

The Opal Express

Published
monthly by
The
American
Opal
Society

February 2025

Volume 58 Issue 2

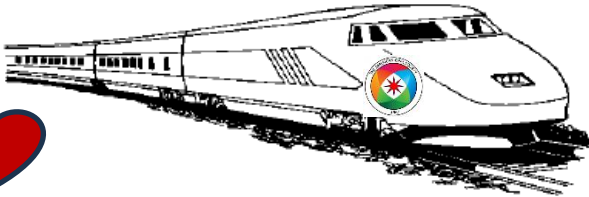


TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message
Members Only Password
Opal show flyer
Benitoite Article
Tecopa Opal Article
Bench Tips
Upcoming Events
Membership Application

1
1
2
3
4
5
6
7

President's Message

Welcome Opalholics!

February is the month of hope and fresh starts.

Let's start this month with some local rock and gem shows. Check our page 6 for upcoming events.

Veronica Purpura, AOS Show Chairman, will be bringing "World of Opals" to the South Orange County Gem and Mineral Society.

Date: February 19, 2025

Location: Dorothy Visser Senior Center.

When: Social time is 6:30pm and program starts at 7:00pm.

Meetings are free and open to the public.

Stan McCall

AOS President

Custom Creative Gem Cutting

Editor's Note:

The state with the most Opal Society members is California.

California, often referred to as the "Golden State," is a diverse and dynamic region located on the west coast of the United States. It is the most populous state in the country and the third-largest in terms of land area. California's geographical diversity is one of its defining features, encompassing everything from picturesque beaches along the Pacific Ocean to towering mountain ranges like the Sierra Nevada and the Cascade Range.

California State Mineral: **Gold**

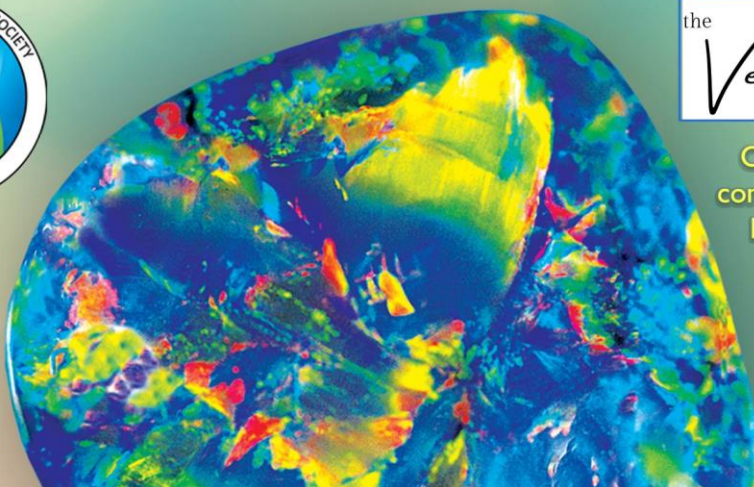
California State Gem: **Benitoite**

California State Rock: **Serpentine**

To celebrate American Heart Month, take some time to learn about heart health risks, find your favorite heart-healthy activities, and cook some healthy meals with your family.



Opal photo
compliments of
Len Cram



55th Annual Opal Show October 18-19, 2025 Velvet Rose Event Center



American Opal Society proudly presents **55th Annual OPAL, GEM & JEWELRY SHOW**

October 18th & 19th, 2025

Saturday 10AM - 6PM

Sunday 10AM - 5PM

!Fabulous Location!

Velvet Rose Event Center

300 S. Flower St., Orange, CA 2868

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

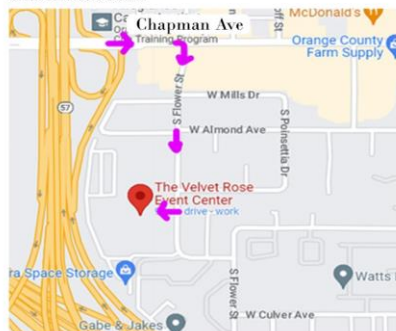
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

Contact: Veronica Purpura (714) 501-9959

info@opalsociety.org <http://opalsociety.org>

(dealer inquiries welcome)

DIRECTIONS: Exit Chapman from the 57 towards Orange. Turn onto Flower Street and go straight. Make a right into the venue just after passing Larkspur Drive. Parking lot is in the back. There is a church next door.





Left Photo By: The Mineral Gallery, Inc. Right photo by: SpiriferMinerals

Benitoite: Rare California Gemstone

Benitoite is a rare and captivating gemstone known for its intense blue color and exceptional brilliance. **Benitoite is a rare blue barium titanium silicate mineral**, found in hydrothermally altered serpentinite. Beniotite is a very rare mineral that was discovered in 1907 in San Benito County in **California**.

