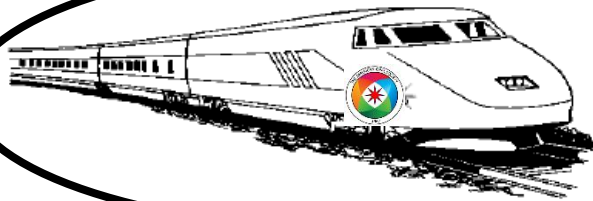


The Opal Express

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President's Message

Hi Opalholics!

The American Opal Society will have a booth at the Anaheim Children's Festival on May 17, 2025 from 11am to 3pm. It's open to the public so please come by and say "Hi". This festival is hosted by Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center.

Stan McCall
AOS President
Custom Creative Gem Cutting

Check us out on:
Instagram * Facebook * YouTube

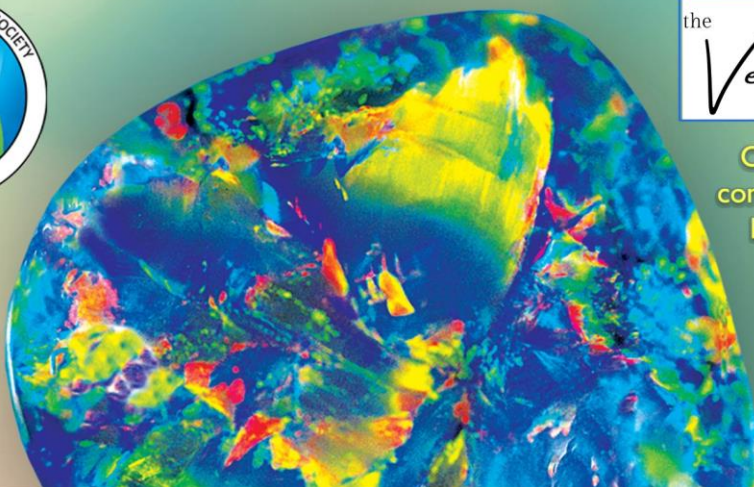
Welcome New Members

MEMORIAL DAY

The first national observance of Memorial Day occurred on May 30, 1868. Then known as Decoration Day and observed on May 30, the holiday was proclaimed by Commander in Chief John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, to honor the Union soldiers who had died in the American Civil War. This national observance followed many local observances which were inaugurated between the end of the Civil War and Logan's declaration. Many cities and people have claimed to be the first to observe it. However, the National Cemetery Administration, a division of the Department of Veteran's Affairs, credits Mary Ana Williams with originating the "idea of strewing the graves of Civil War soldiers-Union and Confederate" with flowers. Official recognition as a holiday spread among the states, beginning with New York in 1873. By 1890, every Union state had adopted it. The world wars turned it into a day of remembrance for all members of the U.S. military who fought and died in service. In 1968, Congress changed its observance to the last Monday in May, and in 1971 standardized its name as "Memorial Day". Two other days celebrate those who have served or are serving in the U.S. military: Armed Forces Day, which is earlier in May, an unofficial U.S. holiday for honoring those who are currently serving in the armed forces and Veteran's Day on November 11, which honors all those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.



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

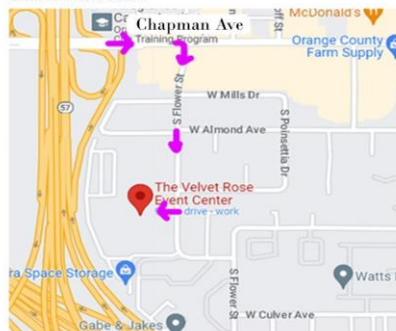
Garden Grove, CA 92842-4875

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.



The Power of Turquoise

It Plays a Significant Role in Human History

Story and Photos by Bob Jones

Of the several thousand known minerals, none has played a more important role in human civilization than turquoise. This blue non-crystalline gem, as a decorative, votive and amulet stone, has been an integral part of early civilization and even today plays a significant role in jewelry and fashion. The early cultures of Egypt, China, Mongolia, Babylonia, and other Near East countries all used turquoise in some formal way. Mesoamericans and, of course, the natives of the American Southwest developed an entire religious and mystical culture around this lovely gem.

