

The Opal Express

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President's Message

Greetings Opalholics!

I would like to personally thank one of our newest members, Kathy Goetz for her generous donation to the American Opal Society. We also had an anonymous donation to the society recently. To Kathy and the anonymous donor, the American Opal Society and I greatly appreciate your generosity.

As a reminder, the AOS is a 5013c charity organization educational in nature, all donations are tax deductible.

Since the COVID pandemic and the cancellation of our annual show for the past three years, which was one of our main revenues for the AOS, we have been running on a shoestring budget. These donations will greatly help out our financial situation, and hopefully the opal show revenues this year will put us in a strong financial position for next year.

The American Opal Society is 100% volunteer run and managed, a few people working very hard for the whole of our society. I encourage our fellow members to volunteer, especially at our annual opal and gem show this year. YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!!!

As for all the volunteers currently running and managing the American Opal Society, I truly would like to thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

Did You Know?

Many historians believe that fireworks originally were developed in the second century B.C. in ancient Liuyang, China. It is believed that the first natural "firecrackers" were bamboo stalks that when thrown in a fire, would explode with a bang because of the overheating of the hollow air pockets in the bamboo.

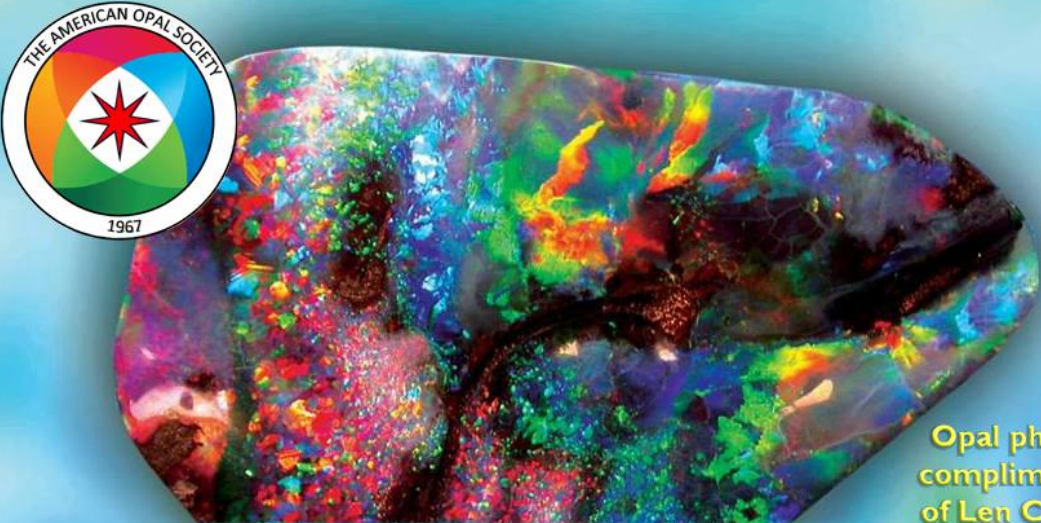
Legend has it that Captain John Smith set off the first fireworks display in the American colonies in Jamestown, Virginia in 1608. He and other settlers used the fireworks to celebrate special events. Fireworks were used in the very first 4th of July celebration in 1776.

Source: Google



We're Back!

After three long years, the Opal Show is back and we have a new location!



Opal photo compliments of Len Cram

53rd Annual Opal Show
October 28-29, 2023
Velvet Rose Event Center



American Opal Society proudly presents
53rd Annual OPAL, GEM & JEWELRY SHOW

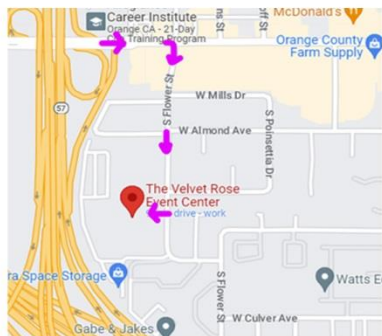
October 28th & 29th, 2023 Saturday 10AM - 6PM Sunday 10AM - 5PM	!Fabulous New Location! Velvet Rose Event Center 300 S. Flower St., Orange, CA 92868
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Opal and Gem Dealers from around the USA and beyond
Rough and Cut Opals, other gemstones, jewelry & supplies
Huge Drawing Grand Prize custom design by Stan McCall
Many other prizes: gemstones, jewelry, books, tools, surprises
Free Demonstrations gemstone cutting, jewelry making, gemstone identification, faceting, gold panning and more!

