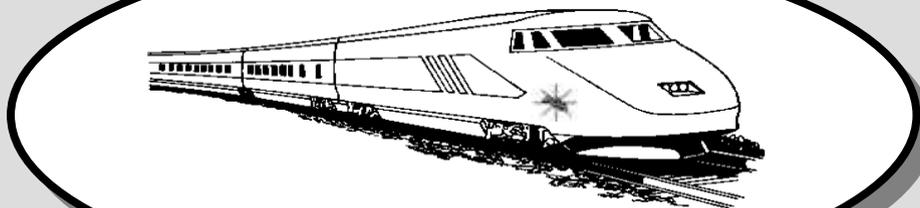


# The Opal Express



Published  
monthly by  
The  
American  
Opal  
Society

March 2009

Volume 42 Issue 3

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## Members Only Website Password

To log onto the website's members only area at: [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_members\\_only\\_area.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_members_only_area.htm) type: Name: "member" and Password: "boulder".

## Presidents Message

*By Jim Lambert*

The past two meetings for January and February were great. Many positive suggestions were made at a general round robin discussion in January. I would like to give my gratitude and say Thank You to all who participated. Stan McCall will be our "Speaker Chairman". So if anybody knows of a good speaker to give a presentation at our meetings, please contact Stan (contact info on our monthly news letter). Stan gave a presentation on how to cut a "Cab" at our February meeting. If you missed the meeting, you missed some special tips on basic cutting techniques. We are planning to have Dan Toledo speak at our March meeting. Dan always gives an excellent presentation about Jewelry design or other interesting related topics. Don't miss this one - See you there!

## New Venue for Opal & Gem Show

The AOS is leaving its long stay at the Clarion Hotel to start with a new venue at the White House Event Center at Hobby City, located on Beach Blvd. in Anaheim. See <http://www.whitehouseeventcenter.com>.

The decision was made due to continuing increases in cost and the inability of the Clarion to let us have the first weekend in November, even when requested over a year in advance. In addition, Whitehouse Events is giving the AOS an excellent price. The Whitehouse Event Center has recently been completely renovated and is a modern, attractive facility, with more total square footage than the Clarion, free parking, and an able and willing staff.

## LaVerne Christenson to Assume Treasurer Spot

LaVerne Christenson has agreed to take over the treasures job from Russ Madsen. Russ has done an excellent job since 2/05 and needs a rest. Let's give a big thanks to Russ for his time and to Laverne for accepting the position.

## March Speaker - Daniel Toledo

The March 12<sup>th</sup> general meeting speaker is the famous wildlife jewelry designer Daniel Toledo. Daniel will speak about some easy quick tips along with some demonstration on the following: wax working techniques, design applications, and a few finishing techniques. Info: Toledo Fine Art Jewelry, [toledowildlife@aol.com](mailto:toledowildlife@aol.com), website: [http://www.natureartists.com/daniel\\_toledo.asp](http://www.natureartists.com/daniel_toledo.asp)

