

Finally, a good set of dividers is probably my favorite layout tool. They let me quickly mark a strip for cutting, swing an arc, and divide a line or curve into as many equal segments as I need. I keep at least one set of dividers in every toolbox.



CUTTING MOLDS

by Brad Smith

Cutting molds is easier and more precise with a sharp blade. A new Xacto blade is sufficient for cutting RTV molds but is usually not sharp enough for vulcanized rubber. For that it's best to use scalpel blades available from most jewelry supply companies.

The #11 blade is triangle shaped, and the #12 is hawksbill shaped. I find the hawksbill is particularly nice for cutting the registration keys of the mold.



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



Montana Agate - An American Gemstone Treasure

by Lynn Baldwin

Since the time Man descended from the trees, personal adornment in the form of jewelry has been part of every culture. Each person wishes to express herself or himself in an individual manner, and jewelry allows us one means to accomplish that goal.

Usually, when someone thinks about gemstones, the big four come to mind. These are diamond, emerald, ruby and sapphire. One might also consider opal, garnet, and a few others, but typically it would end there. Of the gemstones just mentioned, all but the opal would be cut as faceted stones, and allow little in the way of individuality. The opal would be the only gemstone in the list to be cut cabochon. As defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, this means a highly polished, domed, unfaceted gem.



Montana Agates

The opal is the only stone of the previously mentioned gemstones to offer much in the way of exclusivity, as no two opals are ever the same. This property alone allows an opal to be chosen to reflect its owner, and to assure a one of a kind piece of jewelry. Unfortunately opal has a big drawback. It is a fairly soft and brittle gemstone, and must be worn carefully or you risk breaking it.

So far, virtually everyone is aware of the previously mentioned gemstones.

Something to consider though is that this barely scratches the surface of the potential gemstones available to be used in various ways as personal adornment.

For instance, there are a great number of agates and jaspers (topics for another day) that are cut for use in jewelry about which almost no one knows. One of these that I would like to discuss is Montana agate.

Found only in America along the Yellowstone River and its tributaries in Montana and Wyoming, Montana agate is truly an American treasure. It was formed millions of years ago in holes left in lava flows. The lava has since weathered away and the agates are found in the gravel beds along the river.

With more variety in its colors, types, and figures than agate from any other known deposit in the world, Montana agate is especially wonderful for jewelry use. Historically it has typically been cut in standard sizes and shapes as cabochons and set as pendants, pins, rings, or bracelets.

There are however many modern lapidaries (a person who cuts, polishes, or engraves gems) who choose to cut these gemstones as free forms, as carvings, or even to facet them, which maximizes the potential and beauty of each stone. Just as in the opal, no two pieces of Montana agate are alike and this guarantees a totally exclusive and personal piece of jewelry from each one.



Montana Agates

Long a favorite of hobbyist and professional cutters alike because of the beautiful and highly variable patterns and durability, Montana agate is a very hard and tough stone that wears well in jewelry. A classic scenic agate, it produces luminous and lustrous gemstones with evocative scenes of lakeshores or mountains as well as figural gems. With many of these agates, in order to appreciate their subtlety, you will have to view them against the light. No two are ever exactly alike, not even matched pairs.

Agate, the Mystical birthstone for the month of September and the birthstone for the Zodiac sign of Gemini, is believed by many to possess unique properties that protect its wearer from dangers and promotes strength and healing.

Lynn Baldwin is the owner of <http://www.fine-find.com> and has been involved in collecting, cutting and carving fine gemstones, including Montana agate, for more than 30 years.

Article Source:

http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Lynn_Baldwin,
http://www.cabbers.com/cabs/agates/montana_agate2.shtml

Safety Article

Dust in Opal Mining and Cutting

Introduction

All mining creates dust. Dust can cause skin irritation, allergies and damage to the respiratory system. Most dust particles breathed in are large enough to be caught within the nose, throat, trachea and bronchial tubes where they are ejected by sneezing or coughing. However, a small number are the right size and shape to get far enough into the breathing system to cause damage.