Turquoise has been regularly used as a royal gem. It has been an important unit of trade and played a role in the broad commercial trade routes that encouraged the exchange of ideas and cultures. Its value and instrumental use in much of the lore and religion of every early civilization is unrivaled. No other gem has been credited with so much power and had such an impact on the lives of those who wear it.

No one can give an exact date when turquoise was first collected and used, but it may even have predated the initial gathering of gold. Like gold, its native color may well have attracted some hunter-gatherer to pick it up. The use of turquoise as beads dated back tens of thousands of years; as a colorful and relatively easily worked gem, turquoise was ideal for early lapidaries. We do know it was in use during the early evolution of the Egyptian civilization. It most likely preceded that time because the Egyptians must have obtained turquoise early on from wandering nomads who came in from the Sinai Desert, where they picked up loose stones. How else could the Egyptians have known of the desert deposits far to the east? Archaeological evidence shows the Egyptians were among the first to actually formally mine turquoise. The mines were located on the Sinai Peninsula at Wadi Maghara and Serabit el-Khadim.

We have the same problem with dating turquoise mining and use in China, where turquoise has also been revered for thousands of years. As the Chinese mined copper for their early bronze work, dating back thousands of years, they must certainly have come across turquoise, which is most often found in or near copper deposits. It would not surprise me if turquoise was actually found first, leading Chinese miners to discover nearby copper deposits!

The Chinese also prized turquoise for its hidden powers. It was often carved into mystical figures like goddesses and buddhas. It never achieved the status of jade in China, but it was certainly eagerly sought and used.

The lore and power of turquoise is found throughout any history of the use of gems in early cultures. In many cultures, it was thought to guard against evil. Some attributed turquoise with the power to help avoid falls and injuries. It was always considered a lucky stone that could guard against evil, snake bites and some diseases, while acting as a lucky charm and bringing good fortune to anyone who wore it. In China, turquoise was considered an important talisman because legend credits the blue stone with helping Buddha defeat evil!

There are four major historic turquoise sources. Already mentioned are Egypt and China. We all know how important the Southwestern United States deposits have been in providing turquoise for centuries. Persia, now known as Iran, is a fourth major classic source and is usually considered to have been the source of the best turquoise. The fine sky-blue color and hardness of Iran's turquoise serve as the standard against which all other turquoise is compared. Today, more recently discovered sources are recognized as contributing to the world's supply. As older sources are mined out, recently worked sources become more important. Well-known historical sources do continue to produce in many cases, but their contribution is often minimal, mainly because of a depleted supply due to prolonged mining.

Some fine turquoise has recently been coming from Uzbekistan, though only in limited amounts. Armenia is another recent source that has been reported as having some potential if developed vigorously. The most productive source these days seems to be the Hubei and Shanxi province in China. In fact, the Yongxian area of Hubei Province has been heavily worked and has become a major source. This area is recognized by some as the largest deposit in the world with great potential.

I've had an opportunity to examine and work with turquoise from China. It generally has a pale to good blue color, is somewhat soft, and is easily worked. In most cases, the turquoise masses, which can exceed 6 inches across, have a minor amount of matrix included. The included matrix is a relatively soft black manganese oxide, which makes a very nice contrast to the blue turquoise. Because this matrix is slightly softer than the turquoise, it does present a minor problem of undercutting. Care must be taken to avoid undercutting. Chinese turquoise is often porous enough to be impregnated with a stabilizing resin or epoxy, though the better grades of Hubei turquoise I've worked are natural.

There is abundant evidence in the form of carvings and votive objects that turquoise has long been afforded special status by humans. Tens of thousands of turquoise beads, carvings and objects have been found in countless tombs in a host of early human sites. In New Mexico, for example, some 25,000 small beads and other turquoise objects were found in burial sites. It was obvious some of the tombs discovered held the remains of royalty, leaders of society, or major religious figures in the culture. Such turquoise finds are a valuable clue to the culture these early peoples developed.

Since the beginning of human ornamentation, turquoise has been an important part of our décor. It was also worn as a talisman to protect the wearer. Even in modern times, some believe in the power of turquoise. Clothing designers have also used the color of turquoise in their fabrics and used turquoise nugget beads, bracelets, and belt ornaments to complement their designs.