## Opal Canyon Field Trip on March 21<sup>st</sup>

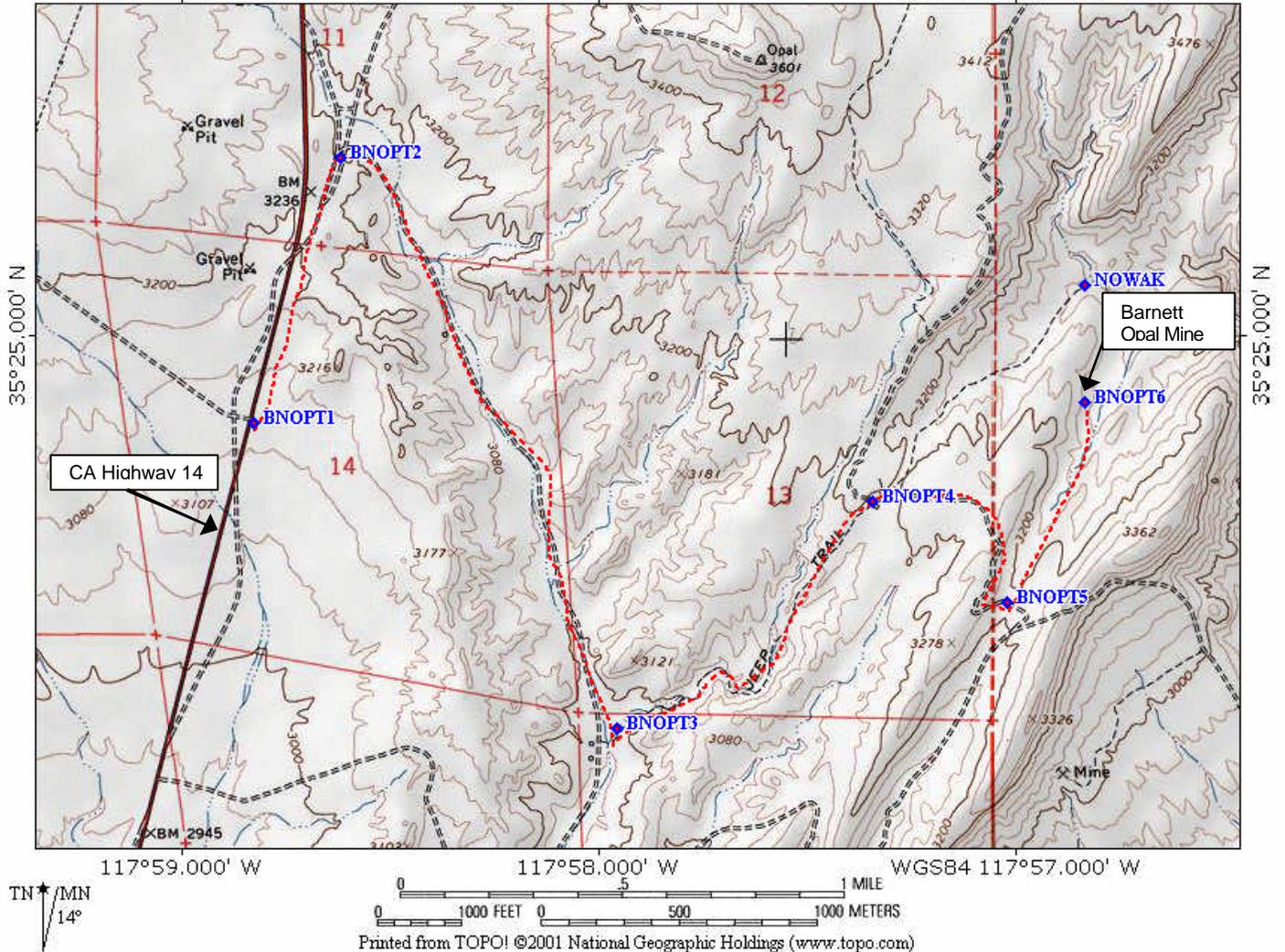
The AOS is planning on visiting the old Barnett Mine site in Opal Canyon on the weekend of March 21st. We will be meeting Saturday, Mar. 21<sup>st</sup>, at 9AM in the parking lot at the Subway Restaurant on the North end of Mojave off of CA-14. We will depart to Opal Canyon as near 9 AM as possible, so arrive early. It takes about one hour to get to the canyon from there and is 35 miles one way. Please RSVP to Russ Madsen at (562) 425-9788 or e-mail him at [chairman2rgm@verizon.net](mailto:chairman2rgm@verizon.net) if you plan to attend.

What to Bring: metal snips (dikes), rock hammers, sledge hammers, large chisels, a small brush, a water squirt bottle, bucket for rocks and a small container for opals. Also, bring a lunch, plenty of water, hat, sunscreen, gloves, and warm clothes. A GPS receiver is a good idea. Make sure you have a full tank of gas in Mojave. You can buy sandwiches from Subway for lunch. There are no toilet facilities, so bring toilet paper and a shovel. We would advise a high clearance vehicle. The road can be rough.