Silica

Silica is very hazardous to health. It is found in pockets of the sandstone host rock in the opal fields and in particularly high quantities in Mintabie. Exposure to silica is the cause of a debilitating and sometime fatal lung disease called silicosis. Dust needs to be tested to find out if it contains silica and to do this effectively right across the opal fields would be a major task. Consequently the most practical solution is for all miners to restrict their exposure to all dust as much as possible. Silica dust can only harm the body if particles are small enough to be breathed into the lungs and retained there (known as inspirable dust).

Dust Controls

There are several ways to control dust. Try to keep as little dust as possible from becoming airborne and prevent the spread of airborne dust. (e.g. extraction/collection systems on drills). In an underground mine ensure air flow (ventilation) is as good as possible. Try not to stand in dust clouds. For example try to stay up-wind of the blower outlet. If possible dust-generating machinery should have a local dust collection system.

Wear a dust mask or respirator. Remember, paper dust masks and some cartridge respirators are not suitable for diesel fumes so, if protection from them is also needed, it is important to ensure that the right cartridges are being used. It will be necessary to contact the supplier for information on the correct type of respirator and cartridge.



Cutting Machine

Cutting and Polishing

Cutting and polishing opal also creates a certain amount of silica-bearing dust. As most cutting and polishing is done wet, the dust is usually held within the water and does not become a problem. However some processes are carried out dry and this allows the dust to become airborne. For this reason it is advisable to have the cutting/polishing equipment fitted with an extraction system that sucks the dust away from the breathing zone of the cutter/polisher. Care must then be taken when emptying the collection system of the extractor.



Dust Extractor

Checklist - Dust

1. Have adequate ventilation to keep the mine clear of dust.
2. Where possible, use dust extraction or collection systems.
3. Ensure that the operator is on the down wind side of the machinery.
4. Appropriate breathing protection should be worn.

*From the Opal Miner's Guide – Safety in Opal Mining.
Published by the Mining and Quarrying Occupational Safety
Committee of South Australia.*

Refurbish Your Worn Out Diamond Belts

by Steve Newstrom

I just hate to throw away perfectly good diamond sanding belts with no useable abrasive. The belt integrity seems fine but the diamond abrasive is gone. With diamond powder being so inexpensive, I thought with a little ingenuity, I could make a good working belt out of an old worn out belt. And I did! I believe this procedure would work for Nova wheels as well.

Enough bragging, let's get down to it. I clean the belt thoroughly with acetone. Read the warnings on the acetone can – it is dangerous stuff. Place the belt over an old expanding drum or grinding wheel (just to give it a solid backing) and suspend on a dowel between two stacks of books or boxes so the belt/wheel hangs free and can be rotated easily by hand.

I use Hughes Epoxy 220 made by Hughes Associates out of Wayzata MN. The epoxy hardens without being brittle and mixes well with the diamond powder. I use the small plastic measuring cups for liquid medication doses that are available in drug stores. Mix a total of 1teaspoonful equal amounts of hardener and resin in the small cup. Then I dump in a 5 carat vial of the appropriate grade of diamond powder and mix thoroughly again. This is not “5 Minute Epoxy” so you have plenty of time to mix.

Apply the epoxy/diamond mixture to the belt smoothly using the disposable acid flux brushes pictured below. Apply in a



I just finished a 600 grit belt and it cuts faster than a new factory belt.

Apply the epoxy/diamond mixture to the belt smoothly using the disposable acid flux brushes pictured below. Apply in a thin coat so there are no lumps or thick areas. The epoxy sets up in one hour (hardens in 8 hrs.) so you must keep rotating the belt every few minutes to keep mixture from running on the belt. A heat lamp or warm desk lamp greatly reduces hardening times. One teaspoon (and 5 carats diamond) is enough for 1–6” X 2” belt. I usually have a little left over. I would toss the used brushes so you don’t cross contaminate although they can be cleaned with acetone and reused for the same grits or coarser.

Note: Even if a thick coat is applied uniformly it tends to run, giving you a bumpy belt (even though they are certainly still useable. I have a bumpy belt that has been used for several years and is finally beginning to smooth out as the diamond wears off). I would try 2 thin coats (1/2 the diamond powder per coat) rather than 1 thick coat to give your wheel extended life.

