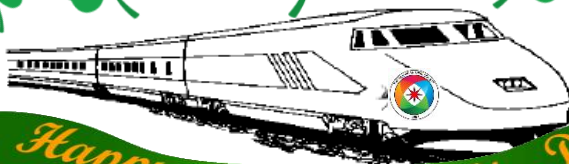


The Opal Express

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Happy Saint Patrick's Day

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President's Message

Happy St. Patrick's Day, Opalholics!



If you don't want to get pinched, be sure to wear something green!

We have good news to report! There will be an Opal Show this year! A BIG THANK YOU to Veronica Purpura for all her hard work in finding a venue for us and working on getting the details taken care of. She is also working on getting the contracts in order for the vendors. Be sure to check your email soon for contract details from Veronica.

There will be a March meeting at the Downtown Anaheim Community Center on Thursday, March 16th, starting at 7:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting







Fun Facts About St. Patrick's Day

The Real St. Patrick Was Born in Britain

Much of what is known about St. Patrick's life has been interwoven with folklore and legend. Historians generally believe that St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Britain (not Ireland) near the end of the 4th century. At age 16 he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sold as a slave to a Celtic priest in Northern Ireland. After toiling for six years as a shepherd, he escaped back to Britain. He eventually returned to Ireland as a Christian missionary.

The Shamrock Was Considered a Sacred Plant

The shamrock, a three-leaf clover, has been associated with Ireland for centuries. It was called the "seamroy" by the Celts and was considered a sacred plant that symbolized the arrival of spring. According to legend, St. Patrick used the plant as a visual guide when explaining the Holy Trinity. By the 17th century, the shamrock had become a symbol of emerging Irish nationalism.

Source: <https://www.history.com/news/st-patricks-day-facts>



Opal Festivals

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James
by Stephen and Mary Aracic



A big hurrah to the Yowah Opal Festival – July 2005! And well done to the enthusiasm of the Yowah community who proudly won the Australian Post Bush Spirit Award for 2005. This award recognizes communities facing or have faced difficult times, yet show outstanding commitment to solving problems by turning them into opportunities.

The spirit of the Yowah Opal Festivals lives on forever, for the attraction to Yowah Nuts and associated Boulder Opal can only be described as world-class. Added to which are splendid gems from surrounding fields such as Koroit, Duck Creek and Black Gate. When set into jewellery, as seen on the stalls during the Opal Festival, it's a creator's delight. Interstate and overseas tourists as well as opal dealers, love the peaceful tranquility and friendliness of the people.

My wife Mary and I enjoy traveling to Yowah for the annual event, as it reminds us of how it used to be in Lightning Ridge when no one was in a hurry. As we crossed the Queensland Border from New South Wales, we were amazed to see a cow suckling her cute little calf, undisturbed. There she stood in the centre of the dirt road, between Dirranbandi and Bollen. So with the greatest respect for this beautiful scene, I drove carefully around them.

It is such a fascinating drive through the Outback towns of Hebel, Bollen, Cunnamulla and Eulo. From then on the road takes you through the scenic hills and valleys to Yowah.

Early in the morning the four kilometre walk to the top of the bluff is a must for us. From there the castles in the surrounding hills can be observed along with the quaint little mining town of Yowah.

Near the General Store, we observed a myriad of birds pecking on the ground and as we approached, they nosily rose and filled the air. Mary couldn't resist commenting to the store owner, Ian Richardson, who made this touching reply: "I so appreciate what nature has provided for me that the least I can do is give some of it back in times of hardship." The same can be said for members of the kangaroo families who frequent Ian's store for a handout. The greatest respect is shown to all creatures, great and small in Yowah.

With all this in mind, it was easy to enjoy what the organizers know best, and that is to put on a good show and welcome the guests!

A special guest of honour was Michael Kowalski. Nature's own gentleman and representative of the American Opal Society, who has a very special place in our hearts.

The night got off to a friendly start as people lined up for meals a-la Yowah style. Neatly packed assorted meat was presented to you. This you cooked on hotplates fueled by glowing coals in 44-gallon drums cut in half. Friendly staff then served cooked veggies, followed by a delicious dessert. Everyone enjoyed their meal around a huge fire.

Having set up our stall amongst the gem opal displays, we were thrilled to see such an interest in our opal books. Collectors were fascinated with our Special Edition, presented in a colourful laminated sleeve box, featuring gem opal at the end of a book marker ribbon.