Just in case you want to do it alone, here are directions. Go North on CA-14 through Palmdale to Mojave. Allow around 2 hours to get to Mojave from the Orange County (130 miles). Proceed on CA-14 thirty miles north to and through Red Rock Canyon State Park. One mile beyond Red Rock there's a well marked exit for Dove Springs ORV area. Take this but head east (right). Make an immediate left. You will be heading north on a dirt road parallel to CA-14. A few hundred yards ahead, the old route to Opal Canyon veers east. Follow the most traveled dirt road and the small "OPAL->" signs. At about 2.8 miles there's a few hundred yards of sand wash. Turn a very hard left at the large ironwood tree in the wash. Continue following the most traveled road as it winds and climbs up to the flat. Continue forward past the Nowak Mine (private) on your left. About 1/2 mile beyond the Nowak mine the road goes downhill a bit steeply. Turn left at the bottom and proceed a few hundred yards to the Barnett Mine. The diggings are on the side of the hill on your right. See the following map and GPS coordinates.

## Map to the Barnett Opal Mine at Opal Canyon

TOPO! map printed on 03/26/06 from "California.tpo" and "Barnett Opal Mine Route.tpg"  
 117°59.000' W      117°58.000' W      WGS84 117°57.000' W



### GPS Coordinates to the Barnett Opal Mine

Waypoint Name	Latitude		Longitude		Elevation	Description
	Degrees	Minutes	Degrees	Minutes	Feet	
BNOPT1	35	24.829	-117	58.829	2848	CA-14 Turnoff to Opal Canyon – right turn coming North from Mojave
BNOPT2	35	25.354	-117	58.621	3176	Barnett Opal Mine Turn 2 (East); road turns into dry wash
BNOPT3	35	24.227	-117	57.960	2959	Turn Left off the main wash by the large Ironwood tree
BNOPT4	35	24.674	-117	57.346	3150	Nowak Mine Turnoff – do not turn here, keep right on main road
BNOPT5	35	24.474	-117	57.024	3009	Barnett Mine Turnoff – Turn Left (North)
BNOPT6	35	24.869	-117	56.839	3100	Barnett Opal Mine
NOWAK	35	25.103	-117	56.837	3060	Nowak Opal Mine (Private – please do not trespass)

Coordinates are in WGS-84 and NAD83

## A California Field Trip Fire Opals in El Paso Mountains

*Since the AOS is going to Opal Canyon this month, I thought it would be great to revisit a fine, old article from a 1972 Desert Magazine – The Editor*

*By Mary Frances Strong*



*Culver City Rock and Mineral Club members dig into opal-bearing basalt.*

It was a warm, sunny, mid-winter day on the Mojave Desert. The stillness of the canyon was broken by the sounds of metal against rock and the muted tones of people. Suddenly a woman's voice happily cried, "Look what I found!" In the palm of her hand, sparkling in the sun like an iridescent rainbow, lay a half-inch stone. She had found the coveted prize — a fire opal.

This scene is not uncommon at Leo Nowak's Opal Mine in the El Paso Mountains of California's Kern County. As might be expected, numerous rockhounds visit the mine where, for \$1.00 per person, they can spend a full weekend digging gemstones.

During the six years Leo has been operating the claims, he has tried to make things "easier" for the diggers. A modest level camping area has been cut from the rather narrow canyon. A chic-sale is provided but there are no other facilities.

Leo uses a skip-loader for digging into the opal-bearing basalt to expose new material for collectors to work. The opals occur as amygdules in the dark basalt and are "extracted" by cracking the host rock. He also regularly moves the gangue material out of the way.

"I want to be sure the rockhounds obtain some opal and are happy with their material," Leo told me. Evidently he is successful in this, as many people return each weekend to try their luck.

The opal deposit was known for many years as the Cowden Opal Mine. It was in 1916 that the Cowdens staked their claim. They had hoped to develop a gem mine and sell the fire opals commercially. A 125-foot shaft was sunk into Member 5 of the Ricardo Formation which was exposed at the head of a canyon. One of the basalt flows was also prospected by small open cuts. The difficulty encountered in removing the opals from the matrix made

commercial mining unfeasible and the deposit was opened to rockhounds.