Website: www.villagesmithyopals.com

What to Do if You See a Fireball

A "fireball" meteor is a rare and significant event, and if you are a witness to one, concentrate on the whole phenomena for as long as it takes. Some things will occur simultaneously (over a short amount of time: light, sound, and changes in direction). Try to take it all in, and use the following ten steps to help you recall the fireball so it can be located by researchers looking for meteorites on the ground.

- Keep your eye on the ball of light and associated phenomena, and count slowly (1, 2, 3, etc.) until it disappears.
- Note time of day.
- Listen carefully for any sounds at the same time as the light and up to two or three minutes later.
- Notice landmarks, buildings, poles, fences, trees, etc., below where you first saw the fireball and where you last saw the fireball.
- Notice the height above the horizon where you first see it and last see it. (You can use landmarks for this too.)
- Pay attention to the end: Did it fade out, blink out, fragment, explode, and what about pieces falling off? Try to keep a mental/visual image of the event (was it shadowed, color, light, intensity, flickering and end).
- Watch for a smoke or dust trail after the fireball: Was there a smoke trail after falling pieces – after the fireball?
- If you are under the fireball, listen for falling objects, even small marble or hail like pieces, or where larger pieces may have hit and could be buried in the ground.



Photo courtesy of Discovery.com
Michael Dunning

After the event ends:

- Memorize your exact location so you can return with a field researcher. (Write down notes and a sketch of what you saw with landmarks noted.)
- If you have a compass, take a bearing and plot your location on a map. If you have a GPS receiver, take a latitude and longitude reading. Directions of first and last sightings and the first and last angles above the horizon are very important. For field researchers, this is the best way to locate the flight path and end position of the fireball; therefore, any compass bearings you take become very important information.

If you think it is a significant event, you may want to report it on the internet. This will allow researchers to use your position and observations to triangulate and locate the longitude and latitude of where the fireball breaks up in the sky and ultimately, to describe a potential impact area on the ground where meteorites might be found.

To report a "Fireball" sighting: Write down as much information as possible, based on the above questions, and mail to:
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007
Or call (213) 763-DINO, and leave your name and phone number.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

October 1-3, 2021 – Vista, CA

Vista Gem and Mineral Society
Vista Gem and Mineral Open Air Market
Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave.,
Vista CA 92083
Friday and Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: 1 (760) 214-8770
Website: <http://www.vistarocks.org>

October 2-3, 2021 – Grass Valley, CA

Nevada County Gem & Mineral Society
Nevada County Fairgrounds, Main Street Center, 11228
McCourtney Rd, Grass Valley, CA 95949
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
54th Annual Earth's Treasures Show. This year's show will feature over 20 vendors, over 24 showcase exhibits, as well as an outstanding petrified wood display. There will be numerous demonstration tables, the gold panning experience, kids activities, gold specimen raffle, and much, much, more. SEE YOU AT THE SHOW!!!

As Covid 19 restrictions could be somewhat fluid in October, there may still be or be a reinstituted State of California requirement for show attendees to be properly masked.

Contact: 4vanclan5@att.net

Website: <http://ncgms.org>

October 8, 9, 10 & 11, 2021, Clovis CA

Fresno Gem & Mineral Society
Clovis Rodeo Grounds, 445 Clovis, CA 93613
Time: Friday-Sunday Oct. 8th-10th – 10 AM – 5 PM, Monday Oct. 11th – 10 AM – 4 PM

Central Valley Gem & Mineral Show sponsored by Fresno Gem & Mineral Society. The show will be held outside and indoors where vendors will be displaying and selling their rocks, minerals and fossils. From rough to cabs, from jewelry to wind chimes you will find a great variety! Adults and children will enjoy the fossilized sharks teeth, dinosaur bones, sparkling minerals in all their forms plus beautiful handcrafted jewelry.