ADMISSION \$5.00 ADULTS
STUDENTS WITH ID & CHILDREN UNDER 15 FREE
FREE PARKING

American Opal Society, Inc.
PO Box 4875
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875
Contact: Veronica Purpura (714) 501-9959
info@opalsociety.org <http://opalsociety.org>
(dealer inquiries welcome)

DIRECTIONS: exit Chapman from the 57 towards Orange. Take Flower Street and follow. Make a right into the venue just after passing Larkspur Drive. Parking lot is in the back. There is a church next door.



In Remembrance of Barbara McCondra

by Mary Aracic

Photos provided by Mary Aracic

from

Metal Stone & Glass Magazine – 2010, Volume 51

as told to AOS editor, Kathleen James

RIP

Barbara McCondra

December 1941 – March 2010

Barbara McCondra, aka – “Eskimo Nell”, came to Lightning Ridge at Easter 1983 from her job as a security guard on the Alaska oil fields. She was an adventurer who loved opal. She was born of Czech parents in America. Through 2009, she fulfilled her dreams of living either on the opal fields or in Arizona. Her grown sons, Ray and Ron, came over from the U.S. and mined too.

As a larger than life sort of woman, she slotted into the excitement of opal mining with ease. Her friends helped her build a camp at Pig Hill and her Purple Dunny is famous! Her mining partner was her father who brought his other daughter, Marian, to Lightning Ridge to see what all the fuss was about and paid for her first shaft. Barb worked side-by-side with the best of men.

In November 1990, Barb #2 – tour guide, Barbara Mortiz from Coober Pedy, moved to the Ridge. Barb #1 had already become an ambassador for the Australian Opal industry. She wrote articles for Rock & Gem Magazine, the monthly Opal Express in the U.S., as well as for Metal, Stone & Glass. She gave talks to the American Opal Society and was a regular at the Tucson and Quartzite Gem Shows.

For the past 15 years, Barb #1 had focused her digging at Yowah and usually returned to catch up with friends at the Ridge Opal



Life Members of the shovel-ready Australian Opal Centre at Lightning Ridge.

Barbara McCondra, Barbara Moritz and Barbara Gasch. Barbs #1, #2 and #3

Festival in July. The Yowah Nut annual newsletter was her creation in 1997 with the help of good friend Gwen Burney. They started the Yowah Jewellery Design Awards that initiated the Lightning Ridge black opal counterpart and met Barb #3 – Jeweller Barbara Gasch at White Cliffs. Barb #1 brought other American “opalholics” over for a hands-on experience of life on the opal fields, an imaginative and colourful hostess as well as an author.

“Smoke Gets in Your Eyes”, a Lightning Ridge cookbook, gives another dimension to cooking. Barb’s writing style is jaunty and memorable; her sketches and caricatures are unique. Her book-a-zine, Fire in a Brown Paper Bag, about the Queensland opal fields

Continued on Page 4

is informative. And there are two more publications ready for the press and two still in her laptop, one is a murder mystery.

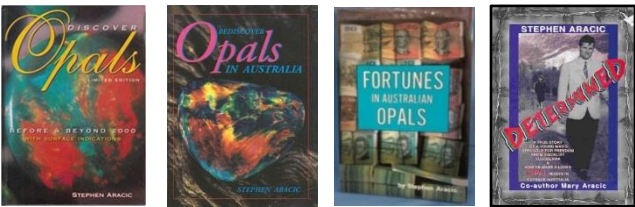
In August 2009 whilst mining at the Yowah fields, Barb complained of stomach pains and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in Toowoomba Hospital. So Ron flew over and took her back to ray's in Dallas. She lost her battle at home in the care of her sons and in the company of her three grandchildren.

Barbara has shared a lot of herself with us – a legend in her own time. One thing is sure, Eskimo Nell's totem is at her former Pig Hill camp and part of her lurks on the Opal fields. Anyone who knew her will agree that she was a one-off. She became an identity during the lively 1983-1993 period at Lightning Ridge and went on to do the same on the Yowah fields.

We remember the vibrancy and generosity of this hardworking woman, Barbara McCondra, who will always be Number 1 to us, Barbara Moritz and Barbara Gasch.

