



The OPAL EXPRESS

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THE OPAL BIRTHSTONE FOR MARCH IS BLUE/GREEN OPAL.
Alternate is doublet opal.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Dorothea and I went to the world's greatest wholesale gem show in February. It's called "Tucson." Dealers and buyers come from all over the world; from India, China, Korea, Australia, Germany, etc. No need to go to Australia or Brazil for your opal.

The show covers most of the larger hotels and motels in the city, and spills over to individuals on the side street by the Freeway. Everything is sold from quartz crystals and mineral specimens, to the highest quality gemstones.

The amount of opal in this city at this time is greater than you will find in any city in the world. You would have to travel the length and breadth of Australia, go to Hong Kong, China, Brazil; to Nevada and Idaho in the USA to avail yourself of the selection offered here. It is in many forms from rough to finished.

Many of the American Opal Society members were at Tucson to sell or buy, or both. The Society friends we met were Brian and Mary Franks, Larry Dobrin, Yung Wu Schulz, Marilyn and Tom Hendricks, K. C. Bell, Denise Roman, Paul and Bobbi Downing and Brian and Jolen Panches. There were many others there that we did not meet, I'm sure. Oh yes, Claudia and Doyle Haight of Spencer and the Hodson's of Scottsdale.

BOARD REPORT

Three major topics at the American Opal Society Board meeting were the show, the possibility of sponsoring opal cutting workshops and ways to attract more members to meetings of the Chapters.

The show will be held September 10th and 11th, at the Anaheim Convention Center. The theme will be "OPAL, THE QUEEN OF GEMS," and will feature our favorite stone! This year we are planning seminars, ranging from An Introduction to Opal to Appraising Cut Opal.

Show Chairman will be Dick Koch, assisted by Jewett Pattee.

The next Board Meeting will be held Thursday, March 24th, 7:30 pm at 3303 Charlemagne. Any member is welcome to attend.

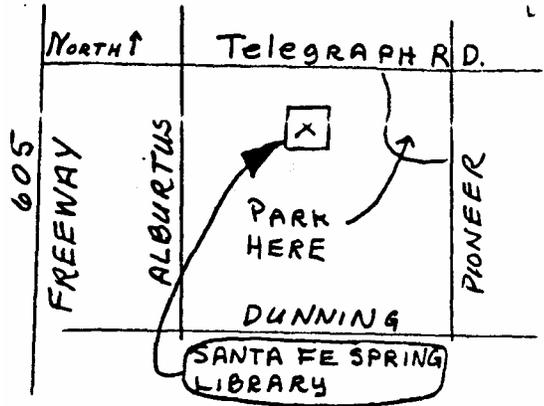
!!!! NEWS FROM THE FOUNDING CHAPTER !!!!!

American Opal Society
 Founding Chapter
 P.O. Box 3895
 Downey, CA 90242

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 Honorary Lifetime Members, Bill end Della Judd



General Meetings held on the 2nd Thursday at 7:30 PM in the Santa Fe Springs Library, 11700 Telegraph Rd., Santa Fe Springs. See Map.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: A WELCOME INVITATION TO AUSSIES! G'day to you down-under-mates. We of the Founding Chapter (P.O. Box 3895 Downey, Ca.90242) are Interested in meeting you and seeing your opal offerings. Have you found some prime stuff? Made new exciting finds in the fields? We are eager to hear about it, and maybe purchase some nice cutting stuff. There's always Interest here from your 'States mates'.

At (he recent combined Board of Director's meeting of the Society and Founding Chapter, there was much helpful discussion toward our combined goal of furthering the delightful addiction of all opalholics. Founding Chapter members attending this important meeting were Joe Veseau, Harold Brees, Georgia Smith, Bill end Nancy Means, Sue Umberson and Edith Ostrander. Last, but by no means least, is Harold Umberson who has been elected to the meaningful job of Liaison Officer between the groups. Congratulations, Harold!

Our February meeting was great for the chance to greet some of our members whom we haven't seen for a while. We need to see others, too, Bobby Gledhill made beautiful cupcakes, and I left mine at the house. Way to go, Joe! Sue saved the day by getting candy and cookies to fill in. Thank you, Sue.

Jewett Pattee starred in a film shown on opal cutting. Next month will be a very Instructive appraisal-of-opal display kit. Hope to see you there!

Joe Veseau, President of Founding Chapter.

Rocky Rockafellor made Lip a very helpful black opal rating chart, distributed by Joe Veseau. If you want a copy, call Joe (714-521-6147).