It was originally mistaken for sapphire. Benitoite fluoresces under short wave ultraviolet light, appearing bright blue to bluish white in color. The more rarely seen clear to white benitoite crystals fluoresce red under long-wave UV light.

Benitoite occurs in a number of sites, but **gemstone quality** material has **only been found** in California. In 1985 benitoite was named as the **official state gem** of California.

Benitoite has the rarest form of crystal structure in the world. It belongs to the Hexagonal System, it's Class is Ditrigonal -Dipyramidal. It's light dispersion or internal fire is greater than that of diamond. Dispersion is the splitting up of white light into its individual wavelengths, what we see as colors. A benitoite that has good clarity, color and cut will show **greater fire** than a diamond.

The blue Benitoite on a white Natrolite matrix and usual association with black Neptunite makes a very aesthetic mineral specimen. Benitoite has a rare 5 pointed crystal form, and an even rarer 6 pointed form, "star of David", with about 24 samples known.

Benitoite is **associated with** other rare minerals such as black-red neptunite, snow white natrolite and brown-yellow joaquinite. Since the only source of this rare combination occurs at San Benito County, California

With the color of the most valuable tanzanite, it is easy to see why it is so valued. Gem quality Benitoite can be worth **more than Diamonds**, Sapphire, Ruby, [Emerald](#) or [Tanzanite](#). A clean, rare 1 carat cut benitoite sells between \$6500 and \$8000, depending on color, cut and clarity.

The cost increases greatly as the size of the cut stone increases due to the rarity of large facet grade crystals. Current market pricing of clean, good color, and well cut faceted benitoite over 2 carats, is \$10,000 per carat. Even uncut, rough stones and good mineral samples in matrix can run in the thousands.

It is one of the only gemstones that is naturally deep blue in [color](#), not needing heat or any other treatment to achieve it's color. It can be found in differing shades of blue, violet, white, clear, and on very rare occasions very pale pink, but the Deep Blue color is the most desirable. Science still cannot identify exactly what gives benitoite it's amazing color, and scientists have been unable to duplicate or replicate benitoite's crystal growth or fluorescent nature.

Opal In Tecopa's Silica Hills

by Mary Frances Strong

Precious opal is eagerly sought after by most collectors but there are few deposits in the United States from which it may be obtained. California's Mojave Desert lives up to its reputation as the jewel box of the United States; it has two localities where precious opal is still found.

Most southern California collectors are familiar with the private opal claim in Last Chance Canyon, Kern County (Desert Gem Trails), but only a small percentage have tried their luck in the Silica Hills west of Tecopa. The material from this area resembles the beautiful Australian opal and the finding of a nice specimen will make the trip well worthwhile.

The Silica Hills lie at the southeast end of Greenwater Valley about three miles northwest of Tecopa. A huge playa has been formed here by the Amargosa River as it spills out of the narrow confines of the mountain ranges south of Eagle Peak. The playa encompasses about six square miles and is dotted with islands. Water stands at the lower end and in times of heavy thundershowers, the lake bed fills. There are many springs in the area and Inyo County has developed Tecopa Hot Springs into a county park.

The Silica Hills form the western edge of the playa. A good opal-bearing strata is located at the site of the ruins of Zabriskie. Remnants of the old adobe buildings still remain and act as a landmark. At this point a dirt road leads up a canyon in the hills, giving access to the area. The canyon offers good camping sites even though it is close to the highway.

The precious opal is found as irregular concretionary masses in the grey green horizon of the beige hill, probably as a result of deposition from aqueous solution. "It reminds me of homemade peanut brittle," Jerry remarked, as he dug out the tube-like pieces. It must be broken open to expose the opal.

The opals are not large, generally pin point to pencil size. However, occasionally a larger one is found. The opals are tightly cemented to the matrix and many removal methods have been tried. Attempting to pry them loose only results in breakage. So far as we know, the best method is to saw away as much matrix as possible and carefully grind down to the opal.

The Tecopa area has had a long and colorful mining history. In its heyday it was second in production in the United States with a total value of over seven million dollars. Most of the lead silver ore came from a group of mines included in the Shoshone mines of the district owned by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Several smelters were in production and the ores were hauled to market by the colorful Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad. It was dismantled in 1940 but the railbed is easily discernible all along its route with many of the stations—now ghost buildings—in various stages of decay. Talc, borax, gold, and bentonite have also been extensively mined in the Tecopa district.