In this country, the use of turquoise by Southwest Native Americans is well established. People have recognized the artistic beauty of Native American turquoise-and-silver jewelry designs. In recent decades, the blue gem has emerged from its regional popularity to become the darling of the jewelry and gem investment community. The latter part of the 20th century saw a huge spurt in interest and value in turquoise as a jewelry gem. This had a huge impact on the Native American jewelry market. Everyone wanted a good squash blossom necklace, a fine silver-and-turquoise ring, or a fancy belt buckle. Old pawn that had sat on the shelves of trading posts and shops for months or even years was suddenly worth a lot more money. This had a very positive effect on the finances of Southwest Indians. Their handcrafted work was eagerly sought. On a negative note, this new interest in turquoise also generated a vast network of fakery and imitation of Native American turquoise styles.

Native Americans used turquoise for centuries before the arrival of Europeans. The stones were drilled, hand polished, and sometimes rubbed with bear fat to improve their luster. Then they were strung together to form necklaces and other types of adornment. Only after the Spanish arrived did Southwest Indians begin using silver in their work. Silver metal was scarce, but coins were available, so the Native Americans initially hammered and shaped silver coins. Some of the more valuable old pawn jewelry today has turquoise mounted in old, hammered Spanish and Mexican coins.

As the value of Southwest Indian jewelry rose, old-timers on the reservations, who had been making fine jewelry for decades, began teaching youngsters the fine art of silversmithing and cabochon cutting. These youngsters, realizing they could make a living with jewelry art, infused more modern designs into the native turquoise culture. Western towns like Santa Fe and Gallup, New Mexico, and Scottsdale, Arizona, saw exponential growth in the Indian jewelry market like never before. The demand for Indian-crafted jewelry rose so dramatically that roadside stands on highways running through the reservations blossomed.

The natural result of this demand for Native American turquoise and silver jewelry was for hundreds of non-Indian silversmiths to begin producing "Indian" jewelry. A small group of unscrupulous dealers profited by marketing non-native work to tourists as authentic. I can recall visiting a well-known shop in the Scottsdale area, where I live. A customer was fawning over a finely crafted Navajo-style turquoise-and-silver pendant. The shop owner, a good friend of mine, was assuring the buyer that this piece had been made on the reservation, where he had bought it directly from a Native American artist. The problem was, I knew the fellow who had actually made the piece. He was an Anglo and he was sitting at his workbench in the back room of that same shop, making yet another "authentic" pendant.

When investors got into the gem market, the price of good turquoise rose quite dramatically. As the value of turquoise went up, non turquoise gems that closely resembled turquoise, including blue-dyed howlite and plastic, were introduced into the market as natural material. Gradually, because of fraud, misleading sales techniques, and a flooded market, the use and buying of turquoise tapered off into a near collapse of the turquoise market.

Today, turquoise once again plays a very important part in the bead and jewelry industry. What is significant about the current popularity of turquoise is its use as natural chunks and nuggets strung for a necklace or set in silver rather than beads, cabochons, or other worked forms. I suspect this is a reflection of the overall trend toward fashion designs in natural colors and forms.

Turquoise is making a comeback! Its lovely color and natural form have great appeal, and it has once again taken its place in the forefront of the jewelry scene. This may well be because turquoise nuggets are not easily replicated using another mineral or plastic. It seems obvious to me that natural turquoise nuggets are very popular simply because they *are* natural-not cut, shaped and polished-since lapidary processes can be used to mask non-turquoise stones, which are then sold as the real thing.

Another wonderful aspect of today's turquoise market is the arrival of a new breed of young Native Americans who still use the traditional native designs, but have added creatively sculpted designs that are works of art! They still use silver, but gold and even stainless steel are also being employed. Young artists also incorporate other gem materials, including opal, lapis, coral and shell, which lend themselves to more colorful and complex designs, which appeal to the modern buyer.

Today, turquoise is but one colorful component in modern jewelry. Its limpid sky-blue color contrasts with and complements so many other gems. The result is a new beginning for this ancient, traditional blue stone. It has reached a new level of acceptance and occupies a very comfortable place in our modern jewelry culture.

Article found in: **Rock&Gem October 2011**

No photos from original posting made it to this re-posting.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Natural History Museum has an ongoing exhibit in the Gem and Mineral Hall. There you will find more than 2,000 minerals, rocks, meteorites, and gems from across the globe.

Wander among thousands of stunning specimens showcasing the beauty and diversity of Earth's building blocks in one of the world's most valuable collections of gems and minerals. Investigate how geologists find and classify rocks and minerals and marvel at over 300 pounds of gold—including the "Mojave Nugget," the largest known nugget of California gold.