Lets hear It from anyone who went to Quartzsite or Tucson--were there good buys? fun encounters? or what? How about some feedback from these major mineral happenings!

Did everyone enjoy the Feb. National Geographic Issue on Australia? We hope by now everyone has seen It. It gives us a wonderful background of a country with which we are so closely allied, but of course, It could have said more about opals. However, we might just be a tad prejudiced on the subject.

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In the past few issues we have been running a continuing article on Opal Carving, written by former member, Marvin "Carvin' Marvin" Wilson; who passed away several years ago. He was also a member of the Gem Carvers Guild and a Graduate Gemologist. He contributed a great deal to the art of' carving opal.

This month we are beginning a three-part article by Paul Downing that first appeared in the December issue of ROCK AND GEM and in the winter edition of Paul's newsletter, "The Opalholic". Paul is contributing a great deal to the world of opal and this article should be of interest to those who wish to evaluate finished opal. His critique of the AOS Appraisal Kit is his own opinion and not influenced by any one else from our Society.

#####

On Thursday April.4th, 7:00 pm There will bE S lecture on Ceo and Jewelry Appraisal at the Page Museum, 5801 Wilshire Blvd. Cosmo Altobelli, has been Chrmn. of the Appraisal Committee of the American Gem Society for many years.

Cost is free to Gem and Mineral Council members (2 per membership), \$3 for Natural History Museum members and \$5 for general public.

Reservations are necessary and may be made by mail only. Write Gem and Mineral Council, do Jean Brandt, Natural History Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007. Include check end stamped return envelope.

ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER—Brian Franks, President—714—857-2743

Last month Helen and Lawrence Bowdle gave a very instructive talk accompanied by slides; all about turquoise. It was refreshing to hear about the properties of another gemstone and its use in carvings and jewelry. They gave us a lot of history of turquoise, too.

This is the month for evaluating finished opal at the next meeting of the Orange County Chapter, Tuesday, March 15th, 7:30 pm at the College Park Clubhouse in Irvine (See map on back.)

Everyone should bring their cut opals; we will furnish evaluation charts and have the AOS master kits there for you to compare your stones with.

VALUING CUT OPAL
by
Paul B. Downing

Author's note: The opinions presented here are mine or my interpretation of the others discussed. They do not necessarily represent those of the American Opal Society or Barrie O'Leary.

"Isn't this a lovely stone. I Just brought it back from Australia. The man told me it was a rare black opal. He gave me a real buy. How much is it worth" Lord protect me!

The question of value comes up continually. And it is never an easy one to answer. First we must determine what is meant by value. In a very real sense, the answer to the lady's question above is "whatever you paid for it" since having purchased the piece, she determined that it was worth the money to her at that time. However, she is more likely to be asking how much an equivalent stone would sell for in the U.S. In other words, she is seeking some estimate of market value. Appraisers define market value as the amount paid by a knowledgeable willing buyer and accepted by a knowledgeable willing seller who is unrelated in family or business. In fact, there are all sorts of market values; wholesale and retail. The "retail" price you would pay at a gem and mineral show may be different from the "retail" at a jewelry store.

Factors Which Influence Value

In an attempt to answer the question of market value, let me first outline the many factors which influence this value.

BASE COLOR - The background color of the stone. This background color may be part of the precious opal, a patch behind the color, or another kind of stone. Background colors include black, semi-black, crystal, semi-crystal, white, orange, grey, brown and boulder brown.

FIRE COLOR - The color or combination of colors which are produced when light is diffracted out from the stone. Red, orange, green, and blue are the most common fire colors found in pure form or in combination.

FIRE INTENSITY - The brightness of the fire coming from the stone. To be assessed independently of either of the above factors.

FIRE PATTERN - The pattern made by the play of fire color. Patterns are infinite and no two are alike, but they can be generally categorized as follows:

Pinfire - Small pinpoint circles of fire. When viewed from the side this pattern often looks like the side of a pin. The side view is called columnar fire.

Flashfire - Larger areas of fire, usually irregular in shape.

Broad Flash - Sheets of color usually covering a large section or all of the stone's surface.

Rolling Flash - Sheets of color which roll across the surface of the stone as it is moved.

Harlequin - "A regular mosaic-like (fire) pattern in rounded, angular, or roughly square patches of about equal size." (O'Leary, A Field Guild To Australian Opals, p.23) Fancy patterns that are riot regular are also especially valued but not true harlequins.