Most of the traders were happy with the sales over the weekend and the hospitality was very much appreciated.

Continued on Page 3

Lightning Ridge – Home of the Black Opal

The Ridge put on a great show for its visitors, most of who had followed on from the Yowah Opal Festival. It started with the 4th National Opal Symposium, when a new image for our National Opal Symposium was created – “Opal, the Colour of the Soul!”

The passion of the Opal industry may live on in the soul. But where are the miners who used to be the backbone of the Opal industry? This is the question being asked by many.

A lively debate got underway with learned speakers espousing their theories on Opal formation. It conflicted with the theories of the miners who obviously gained more knowledge from my latest book, “Rediscover Opals in Australia 1999”.

At the end of the day, it’s hats off to the dwindling few miners who use the knowledge gained through my book and brave harsh conditions in search of gem Opal.

A myriad of stalls attracted great interest in Opals from the commercial Opal fields of Australia. The Opal Jewellery Awards caused great excitement at the Gala Dinner. A tall Texan, Dalan Hargrave, was special guest Judge – a multi-award carver and goldsmith, Dalan will no doubt take back to America a wealth of experience from this great country of assorted gem Opal.

Quilpie – The Home of Boulder Opal

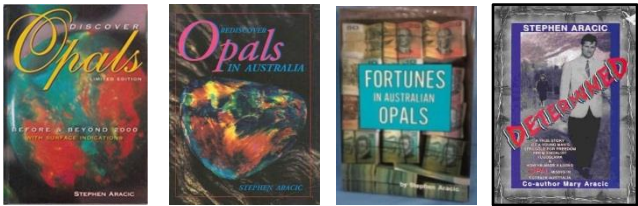
In 2005, the show was well reduced from previous years. However, taking into consideration the world economy and fuel prices rising dramatically, Opal has not risen in price. In recent years, the Gala Dinner night would be booked out. But it was reduced to the dining area. The food was great and the friendly atmosphere at its best.

On Tuesday evening, the Kangarangadoo” attracted huge crowds, stalls were plentiful and there were lots of entertaining venues. A stone throwing competition caused great excitement as competitors hurled rocks in and out of boxes. Brolga Street was closed off and live music was played.

The show finished about 2 a.m. and all had an enjoyable night. Some of the spirited crowd were on their way to other events in Windorah and Birdsville.

Source: As written on Page 47 of “Metal, Stone & Glass” magazine by Stephen and Mary Aracic.

As AOS Editor, I would like to thank Mary and Stephen Aracic once again for allowing us to share their wonderful stories from Lightning Ridge. I look forward to sharing more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in future newsletters!

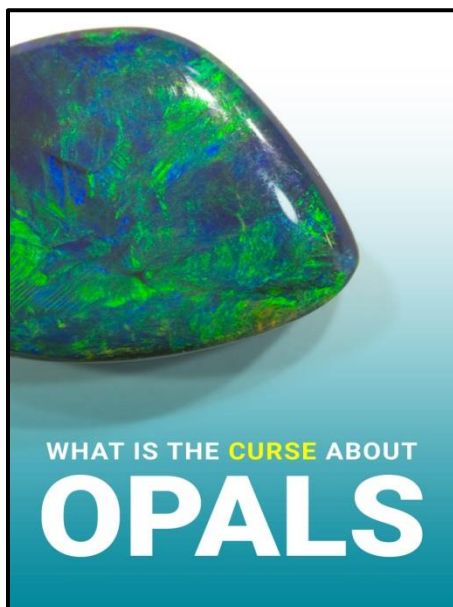


You’ll find more opal stories from Stephen and Mary in these books.

Lightning Ridge Opal Festival - 2023

Starts: Thursday, 27 July 2023
Ends: Saturday, 29 July 2023

Opal and Gem Expo. Free entry to outdoor stalls and stalls in the Beer garden of the Lightning Ridge Bowling Club and Racecourse car Park. Annual Red on Black Opal Queen Ball at the Bowling Club. Jewellers, buyers, wholesalers, miners, rock hounds, lapidary enthusiasts and tourists are invited to experience the best Lightning Ridge has to offer with this culmination of information, spectacular jewellery, collectables, great deals and fantastic networking opportunities. The Opal and Gem Expo boasts over 100 stalls with a huge range of products including gemstones, tools, lapidary supplies and lifestyle products. Click here for more information on the Lightning Ridge Opal and Gem Expo Stall Bookings.