Topped by Flow F (an olivine basalt up to 100 feet in thickness) Member 5 of the Ricardo consists of lake bed deposits containing opal-chert, sand and silt, sandstone, tuff-breccia and three additional basalt flows. Its total thickness averages 750 feet and is well exposed along a two-mile canyon running east from the opal mine to Last Chance Canyon.

The Ricardo Formation in the El Paso Mountains has been studied extensively. It is the largest, complete series of Pliocene sediments and volcanics exposed within the Mojave Desert and probably was deposited as a local subsiding basin. The formation is



*There are ample camping areas (above) for rockhounds who move in (below) after a skip loader cuts a trench. Photos by Jerry Strong*



also well known for the fine specimens of petrified wood to be found in the opal-chert sediments. Some specimens have been identified as palm and various hardwoods which seems to indicate this region was hot and semiarid even in the Pliocene Epoch over a million years ago.

It has also yielded a number of mammalian fossils including horses and camels. Dr. J. C. Merriam describes the fossils in his report, Relationship of Pliocene Mammalian Faunas from the Pacific Coast and Great Basin Provinces of North America. (University of California Geological Bulletin, Vol. 10, 1917.)

My first visit to the opal mine was in 1949 with a group from my college geology class. The Cowdens were excellent hosts and saw to it we all found specimens for the collections we were required to prepare as part of a final exam.

I returned within a month and spent another very pleasant weekend breaking rocks. I also found my best specimen on this trip, though there have been many others in subsequent years. Perhaps it was because I was young and enthusiastic that this came about. I cracked many chunks of basalt and found a number of small pieces before adding the half-inch "gem" to my collection.

Over the years I seem to have lost my enthusiasm for digging. Maturity has evidently made a "float collector" out of me. Oh heck, I might as well be honest—why dig when you have a strong man to do it for you? As you can see, I don't belong to "Women's Lib." However, the fine opals currently being found (January, 1972) may stimulate both Terry and me to do some digging. On a trip in the early 50's, I stopped at Stormy's Camp and learned Mr. Cowden was ill. Stormy was taking care of their mine, though his interest wasn't in opal. He was after uranium and had staked several claims in the hills where thin coatings of uranophane had been found on fractures in the silicified clay of the Ricardo Formation. It was, more or less, confined to one small bed in a nearby hill but did it ever make the Geiger counter jump!

Several years passed between return visits and I never saw the Cowdens again. Then Stormy was gone. Both of the camps fell victim to vandalism and today are only memories.

There was a bit of adventure in visiting the opal mine in the early days as the road left something to be desired - especially the short, steep climb between the two camps. The loose soil taxed both driver and stock car. Sometimes several passes were needed to



make it to the top. However, like the old camps, the challenging trail has given way to a new one that is easily negotiated by cars and trailers.

During one of my visits, I decided to explore the canyon dropping sharply east. From the mine, beautiful pink hills and colorful mountains could be seen in the distance. It was a marvelous hike, not strenuous, and led through several outstanding formations. In about three-quarters of a mile, I found myself at the edge of a steep dry falls. A narrow ledge on the side of a high ridge allowed me to skirt the falls and I found myself in a forest of petrified logs. I walked midway along the steep hillside which towered several hundred feet above me and dropped downward about the same distance to the wash below. I later learned I had been on Roaring Ridge.

Beautiful veins of grey, translucent agate containing stringers of red jasper were exposed along the trail. I also dug geodes and nodules from a dark green hill about 50 feet below the trail. Caching my specimens, I hiked (slid mostly) down to the wash, climbed over two dry falls and found the entrance to the canyon could be reached by car. I later spent many happy days collecting petrified wood specimens and some excellent cutting material.

I was also lucky enough to find two fossil bones whose centers are replaced by black opal with a thin coating of white, opal-chert on the outer edge. Under shortwave light, the center of the bones fluoresce a deep orange and the outer edge green.

If you can bring yourself to leave the opal diggings, make the trip down the canyon. Try it you'll like it. Specimens are still there for the collecting.

At the present time the opal mine is open all through the year on Saturday and Sunday only. Special dates may be arranged by appointment. Write: Leo Nowak, 4316 Van Nuys Blvd., Sherman Oaks, California 91403.