Such a lovely tribute to Barbara McCondra.

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.



“Eskimo Nell” – Barbara McCondra



Barbara McCondra at the 2001 American Opal Society Opal Show

The Folklore of Opal

6 October 2020

The folklore around opal gemstones has changed over the centuries. It has long been associated with hope, happiness, innocence, and luck.

According to Arabic legend, opals fell from the sky in bolts of lightning. 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.

Aztecs named fire opal after Quetzalcoatl, their feathered-serpent diety. They believed the "Stone of the Bird of Paradise" could foster creativity and beginnings. They felt it could also bring about necessary destruction.

People in the Middle Ages wore opal gemstones to bring them luck. They believed that the color-changing opal possessed the powers of each gemstone whose color appeared in its sheen.

However, that perception changed with the 1829 publication of Sir Walter Scott's book, "Anne of Geierstein." The story featured an enchanted princess who wore an opal that changed colors with her moods. But when a few drops of holy water extinguished the stone's magic fire, the woman soon died. People began



associating opals with bad luck. Within a year after publication of Scott's book, opal sales in Europe fell by 50 percent.

Other stories of bad luck were told through the years. For example, Spain's King Alfonso XII was gifted an opal ring for his wedding. After giving it to his wife, she died. The ring was then given to his grandmother, sister, and sister-in-law, each of them also dying when in possession of the ring. King Alfonso was the last to wear the opal, dying shortly after. These deaths could have been attributed to the cholera epidemic at the time, but the legend of the cursed opal persisted.

When opal deposits were discovered in Australia after 1850, the gemstone's perception changed yet again. The country started to produce 95 percent of the world's opal supply and many of the most beautiful specimens. People once again clamored to wear opal jewelry.

NOTE: The above is intended to educate on the myth, legend, and historical lore of opal and is not meant to be interpreted as fact.

Source: <https://www.americangemsociety.org/the-folklore-of-opal/>

Opal Mythology: Greek Origin Story and Meaning

In Greek mythology, Zeus' siblings asked him to be their king and to wage war against their cruel father Cronus and the other Titans. To aid in the war effort, Zeus travelled to Tartarus and freed three Cyclopes and three Hundred-Hander Giants from their incarceration. To show their gratitude, they decided to forge a special weapon for Zeus – the thunderbolt. Zeus and his new allies then engaged the Titans in battle.

Amidst the fog of war, Cronus was momentarily distracted. Zeus used the opportunity to strike his father with the thunderbolt, downing him and allowing for his capture. It is said that after emerging victorious, Zeus wept tears which turned to beautiful opals upon hitting the ground!

The idea of opal retaining the fiery luminesce of lightning and thunder was also held by ancient Arabs, believing that opals fell from the sky during storms. Pliny, the Roman scholar remarked: “Some opali carry such a play within them that they equal the deepest and richest colors of painters. Others...simulate the flaming fire of burning sulphur and even the bright blaze of burning oil”.

Opals have been the victim of some terrible shaming campaign waged through the ages. In Medieval Europe, when Black Death and superstition was all around, opal became associated with all the pestilence and affliction. Later on, opal became a sought-after jewel for thieves, believing it could bestow them with a type of invisibility, allowing them to conduct their craft away from watchful eyes.

The curse of the opal was certainly encouraged by the De Beer mining family - powerful diamond miners - who feared the threat of opal overtaking diamonds. They saw its

popularity make a comeback, with even Queen Victoria herself wearing and gifting opal! They so successfully promoted and encouraged the notion of opal being bad luck, that even today, wearing Opal if you were not born during the month of October can be considered bad luck!

Opal gets its name in English from the Latin Opalus, meaning: “Precious stone”. The gem that has a storied past and regardless of the bad press, continues to be worn and adored by many in the present day, particularly royal families in Europe.

The former Queen of the Netherlands, Beatrix has both a private and royal collection of jewels made of the orange-colored fire opals. Perfect for the Netherlands!

Opal is Australia's national gemstone, and as Queen of Australia, Queen Elizabeth also has a collection of gorgeous opal jewels.