There are several other good collecting areas in a radius of thirty miles—Kingston amethyst, Sherry Wash wood (Desert Gem Trails), and Eagle Peak (G&M, Nov. '67). If one so desires, a week or two of good collecting can be enjoyed in this region.

The opal area lies along paved Highway 95 and is readily accessible to all types of cars and trailers. A spring lies just north of the collecting area, though the water is not for human consumption. Local residents come out here to wash their cars. "Gives them a real silicone polish," one man told us.

Limited supplies are available at Tecopa including ice. For those who don't mind being packed like "sardines in a can," there is camping in the county park at Tecopa Hot Springs.

Our travels have led us to hundreds of dead, dying, and live old mining towns throughout the southwest desert country. Once a bustling little mining town on the Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad, Tecopa has become a shadow of its former self. It seems a shame that with a fine mineral spring and a picturesque setting, it isn't developed into one of the desert's beauty spots. Perhaps someday it will be.

Found in Gems & Minerals Magazine January 1968

~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.newsletter.03@gmail.com

Depth gauge for drilling

by Brad Smith



DEPTH GAUGE FOR DRILLING

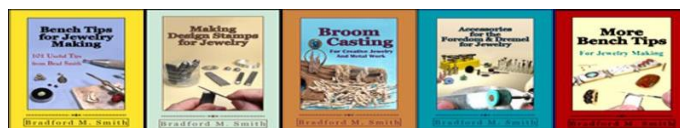
Sometimes you need to drill a number of holes all to the same depth. One quick and easy way to do this is to wind some tape around the drill bit so that the tape just touches the part surface when the hole is deep enough.

You can set the depth either by measuring from the tip of the drill to the tape or by drilling to the correct depth, leaving the bit in the hole, and wrapping tape around the bit at the surface level.

Note that a little extra tape left free on the end will blow away debris from the drilling.

See More of my Smart Solutions for Jewelry Making Series

<http://amazon.com/dp/B0BQ8YVLTJ>



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.

Shows for 2025

Antioch Lapidary Club's Jewelry, Gem and Rock Show - 02/15/2025

Start Date: 02/15/2025
End Date: 02/16/2025
Hours: Sat 10:00-5:00 Sun 10:00-4:00
Venue: Contra Costa County Fairgrounds
Address:
1201 West 10th Street
Antioch, CA 94509
Website: <http://www.antiochlapidaryclub.com/>
Types: Rock & Mineral Shows

February 22-23, 2025 – Vallejo, CA

Vallejo Gem and Mineral Society
Solano County Fairgrounds McCormack Hall, 900 Fairgrounds Drive, Vallejo, CA
Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM
59th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show
Contact: (415) 254-1506
Website: <http://vjgems.com>

March 1-2, 2025 – Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem and Mineral Society
Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura CA 93003
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
62nd Annual VGMS Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show. Kids' activities; jewelry-making demos; exhibits; raffle prizes, hourly silent auctions; dealers in fossils, mineral, lapidary materials; gold panning, Second-Hand Treasures Store of gently used items, books, and plants.
Free admission but the Fairgrounds charges parking if using the Fairgrounds lot.
Contact: (805) 312-8467, info@vgms.org
Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 7-9, 2024 – Stoddard Wells, CA

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club
1-15 toward Barstow. EXIT #157, stay on Stoddard Wells Road. Follow the signs 7 miles to tailgate
Hours: Daily 9 M – 5 PM
49th Annual Show; Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club, Annual Stoddard Wells Tailgate; Friday-Sunday 95p; Free to vendors and public; Vendors offering slabs and cabs, findings and equipment, minerals and fossils, rough material, handcrafted and faceted jewelry. Family field trip on Saturday 9a-1p at local collecting site.
Contact: Dave Duncan (831) 406-0214, president@vvgmc.org
Website: <http://vvgmc.org>

Mother Lode Mineral Society Rock & Gem Show - 03/08/2025

Start Date: 03/08/2025
End Date: 03/09/2025
Hours: 10:00 - 5:00
Venue: Turlock Fairgrounds
Address:
900 North Broadway Ave
Turlock, CA 95380
Website: <http://www.turlockgemshow.com>