If you are interested in fluorescent minerals ask Leo to show you the ledge of opalite (opal-chert) which fluoresces green. The El Paso Mountains contain many fine rock collecting areas but only one rare gemstone deposit. But then, how many desert mountains have more than one precious gem field? Easy to reach and fun to visit, the fire opals in the El Paso Mountains will lure you back time and time again.

*Desert Magazine, May 1972, source <http://www.scribd.com>. Permission to reprint has been given for non-commercial use. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>.*

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**Leo Nowak - 12/24/1907 to 1/6/2001**

To most rockhounds, the name Leo Nowak immediately brings to mind the colorful opal mine owner in Opal Canyon. For generations, the Nowak Mine was the site of opal digging for many a rockhound. However, to another genre, he was a well known artist and comic illustrator.

Leo was a musician and painter who joined Joe Shuster's studio in September 1940. There, he replaced Paul Cassidy on the 'Superman' comic. He remained at the studios until early 1943. After serving as a battalion artist during World War II, he moved to Southern California. For 25 years he was the chief illustrator for Stamps-Conheim Newspaper Advertising Service in Los Angeles. Moving to the desert community of Inyokern in the mid-1970s, Nowak illustrated political cartoons for The Daily Independent in Ridgecrest for twelve years. - *The Editor*

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Could there be Diamonds in the Lightning Ridge Area?**

*By Richard W. Holmes*

Bob Lisle, "Bowerbird Bob" as the locals called him; a long time resident in the Lightning Ridge area led me to believe it might be possible to find diamonds there. Lisle, who died about five years ago of heart failure, had spent over fifty years on horse back and motor cycles searching for opal covering a hundred mile radius of the Lightning Ridge area. Of all the people who found opal there, he

proved to be one of the more successful miners having discovered one claim that yielded him over \$70 million dollars worth of gem opal. His techniques in searching for opal included the use of aerial maps, geological maps, magnetometric maps, as well as the use of divining rods.

In October, 1997, my first trip to Australia, I had the good fortune to spend a whole day with Bob Lisle. Lisle was not the sort to talk with strangers. However, I had been introduced to him by one of his friends, and as an American visiting the Ridge as a tourist, Lisle did not feel intimidated in any way spending time with me. Even though we had never met before, we bonded quite well and had a great day together. In later years, Len Cram told me that anything Bob Lisle told you, you could believe as he was not the sort of man to make up stories.

Before we left the Ridge for his claim at Jag Hill, we stopped at one of the local stores and picked up lunch in order that we could spend the whole day mining opal. Lisle said through various name arrangements he had seventeen claims under his control even though you were only allowed to have two claims in your own name.

When we reached the mine field, he showed me all the techniques in using divining rods to locate fault lines as well as mined out areas below the surface of the earth. Divining is a method of locating fault lines in the earth using two copper rods held in each hand. When the rods cross the person divining has just located a fault line in the earth. The incidence of opal may be found along these lines. (a complete discussion as to the use of divining rods can be found in Stephen Aracic's book, "Rediscover Opals in Australia"). (Also, if you can find it, the best book on divining I have ever encountered was written by Albert L. Wilk, Copyright 1988, Advanced ELF Research, "The Divining Rod and I").



Richard Holmes in his mine at Lightning Ridge

Lisle said he mined by himself even though the law stated there should be two people in the mine for safety. He stated that over the years he had many partners who stole equipment, cheated on opal distributions and created other problems that were not in the interest of a healthy partnership.

Before we went down into the mine on his claim, Lisle took two batteries out of his truck, unlocked the gate to the blower truck, and installed the batteries. If the batteries had been left on the truck they would have been stolen over night (there is a lot of thievery of every thing that can be carried away out in the Australian bush). Lisle also had to add diesel fuel to the tank – that too would be stolen if left at the claim. He fired up the diesel engine on the blower truck, unlocked the man lift over the mine hole and we descended down fifty feet below to the bottom of the mine.

Once in the mine Lisle adjusted the blower pipe under his mining machine which was run by hydraulics from the diesel engine above. His lighting for the mine also ran off the diesel engine above. The mining machine acted like a converted backhoe digging at the face of the opal dirt.