[Natural History Museum](#)

Your Los Angeles County Library Card can get you into various museums for free.

Program Requirements:

Only adults ages 18 and over with a full access library card in good standing can reserve Discover & Go passes – this means your account is not barred or blocked. Digital library cards may not be used to reserve passes. Contact your [local library](#) to check on your account status.

Types and Varieties of Ethiopian Opals



Ethiopian opals come in various types and varieties, each with its own unique characteristics and appearance. Here are some of the most notable types and varieties of Ethiopian opals:

1.Welo Opals: Welo opals, also known as Wollo opals, are perhaps the most famous type of Ethiopian opals. They are primarily mined in the Wollo Province of Ethiopia. Welo opals are known for their impressive play of color, which can include a full spectrum of hues. They often exhibit a lively and dynamic display of colors, making them highly sought after in the gemstone market.

2.Chocolate Opals: Chocolate opals are a variety of Ethiopian opals known for their warm, brownish tones. These opals often display deep and rich play-of-color against a chocolate or coffee-colored background. They can be a unique and attractive choice for jewelry, offering a different color palette compared to traditional white opals.

3.Crystal Opals: Crystal opals are characterized by their transparency and clear body color, allowing for a more pronounced and vibrant play of color. These opals are highly prized for their ability to showcase the play-of-color without significant background interference. Crystal opals from Ethiopia can exhibit a wide range of colors and patterns.

4.Black Opals: Ethiopian black opals are known for their dark body color, often ranging from dark gray to black. Despite the dark background, they can still display vibrant flashes of color, creating a striking and contrasting effect. The play-of-color in black opals can be particularly intense and captivating.

5.Hydrophane Opals: Hydrophane opals are unique because they have the ability to absorb and release water. When submerged in water, these opals can temporarily become more translucent and vibrant. This distinctive characteristic adds to their allure and makes them fascinating gems for collectors and gem enthusiasts.

6.Pinfire Opals: Pinfire opals are a type of Ethiopian opal that exhibit small, pinpoint flashes of color. These flashes often appear as tiny dots or pinpricks of light, creating a delicate and subtle play-of-color effect. Pinfire opals can be found in various body colors, from white to dark gray.

7.Fire Opals: While fire opals are more commonly associated with Mexican opal deposits, some Ethiopian opals also display fiery orange, red, or yellow hues. Ethiopian fire opals can be exceptionally bright and vivid, and they are prized for their intense coloration.

8.Boulder Opals: Boulder opals, characterized by their association with a host rock (ironstone), can also be found in Ethiopian opal deposits. These opals have a natural matrix of host rock, which adds to their unique appearance and may create interesting patterns within the gem.

It's important to note that Ethiopian opals can vary greatly in terms of color, pattern, and quality, making each stone distinct and valuable in its own way. Gem cutters often work to maximize the beauty of each opal by cutting it to enhance its play of color and overall appearance. When buying Ethiopian opals, it's essential to consider the specific type and characteristics of the opal to choose the one that best suits your preferences and intended use.

In part by: [Geology Science: Study of Earth Science, Rocks and Minerals](#)

~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

TAPERED REAMERS

by Brad Smith



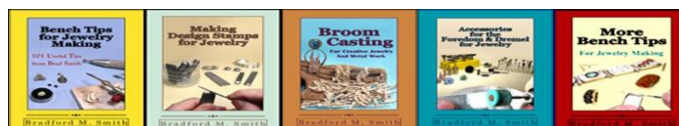
A tool you don't see often these days is a tapered reamer. It's not a tool you'll use everyday, but they're particularly useful for making an irregular hole round or for enlarging a hole to an exact diameter. For example, the small set in the yellow pouch is for holes in the range of 0.3mm to 2.5mm. They are great for sizing a tube to fit a hinge pin. Other times when I'm drilling a hole for riveting and can't find the exact size drill, I simply drill the holes with a slightly smaller bit and enlarge them with a reamer until the wire just fits.

For larger hole sizes in sheet metal up to 14 ga, I really like the reamer with the black handle. It makes quick work of sizing holes from about 3mm to 12mm. You can find them in well-equipped hardware stores.

You may never use the large diameter reamers, but when sawing out some rings from 4mm thick sheet, I found they worked well for rounding and sizing the hole.