What Is The Curse About Opals?

Has anyone ever warned you not to wear opal? Maybe you heard it's cursed or bad luck. So what's all this superstition about? What is the curse about opals, and is it true?

The most popular source is Sir Walter Scott's 1829 novel, *Anne of Geierstein*. However, others say the belief goes back much further in time, stemming from the Black Plague or even ancient Rome.

This superstition has led other authors since Scott to pair opals with evil, notably the cursed opal necklace in the *Harry Potter* series. But is this just a trope of fiction? Does any real evidence exist? Or is it a vast marketing scheme dating back over a century?

We'll answer these questions and more to finally distinguish opal fact from fiction.

Sources of the Superstition

As we all know, myths don't just suddenly enter mass consciousness; they start in stories passed down, especially by artists or authors. Let's look at a few sources that set this myth into motion.

Sir Walter Scott

As we mentioned, the most popular source of the opals being cursed is Scott's novel, *Anne of Geierstein*. His story started a widespread connection between opals and the paranormal.

The chapter in question included the spontaneous combustion of a character who wore a special opal hair clip. The character seemed to bring out the magic in the stone, but when holy water eventually touched it, the stone immediately faded to black and the woman fainted before reducing to ash by the morning.

As holy water is used in exorcisms, many people, both characters and readers alike, thought this must mean opals were demonic. At the very least, they thought it brought bad luck, leading opal sales to drop by a whopping 50%. However, the novel wasn't the only reason behind this.

The Black Plague

You probably remember learning about the plague, aka "The Black Death," that happened in the Middle Ages. We know the tales of rats and creepy masks, but you might not remember that the plague stayed around for centuries. One of the periodic outbreaks happened just a few decades after Scott's book was published.

Sometimes referred to as the "third pandemic," the 1860 outbreak was devastating. The public still didn't know the exact science behind the cause, so many blamed it on the supernatural. Naturally, rumors about the original Black Plague resurfaced. A particularly famous one claimed that, after one patient died, the color in the opal she wore vanished.

This only increased the opal's association with curses and death. Even though the scientific reason for the plague was discovered shortly after the third pandemic began, some made it their mission to stoke the flame of this opal controversy.

Diamond Dealers

Around 1900, diamonds were the most popular gem on the market. No surprise there, right? But as opal imports started flooding into the U.S. and Europe, leading diamond dealers were scared of losing their share on the market.

To quench the competition, they spread more rumors about the gem. One of these rumors was based on opals cracking. While opals tend to

Continued on Page 5
Page 4

retain moisture and do sometimes crack as they’re drying out, the dealers claimed any stone that cracked was bad luck.

Considering they were selling the hardest stone to crack, diamonds, it’s not hard to see why they chose to put down opals like this. But because of these dealers’ status at the time, the rumors were so influential that many still believe them.

You might be thinking, “If everything about this stone is negative, shouldn’t I just avoid it?” On the contrary! For just this one bad myth, there are a handful of legends and traditions that illuminate the positive attributes of opals!

The Brighter Side of Opal Mythology

The idea that opals are harmful is a relatively recent phenomenon, compared to how far legends about the gem go back. Long before the Black Plague — we’re talking 1st century A.D. — ancient Romans made their own lore about this stone’s power.

Many Romans believed the opal’s display of colors was because other gemstones, like rubies and sapphires, were growing inside them. Others said wrapping one in a bay leaf would make you invisible. One lasting association, however, was with wealth; a connection that extended all over the world.

Opals and Good Fortune

In Rome, those in power would keep their own special opals for good fortune. One story states that Julius Caesar even tried to convince a wealthy man to give up his opal and the man decided to skip town and live in isolation instead. Many rulers since, from Queen Victoria to the first Empress of France, have famously donned opals, too.

Even the Greeks had their own story, believing opals could give you clairvoyance. Go to the Middle East in the era of Mohammad, and you’d hear Arabs describing how opals came from the sky, brought to Earth by lightning.

Before the Black Plague, lots of Europeans wore opal to see better and stop their hair color from fading. As Scott’s novel was set around this time period, this could be the reason behind the “evil” opal hair clip.

Symbolically, opals have represented intense emotions, especially hope and enthusiasm. They’re also known for facilitating self-reflection and freedom from the past. These beliefs are likely rooted in opal’s unique way of absorbing and reflecting a rainbow of colors. To some, this parallels the idea of bringing hidden thoughts or feelings to light, and many even cleanse their opals by moonlight to release any negative energy the stone might have absorbed.