We worked in the mine for approximately two hours, long enough where Lisle thought he had filled the dump truck above which was under a shut coming off the blower truck. With the air moving through the nine inch pipe up to the surface, a Ventura effect was created in the mine which provided an exchange of air for those down below.

When Lisle felt we had enough dirt, he closed up the mine, removed the batteries from the blower truck, climbed into the dump truck filled with opal dirt, and we proceed about three miles to the puddling dam. There he hooked up a gas engine to a siphon pulling water from a rain filled earthen pond and filled an old converted cement mixer and washed the load of dirt.

When we were through with our day of mining, I asked Lisle what he thought was the most important thing in finding and mining opal. Lisle told me that too many miners try to get every bit of opal out of a claim. He said that's why so many go broke. His approach to mining was to completely survey the area, develop and dig one long entry way in a claim and move on to the next claim. While you may know there may be more opal if you were to dig some side tunnels, the economics were such that were you to do that, the cost would far exceed any opal you could hope to recover.

At that point Lisle, recognizing that he would probably never see me again, told me that he had one claim, he would not tell me where, that if a miner was to dig twice the depth that the opal miners do to find opal, one would hit bed rock and in this case it would be kimberlite, the host rock for diamonds. With his geology experience he was absolutely certain the kimberlite was there and he would find diamonds there. He indicated, however, with his age and health problems it might not get dug in his lifetime. All the opal miners dig for opal in the Cretaceous in roughly three levels, thirty feet, fifty feet, and at seventy feet. This is where opal is found and there is no need to go down to the bed rock. Also, to my knowledge there isn't even a drill rig in the Lightning Ridge area that could dig to one hundred and fifty feet, or through the Cretaceous and down to bed rock. Lisle died before he ever got a chance to prove his premise.

Lisle's story about searching for diamonds gave me the idea to write my fictional book – "The Diamonds of Jaruk."

I have recently been told there have been airplanes in the area with ground penetrating equipment looking for kimberlite pipes. Who knows, maybe someday they may find the kimberlite Bob Lisle told me was there for the digging.

**Richard Holmes is a AOS Member and has written a number of books on his Lightning Ridge mining experiences. Thanks, Richard, for this excellent article on a very interesting topic – Diamonds! The Editor**

## Opals and Their Treatments

[Your Gemologist / International School of Gemology Forums Board](#)

From 11/2/06 to 11/20/06

From [Stuart Wheeler](#), Location: UK

Opals and their treatments

Open question. I have started to collect information and sources on opals, understanding the 3 types as Solid, Doublet and Triplet i have been stumped by a piece of information provided to me (by the member of the public not a gemologist or dealer) that ALL opals must receive a treatment coating so they are protected from scratches or water damage. Understandable with doublets and triplets as it part of their construction, but they were particular with regarding to the solid.

As a new-be to gemology my understanding that solid opals will damage in water makes no sense as they are made up of a large amount of water and need to be kept out continues sun so not dry out over time. Also when polished they are done to a high gloss with no treatment coatings (maybe wrong!!!)

So to cut this short "I must not buy opals that have been treated as they will notlast!!!!".

Anythoughts or comments would be most appreciated.

Cheers, Stuart, ISG Student and Opalolic. [www.opulentopals.co.uk](http://www.opulentopals.co.uk)

From [Stuart Wheeler](#), Location: UK

Sorry correction on my question. So to cut this short - "I must not buy opals that have NOT been treated as they will not last!!!"

Any thoughts or comments would be most appreciated.

Cheers, Stuart, ISG Student and Opalolic. [www.opulentopals.co.uk](http://www.opulentopals.co.uk)

From, [12114](#), Location: California

Natural Opals

I can't believe that no one has responded to your inquiry.

As an amateur lapidary, my experience has been that inferior grades or thin pieces of opals would be treated, or made into doublets or triplets. This allows them to optimize a piece that is not gem quality on its own or too thin to withstand wear.

Truly fine examples of opal are slabbed, cut and cabbed with no other treatment. Treatments to stabilize or coat the piece bring down its value, and are not necessary in a truly gem quality piece.

Hope this clarifies your question.