Contact: 1 (708) 821-7575, danielbolm096@gmail.com

Website: <http://www.fgms.us/>

October 9, 2021 – Antioch, CA

Antioch Lapidary Club
Antioch Lapidary Club's Annual Artisan Jewelry and Rock Show
Antioch Lapidary Club's clubhouse, 425 Fulton Shipyard Rd.,
Antioch

Time: 10 AM – 4 PM

Directions: Take Highway 4 to Antioch; exit A Street and go north, towards the water. Turn right on E 18th Street; go approx. 3/4 mile; turn left of Cavallo Road. Follow Cavallo, across Wilbur Avenue. You are now on Fulton Shipyard Road. Cross the railroad tracks and immediately turn right into the parking lot.

October 9-10, 2021 – Los Altos, CA - CANCELLED

Peninsula Gem and Geology Society
One No. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022
Saturday and Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: 1 (408) 834-5384, steve_jobe@sbcglobal.net
Website: <http://pggs.org>

October 10, 2021 – Fallbrook, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society
Fall Festival of Gems
Location: Across the street from the Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Museum, 123 W. Alvarado St., Fallbrook, CA in the parking lot.

October 10th, 9 AM – 4 PM

Contact (760) 728-1130

Email: info@fgms.org

October 16-17, 2021 – Placerville, CA

El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society
El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Dr., Placerville, CA 95667

This show will be held indoors at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds with secure spaces for 25-30 vendors.

Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

Contact: (530) 676-2472

Website: <https://eldoradomineralandgem.org>

October 16-17, 2021 – Santa Rosa, CA

Santa Rosa Mineral & Gem Society
Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave, Santa Rosa
Hours: Saturday 10 AM-6PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: Janyce Vickers (707) 217-0636
Email: santarosarockshow@hotmail.com

October 30-31, 2021 – Mariposa CA

Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club
Mountains of Minerals Show
Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5007 Fairgrounds Rd.
Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM-4 PM
Contact: Meredith Meehan, mngmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

November 6-7, 2021, Concord, CA

Contra Costa Mineral and Gem Society
Contra Costa Annual Mineral and Gem Show
Centre Concord, 5298 Clayton Rd., Concord, CA 94518
Time: 10 AM – 5 PM each day
Mineral & Gem Show & Sale – Admission \$6, Under 16 Free with adult. Scouts in Uniform Free. Military and First Responders Free with ID. Gems, jewelry, mineral specimens, fossils, meteorites, beads, tools, equipment, fluorescent room. Demonstrations, displays, kids activities, door prizes, raffle and auction materials.
Email: mhopkins@ironhorsesdesign.net

Annual Show

Website: <https://contracostamineralandgemsociety.org/annual-show/>

November 6-7, 2021 – Ridgecrest, CA

Indian Wells Gem & Mineral Society, Inc.
Desert Empire Fairgrounds, 520 S. Richmond Rd., Ridgecrest CA 93555

Time: Saturday & Sunday 9 AM – 5 PM

Fieldtrip November 7th at 9 AM

Free admission!! Vendor spaces available. Goede purchasing and cutting, petroglyph slab paintings, gems and minerals and jewelry.

Contact: (760) 375-7905, fjrocks@dslexreme.com

November 13-14, 2021 – Yuba City

Sutter Buttes Gem and Mineral Society
29th Festival of Gems and Minerals
Yuba – Sutter Fairgrounds
442 Franklin Ave., Franklin Hall, Yuba City
Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact 916 677-6696, horita@comcast.net
Website: <http://sutterbuttesgemmin.org>

November 20-21, 2021 – Lake Side, CA

El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society
El Cajon Valley Gem and Mineral Society Annual Rock and Gem Round-up
Lakeside Rodeo Grounds, 12584 Mapleview St., Lakeside, CA 92040
Time: Saturday 9 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM
Free admission and parking.
Contact: 619 729-7904, ecvgms@gmail.com
Website: <http://ecvgms.org>

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 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.

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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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 54, Issue 10

— 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 October**



General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

250 E. Center Street

Anaheim, CA 92805

Stayed tuned! We may be starting up meetings again at the Anaheim Community Center. We are currently checking into getting our old room for meetings.

American Opal Society

Website: <http://OpalSociety.org>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/opalsociety>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AmericanOpalSociety>
Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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