So What’s The Verdict?

Most of the stories surrounding opals are rumors and urban legends. While urban legends serve to entertain or teach a lesson through storytelling, rumors help people make sense of a situation they don’t understand. When an uncertain outcome will affect your life, the rumor can be even more powerful.

If you’re worried that buying a beautiful opal will bring bad luck, know that these rumors are just that: rumors, with no substantial basis. However, you may feel more at ease by following the metaphysical practice of adding diamonds around the opal to overpower its energy.

At the end of the day, opals are striking gemstones valued for their iridescence. The only significance behind the “opal curse” rumors is the mystery and intrigue they’ve brought to this already captivating stone.

Source: <https://www.opalauctions.com/learn/opal-stories>

Greek mythology stated that opals originated from Zeus’ joyful tears after winning the battle against the Titans. Meanwhile, Australian aborigines believed that the Creator came to Earth on a rainbow, leaving these colorful stones where his feet touched the ground.

Source: Google

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~ 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

PROBLEMS WITH SMALL DRILLS

by Brad Smith

Drilling small holes can be a problem. With drills that are less than 1 mm (18 gauge or .040 inches), some chucks will not tighten down well enough to hold the drill securely.

The problem is easily solved in either of two ways - with a chuck adapter or by buying your small drills with a 3/32 inch shank size. Either way you have a large shank to be gripped in your drill press, Foredom or Dremel, so changing bits is fast and easy.



EASIER PRONG SETTING

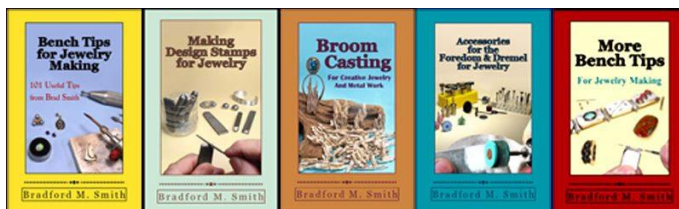
by Brad Smith

When setting stones in a prong mount, the tool is less likely to slip off the prong if you grind a groove into its face or rough up the face a bit with sandpaper. Some folks prefer a prong pusher for doing this, and others like a set of pliers.

The easiest way to create a slot on the pusher is with a file, and the quickest way to create a slot on one jaw of your pliers is with a separating disc. Then do a rough polish on the slot with a medium grit, knife-edge silicone wheel.



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



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.

March 3, 4 & 5, 2023, Newark, CA

Mineral and Gem Society of Castro Valley
Newark Pavilion, 6430 Thornton Ave., Newark, CA
Times: Friday and Saturday, 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
MGSCV Annual Show. 40+ dealers, display cases, demonstrations, door prizes. Sunday auction of donated items from society members. Fluorescent displays and dealers. Free parking.
Contact: Showchair@mgscv.org
Website: <http://MGSCV.org>

March 4-5, 2023 – Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem & Mineral Society
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA 93001
Hours: Saturday 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
50 exhibits of gems, minerals, fossils and lapidary arts; ongoing demos of lapidary and jewelry making; raffle prizes & silent auctions; a Second-Hand Treasures Store & plant sale; 15 dealers; children's activities and free resources for teachers. A SoCal tradition for 6 decades and counting!
Contact: (805) 312-8467, info@vgms.org
Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 10-12, 2023 – Stoddard Wells

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club
47th Annual Stoddard Wells Rockhound Tailgate
Time: Friday, Saturday & Sunday – 9 AM – 5 PM
Come visit us and our vendors for Handcrafted and Faceted Jewelry, Slabs and Cabs, Findings, and Equipment, Minerals and Fossils. TONS of Rough Material and More
Contact: (909) 657-7200, marklantz53@gmail.com
Club Address: 15056B Seventh St., Victorville, CA 92395
Phone: (760) 243-2330 and leave a message. Email: president@vvgmc.org
Website: <http://vvgmc.org>
[Tailgate-2023-Info.jpg](#)