From [Jung Kee](#), Location: Sweden, above the Polar Circle

Opals can be a pain in the butt, as they indeed can be extremely sensitive or unstable, but a good opal is like the rainbow; a shimmering path of colourful joy to heaven!

The keyword here is "Quality". Bad opals are sad opals since they will make their owners sad.

"Solid", "doublet" and "triplet" are only descriptions of the opal's fashioning and not treatments as such. A solid opal is a stone cut from a single piece of opal rough, while a doublet is made from two layers, one being opal and the other a dark background material which can be glass, ironstone matrix, plastic or something else. This is done from opals too thin to make good solids; usually white/light grey opal from Coober Pedy in Australia, the dark background will stabilize the stone and enhance its appearance since the entity will be perceived as the precious black opal. A triplet is likewise made from a dark background and a thin layer of opal, plus an extra layer of a clear substance above the opal, usually synthetic quartz or glass. When this is cut, the domed quartz will act as a lens and improve the play of colour in the opal as well as to protect it from hits and scratches.

What kind of stone you want is a matter of personal choice, but there are huge differences in price between the fashioning. Doublets and triplets can be bought for everything from a penny to a couple of hundred bucks, while a good, solid opal of some size can be in the tens of thousands. Either one of these are fine and none of them should need any treatments or special care. So I think you've got some bad info from sellers of inferior material.

Some stones will only crack and craze, dry up and fade, making it poor jewellery material, and there is up to date no really good, lasting treatments to prevent this. Inferior quality is inferior quality, and that's it.

The only time you could accept artificially stabilized material is when it is a collector's piece, like some of the gorgeous opals from Nevada. But then you have to count in continuous care and to redo the treatment every once in a while to keep the stone nice. Also, Andamooka matrix opal is sugar and acid treated, but this isn't for stabilization, it is made for colour enhancement.

So, finally, I say that you should buy stones of good quality that you like! Good quality lasts, without any treatments, bad quality won't last, regardless of how much it is treated.

Still, I'm certainly no expert here, so this is just my 2c.

Good luck and much joy!

[Lee Little](#)

Location: Ohio and Thailand, 6 months each per year

Triplets

Good info as usual Jung Kee. Does anybody have a good source (including their own stock) of triplets? I will be in the market for some triplets this winter. Ya'all lemme hear.

The Opal Express

The American Opal Society

Best regards, Lee

[Karen](#)

Location: Puyallup, WA

Oiling

According to our text, Colored Gemstone Identification, Lesson 20 Synthetic, Imitation and Treated Gemstones, "opals must be oiled to seal them and guard against water loss in the gemstone". ISG Registered Gemologist

[Jung Kee](#)

Location: Sweden, above the Polar Circle

That was something new to me, the advice I got from an opal miner was to never buy any stones which are coated in oil since it's as good as proof on low quality material with too high water content to be stable. How is this oiling supposed to be done?

From [Crystal Star](#),

Location: Ozark Mtns. NW Arkansas, the only state where diamonds are mined

There seem to be varying opinions on this, but I, too, was told by the miners I've dealt with in Australia, that oiling is unnecessary, and that it isn't very effective at keeping water inside an opal. That made me think about how putting baby oil on skin doesn't keep it from drying out, either; it just appears to slow an inevitable process a bit, but like the opal, skin's hydration comes from within. So they never recommended it, and the only treatment they ever mentioned was the sugar treatment that some of the miners do.

After reading about oiling opals in the course notes I did get some oil, but since then I've read so many conflicting statements about it that I haven't put it on any of my opals.

Crystal Star

Collector of physical and spiritual gems. Proud to be an ISG RG

From [Lee Little](#)

Location: Ohio and Thailand, 6 months each per year

Hi Crystal,

Could you tell us what the sugar treatment is? When it comes to opals, I mean, LOL. Thanks, Lee

From [Morning Dove](#), Location: Minnesota

I've never oiled my opals, but I do keep them in an amber-colored bottle covered with distilled water to keep them from drying out. Of course, those are my loose stones. For set stones, I've always heard to place them in distilled water overnight every few months and they wouldn't dry out.