Source:
<https://varianceobjects.com/blogs/gemstone-history/the-ancient-greek-origin-story-of-opal>

~ 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

ANNEALING THIN WIRE

by Brad Smith

Annealing thin wire can be tricky. For a good anneal, all areas of the wire must be heated uniformly to just barely red before quenching in water. If you're heating with a torch, the tricky part is how to get every inch of the wire up to the same proper annealing temp without melting any of it.

The first thing I do to avoid problems is to wind the wire into a tight coil about two inches in diameter and bind it together in several places with scrap wire. Any stray loops or loose ends will heat up very quickly and possibly melt before the more bulky coil reaches the annealing temperature. Annealing fine wire with a torch is always risky.

A perfect anneal with no risk of melting is easy if you have an enameling or casting oven. Heat to about 1200 F, place the coil of wire into the oven, let it soak for 5 minutes, and quench.

But for those with no oven, here's how I use a scrap of thick sheet metal and an old tuna fish can to build my own "oven" and avoid melting delicate items when annealing.

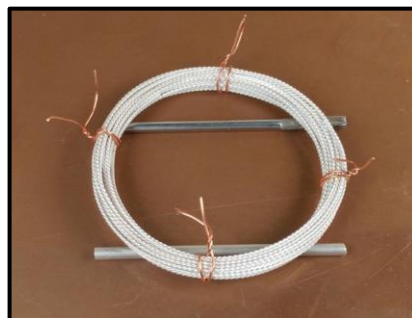
1. Elevate the sheet on a tripod or a couple fire bricks at your solder station so you can heat it with a torch from below.
2. Place the coil onto the sheet and elevate it with a couple pieces of steel or broken solder pad so the silver wire does not touch the plate. An old bur shaft or a nail works nicely.
3. Cover the wire coil with a metal can similar to what tuna fish comes in.

4. Heat from the bottom and hold at the annealing temperature for several minutes before quenching.

Avoid getting the sheet metal red hot. One easy way to gauge the proper annealing temperature inside the can is to use a black marker on the outside as shown. Another is to put a dab of paste flux on the sheet metal plate. The marker will disappear or the flux will melt when the can reaches the proper annealing temperature.

And BTW, the wire coil I'm annealing here is filigree wire that I'm making up for a workshop I'll be teaching this July in Culver City, CA at the Fiesta of Gems Show. For more information on the classes there, see

<https://culvercityrocks.org/fiesta/>



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.

July 8-9, 2023 – Culver City, CA

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM
Culver City Gem and Mineral Society
Culver City Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA 90203
60th Annual Fiesta of Gems – 2023 Theme: Druzy
Free Admission – Free Parking – Free Hourly Drawings
35 Vendors Featuring Minerals, Gems, Jewelry, Fossils, Lapidary & Jewelry making supplies, Books, Etc.
Free Exhibits of Minerals, Gems, Fossils, Crystals, Handcrafted Jewelry, Meteorites, Etc.
Free Demonstrations of Jewelry Making and Earth Sciences
Free Mineral Specimen for the Kids plus Rock Games & Earth Science Education Displays
Grand Prize Raffle drawing on Sunday
Contact: lexyhunter@aol.com
Website: <http://culvercityrocks.org/fiesta/>

August 4, 5 & 6, 2023 – Nipomo, CA

Orcutt Mineral Society
Nipomo High School, 525 N. Thompson Ave., Nipomo, CA 93444
Hours: Aug 4 & 5 – 10 AM – 5 PM, Aug 6 – 10 AM – 4 PM
The 55th Annual Rockhound Tailgating Rock & Gem Festival
Free Admission and Free Parking
Contact: nipomocowgirl55@yahoo.com
Website: <http://www.omsinc.org>

August 5-6, 2023 – Roseville, CA

Roseville Rock Rollers Gem and Mineral Society
Roebbelen Event Center, @the Grounds – Roseville, 700 Event Center Dr., Roseville, CA 95678
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
61st Roseville Gem, Jewelry, Mineral and Fossil Show
Over 60 vendors, inside and out, featuring Crystals, Fossils, Minerals from around the world, Opal, Amethyst, Beads, Gemstones, Meteorites, Gold, and for Kids – “Education Station”, Gold Nuggets, Prospecting equipment, detectors and supplies, Petrified Wood, Stone carvings. Watch Demonstrations in the Lapidary Arts and bid on Silent Rock Auctions. Free – Scientific Mineral and Gem ID! Bring your Rocks, Gems, Minerals, Meteorites and treasures, for a no-cost Scientific Identification. General Admission \$8, Seniors 60+ \$7, Kids – 12 and under Free. Parking \$10. Discount coupon.
Contact: gloriarosevillerockrollers@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.rockrollers.com/index.html>