Santa Clara Gem & Mineral Show - 03/15/2025

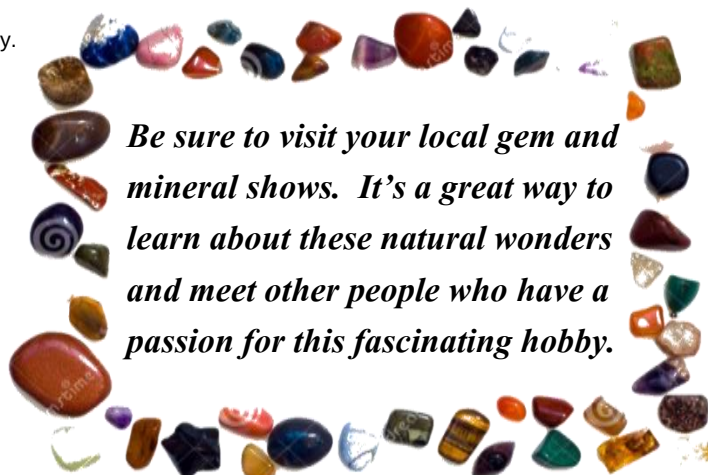
Start Date: 03/15/2025
End Date: 03/16/2025
Hours: 10:00 - 5:00
Venue: Santa Clara County Fairgrounds
Address:
344 Tully Rd
San Jose, CA
Website: <http://www.scvgms.org>

March 22-23, 2025 – Angels Camp, CA

Calaveras Gem and Mineral Society
Calaveras County Fairgrounds, 2465 Gun Club Rd., Angels Camp, CA 95222
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
The Calaveras Gem and Mineral and Jewelry Show at the Calaveras County Fairgrounds Frogtown. Admission is \$4 for adults; kids 12 and under are free, if accompanied by a paying adult. There will be numerous exhibits featuring jewelry, carving, faceted gemstones, and polished rocks. There will be demonstrators in disciplines such as fastening gemstones, wire wrapping, chair fabrication, and rock carving. Dealers will be selling jewelry making supplies and tools, beads, minerals, handcrafted jewelry, meteorites, fossils, ETC. Snack bar and food trucks on site. Free parking and shuttle service from fairgrounds gate up to the show building.
Contact: (209) 736-4892, annachristiansen7132@comcast.net
Website: <https://calaverasgemandmineral.net/show.html>

March 22-23, 2025 – Torrance, CA

South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society
Ken Miller Recreation Center, 3341 Torrance Blvd, Torrance, CA 90503
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society presents our Annual Gem & Mineral Show. Natures Treasures. Free admission and plenty of free parking.. We will have educational demonstrations, slabs, raffle, rough rock, silent auction, polished stones, fluorescent minerals, children's activities, crystals, etc., etc., etc.
Vendors, please contact: edwhitefire@gmail.com, (310) 283-3448
Website: <http://southbaylapidaryandmineralsociety.com>



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: SELECT ONE	RENEWING MEMBERS	\$35.00	
	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

To pay via PayPal, please visit the [PayPal](#) page. The AOS PayPal account is membership@opalsociety.org

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. If paying by PayPal, please download, complete and send this application form by mail to the address above or email to AOS Treasurer aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org

NAME		
BUSINESS NAME		
ADDRESS		APT # or PO BOX
CITY		STATE
ZIP or POSTAL CODE		COUNTRY (IF OUTSIDE USA)
PHONE - Home ()	PHONE - Business ()	FAX ()
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 directory once per year in its Newsletter, the Opal Express. Your name will be included. Please check what additional personal information that you want listed for other members. If it is different from the information above, please note that on the application.

☐ Address ☐ Phone ☐ E-mail ☐ Website

Please sign here: _____ Date _____

The Opal Express is published monthly by
The American Opal Society.
Copyright 2024. All rights reserved.
Non-Commercial Reprint Permission Granted Unless
Otherwise Reserved.
Please address all inquires and exchange newsletters to:
Editor
American Opal Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 4875
Garden Grove, Ca. 92842-4875
E-mail: aos.newsletter.03@gmail.com

Are Your Dues Due Now?

PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL or NEWSLETTER E-MAIL.
There should be a date that shows the current month/year of your membership. If the date is older than the current date, your dues are overdue. A warning will be stated if you are overdue.
A Renewal Grace Period of two months will be provided. Please note, however, that as the system is now set up, if your renewal is not received you will be AUTOMATICALLY dropped from membership thereafter. It is your responsibility to assure your dues are current.
Thank you,
The Editor
(revised 06/23/24)

The Opal Express

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

Volume 58, Issue 2

— 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 – Thursday, February 20, 2025

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, February 20, 2025 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

Stan McCall	President	(714) 220-9282
Russ Madsen	Treasurer	(562) 884-2254
Yvette LaFrinere	Editor	(909) 538-9850
Bart Gampe	Webmaster	(310) 736-5528
Veronica Purpura	Show Chairman	(714) 501-9959
Jamie Cassidy-Curtis	Secretary	

email: aos.president.01@gmail.com
email: aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org
email: aos.newsletter.03@gmail.com
email: bgampe@gmail.com
email: aos.showchair@gmail.com
email: jamiec275@gmail.com