WEIGHT - Other things being equal (and they never are) a larger stone is more valuable per carat than a smaller one. However, if the stone is quite large the value per carat declines somewhat because it may be too large to use effectively in jewelry or because total price restricts the market to be a few buyers.

CUT - The overall shape and quality of cutting. This includes:

Shape - Oval; calibrated or standard size oval preferred, baroque or irregular non-oval outline and proportionality (for example stones cut fat to gain weight are less attractive).

Dome - Flat, low, medium, high top of cabochon. A high dome or, bottom of stone is objectionable.

Inclusions - Spots visible to a practiced eye. These included sand, common patch with no color, black feathers and cotton (white spots). These detract if visible from top of stone but are of little significance if on the back.

Fractures - Cracks in the stone, even very tiny ones, are seriously faulted as are chips.

Polish - Absence of scratches and a clear high shine. Lack of polish on back may not detract from the stone.

CONSISTENCY OF FIRE - The ideal is a stone that shows good 'fire in all directions as you turn it or pick it up. A stone which shows color only in one direction is called highly directional and should be faulted. There is, of course, a continuum from non-directional to highly directional.

RARITY - Some stones are rare or unusual and need to be given special attention. Yowah opal commands a premium because of rarity. Crystal from Lightning Ridge Australia is also valued more highly than other crystal because of rarity. Andamooka solid opal is valued more highly because of its reputation of being more stable than other opals.

Continued

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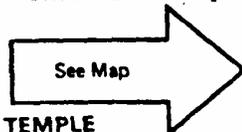
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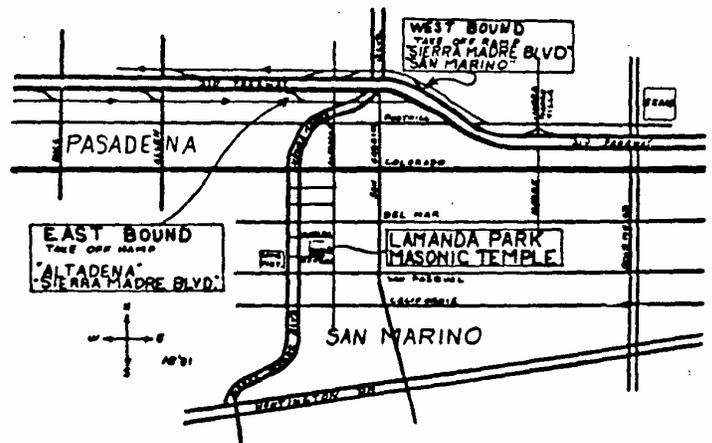
Thursday, March 12, 1988
10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

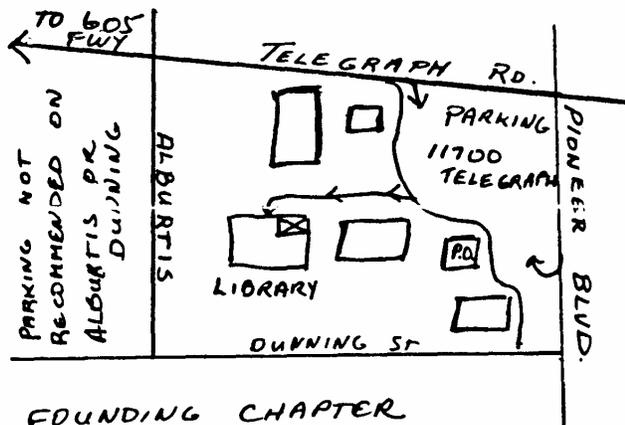
Sunday, March 13, 1988
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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ADMISSION**

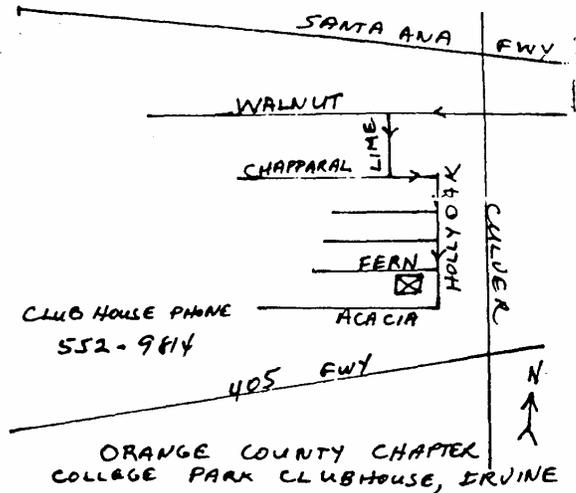


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