See More of my Smart Solutions for Jewelry Making Series

<http://amazon.com/dp/B0BQ8YVL TJ>



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

May 2-3, 2025 – Yucaipa, CA

Yucaipa Valley Gem and Mineral Society
Yucaipa Blvd and Adams Street, Yucaipa, CA 92399
Hours: Friday, 5 PM – 10 PM, Sunday Noon – 9 PM
Contact: grandpasgems@gmail.com
Website: <http://YVGMS.org>

May 10-11, 2025 – Lancaster, CA

Antelope Valley Gem and Mineral Club
Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 2551 W, Ave H, Lancaster, CA
Hours: Saturday 9 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM
Admission and Parking are Free.
The CFMS Convention will be held in conjunction with our show.
Website: <http://avgem.weebly.com>
Calendar last updated: 11/29/2024

May 16-18, 2025 – Vista, CA

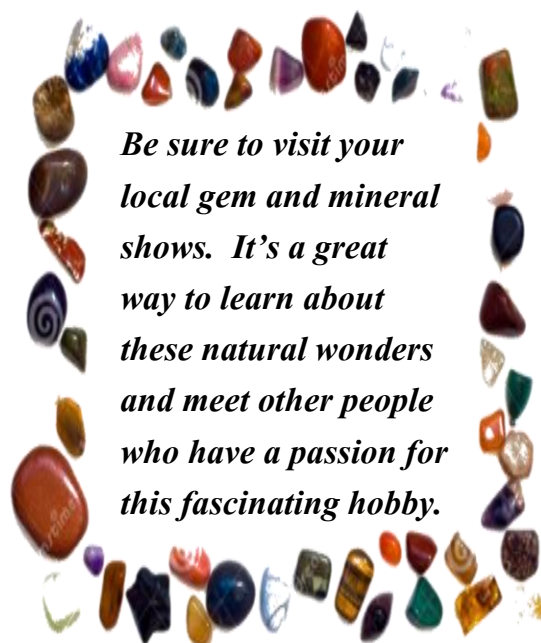
Vista Gem and Mineral Society
Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, 2040 N. Santa Fe Ave.,
Vista, CA 92083 (in the Lower North Field)
Hours: Friday and Saturday 10-5 and Sunday 10-4
Contact: info@vistarocks.org
Website: <https://vistarocks.org/events/>

May 17, 2025 – Grass Valley, CA

Nevada County Gem and Mineral Society
At the Banner Grange parking lot, (12629 McCourtney Rd., Grass Valley, CA 95945) just 1 mile past the Nevada County Fairgrounds
Tailgate Show – Second Annual. Parking spots to sell are \$25 (cash), free admission, anything rock related beyond minerals and jewelry allowed (even art, plants, equipment, etc. all fine!) Additional spaces to sell \$20. Just come early, 7-ish, pick your spot, and Blaze will be there midmorning to collect for the Grange. Hope to see you there.
Contact: oominerals@gmail.com

May 31, 2025 – Laguna Hills, CA

South Orange County Gem & Mineral Society, Anaheim Searchers
Gem & Mineral Club, Laguna Woods Lapidary Club
Florence Sylvester Senior Center, 23721 Moulton Parkway, Laguna Hills, Ca 92653
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 11 PM; Presentation 10 AM, Sale 11 AM – 2 PM
Turquoise: Natural or Otherwise. Presentation: 10-11, by Dayton Simmons, Turquoise Miner and Silversmith, 11am-2pm, sale of natural turquoise rough, cabs and jewelry, plus gems, minerals, rough, cabs and jewelry from three host clubs.
Contact: (408) 718-0504, edupuy@me.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

RENEWING MEMBERS

NEW MEMBERS

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FEE (All addresses outside of USA)

PRINTED NEWSLETTER FEE (Paper copy postal mailed instead of PDF file by e-mail)

ADDITIONAL BADGES (Your First Badge is free when joining)

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](https://www.paypal.com/US/membership@opalsociety.org) 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

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HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

NAME BADGE ORDER FORM:

PLEASE PRINT
NAME AS YOU
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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 _____

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The American Opal Society.

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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 5

— 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, May 15, 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, May 15, 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>
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Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/opalsociety>
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCegTIH1IEyO7y8wdqvRfyUA?view_as=subscriber

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President (714) 220-9282
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email: aos.president.01@gmail.com
email: aos.treasurer.02@opalsociety.org
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email: jamiec275@gmail.com