March 11-12, 2023 -Turlock, CA

Mother Lode Mineral Society
Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway, Turlock, CA
Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Admission: Adults \$8, 12 & under free w/paid adult
Parking: Free
Activities: Jewelry, Beads, Tools, Educational Exhibits, Demonstrations, Fossil Exhibit, Sharks, Fluorescent room, Speakers, Geode Cutting, Dinosaur Walk-about, Gold Panning, Gem & Mineral Identification. Chat with Paleontologist Neal Larson, Large Fluorescent Room, Kids Activities, Rock Sale – old collections, Earth Science Tables, Food Court, Gemstone & Fossil Dig bags, Raffle, 45 Dealers
Website: <http://www.turlockgemshow.com> or <http://www.motherlodemineralsociety.com>

March 18-19, 2023 – Lemoore, CA

Lemoore Gem & Mineral Club
Trinity Hall, 470 Champion St., Lemoore, CA
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Featuring gems and minerals from around the world! Fossils, Jewelry, Beads, Stone Carvings, Lapidary Rough, Geode Cutting, and Artesian Jewelry.
Website: <https://facebook.com/AndLemoore>

March 18, 2023 – Lake Elsinore, CA

Lake Elsinore Gem & Mineral Society
32097 Corydon Road, Lake Elsinore, CA 92530
3rd Annual Spring Show
Contact: (909) 208-6956, berylman50@aol.com

March 18, 2023 – Fallbrook, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society
123 W. Alvarado St., Fallbrook, CA 92028
Hours: 1 PM -4 PM
Rough ^ Cut sale of mineral specimens, gem rough and cut, lapidary slabs and rough, obsidian, micros, grab buckets and more. Priced to GO! Visit our free admission Gem and Mineral Museum while you're in town.
Parking in church lot on Pico (across from Rough & Cut entrance)
Contact: (760) 728-1130, info@fgms.org
Website: <http://fgms.org>

March 18-19, 2023 – San Jose, CA

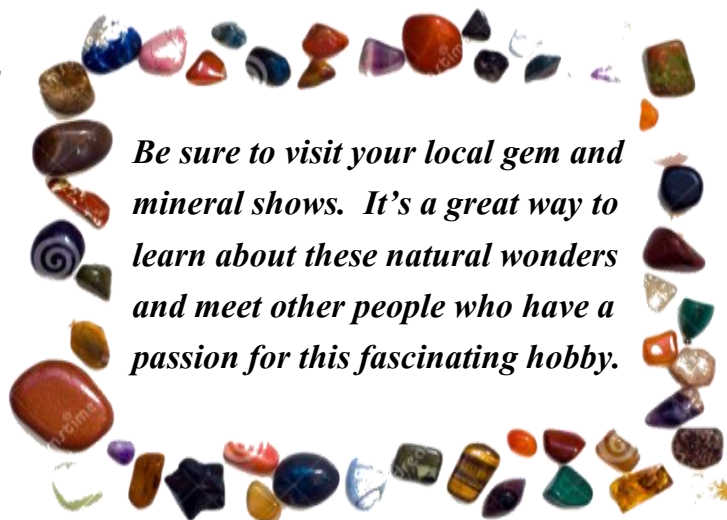
Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Rd, San Jose, CA 95111
Hours: Saturday & Sunday 10 AM-5 PM
Fun for children of all ages. Free Parking.
Active Duty, Retired Military, Their Dependents & First Responders
Free with Valid Military ID or First Responder ID

March 24-26, 2023 – Clovis, CA

Fresno Gem and Mineral Society
The Clovis Rodeo Grounds, 748 Rodeo Dr., Clovis, CA 93612
Hours: Friday & Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Central Valley Gem and Mineral Show: Showing Crystals, Gems, Jewelry, Minerals and Fossils. There will be Silent Auctions and Door Prizes. Free Parking and Free Admission
Website: <https://www.fgms.online>

March 25-26, 2023 – Angeles Camp, CA

Calaveras Gem and Mineral Show
Calaveras County Fairgrounds, 2465 Gun Club Road, Angeles Camp, CA 95222
Contact: clairemathison1@gmail.com
Website: <https://calaverasgemandmineral.net/>



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 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.

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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 56, Issue 3

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

3rd Thursday of the Month
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

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



Next meeting will be
Thursday, March 16th at
7:00 p.m. at the Anaheim Downtown
Community Center.

TO:



General Meeting Location at:

[Anaheim Downtown Community Center](#)

250 E. Center Street
Anaheim, CA 92805

Next meeting will be Thursday, February 16th, at
7:00 p.m. at the Anaheim Downtown Community Center

American Opal Society

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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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