August 19-20, 2023 – Tehachapi, CA

Tehachapi Valley Gem and Mineral Society
Annual Tehachapi Valley Gem and Mineral Show
500 East “F” Street, Tehachapi, CA 93561
Hours: 9 AM – 5 PM
Gems and minerals, jewelry, activities for kids and much more. Free admission.
Contact: (661) 972-1117, travis462@outlook.com
Website: <https://www.tvgms.rocks>

August 26-27, 2023 – Arcadia, CA

Pasadena Lapidary Society
Arcadia Masonic Lodge, 50 W. Duarte Rd., Arcadia CA 91007
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: (626) 260-7239
Website: <https://pasadenalapidary.org>

September 16-17, 2023 – Monterey, CA

Carmel Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Monterey Fairgrounds, Monterey, CA
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
Contact: (831) 801-5887, susieharlow@gmail.com
Website: <http://cvgms.rocks>

September 16-17, 2023 – Reno, NV

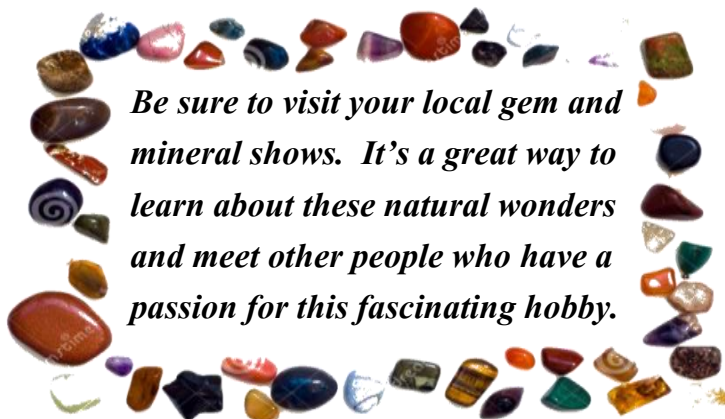
Reno Gem and Mineral Society
Reno/Sparks Convention Center, 4590 S. Virginia St., Reno
The Jackpot of Gems has been held in the Reno area for over 50 years. The show is put on to educate people who have an interest in minerals and gems that are so abundant in our State. RGMS members display over 30 cases of rocks, gems, and minerals. There are demonstrations showing how to make some of the beautiful things shown in the Display Cases. There is a booth high-lighting fluorescent features of some minerals that has been called “nature’s light show”. Expect to learn something new about rocks and minerals in the State of Nevada. It is a fun hobby to learn about and the Show is enjoyable for the entire family. There will be raffle tickets available for fabulous prizes. The Wheel of Fortune is a special place for children who spin the wheel to win fun rock and gem specimens. We also have a new Kids Corner with rock painting and a scavenger hunt. There are great bargains available in beads and minerals in the silent auction held every thirty minutes. Come join us!
Contact: (775) 229-4420, sailondan55@aol.com
Website: www.renogms.org

September 16-17, 2023 – San Luis Obispo, CA

San Luis Obispo Gem and Mineral Club
San Luis Obispo Veteran's Memorial Building, 801 Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
Gems by the Sea Show. Admission: \$5, Children 12 and under Free. Free parking.
Contact: 2023show@slogem.org
Website: <http://slogem.org>

October 7-8, 2023 – Signal Hill, CA

Long Beach Mineral & Gem Society
Signal Hill Library, 1800 E. Hill Street, Signal Hill, CA 90755
“Gems on the Hill” Annual Show
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Contact: (562) 253-1390, lbmineralgemsociety@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.facebook.com/LBMGS>



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.

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 56, Issue 7

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

3rd Thursday of the Month
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

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



TO:

Meeting - July 20th

at the Anaheim Community Center

Social Time: 6:30 p.m.

General Meeting - Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.



General Meeting Location at:

Anaheim Downtown Community Center

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

**Next meeting will be Thursday, July 20th, at the
Anaheim Downtown Community Center**

**→ Social Time: 6:30 p.m. ←
General Meeting - Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.**

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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Jamie Cassidy-Curtis	Secretary	

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