Just my 2.3 cents (inflation). ISG Registered Gemologist

[Jung Kee](#), Location: Sweden, above the Polar Circle

I think she refers to the same treatment that I mentioned in my earlier post, which is done do matrix opal which is white and somewhat porous. You put the cut and sanded, but not polished, opals in a highly saturated sugar solution (of old this was done with honey) and let it seep into the pores for some time (different for different treaters). Then you put the stones in a high concentration sulphuric acid to burn off the oxygen and hydrogen, which leaves charcoal in the pores, making the white matrix opal to appear dark like a black opal.

[ClassyCarat](#), Location: San Diego

A very high percentage Andamooka opal both solid and boulder is treated with the sugar/sulphuric. I have done it a time or two myself. It can make a modest opal very beautiful. BTW, I have cut many, many Kg of opal in my time. I always wipe the finished stone across my nose and forehead after the final finish. I don't think it does much, but an old Aussie cutting buddy of mine used to always do it. It has gotten to be a habit.

I wouldn't do what Modo suggested, that is keep your cut opal in water. I have found that this practice seems to 'over-hydrate'. Often

March 2009

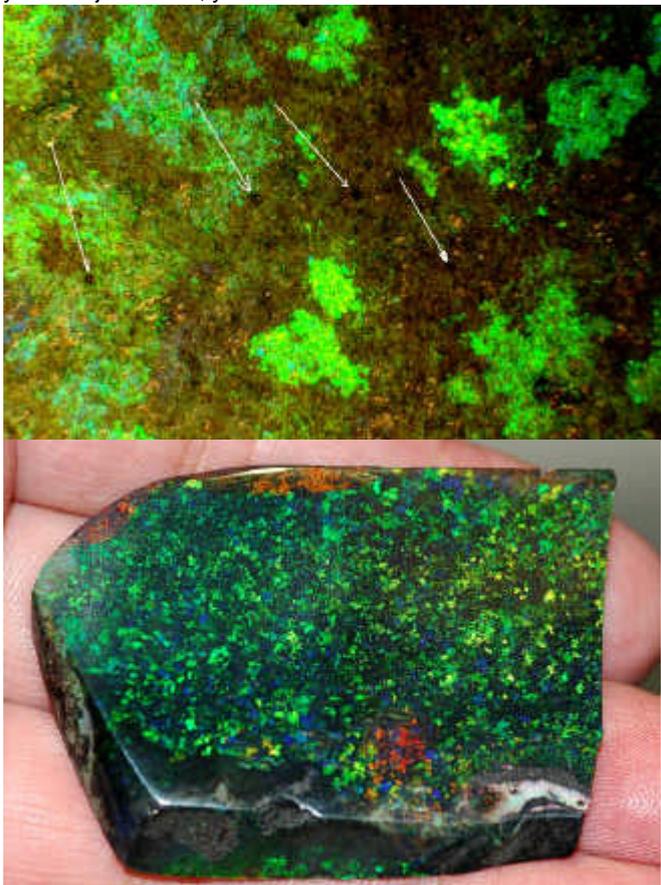
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when you take them out, they will craze. The exception here is Virgin Valley Wood and the like. It has a tendency to craze when it comes out of water for any time at all. Generally, most of it is mined in wet conditions, though. I'm not sure this habit of VV opal doesn't verify what I said about going from very wet to dry. Much of the VV material won't craze if it is dried very, very slowly.  
CC (Still an Opal freak after all these years.)

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[Lee Little](#). Location: Ohio and Thailand, 6 months each per year  
Great info, gang. Now I am wondering how to spot, or how to test for a sugar treated opal. How stable is the treatment? Are they supposed to be labeled to let consumers know of the treatment, if so, what letters? Thanks, Lee

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[Lee Little](#). Location: Ohio and Thailand, 6 months each per year  
Hey,  
Good timing someone posted this link in the sellers corner and it does contain some tips on how to care for opals in one of their drop down menus. Here it is again [www.naturalopal.com](http://www.naturalopal.com).

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[ClassyCarat](#). Location: San Diego  
Lee and All,  
This is a chunk of opal with the sugaring we are talking about. The other pic is a photomicrograph of the same piece. I drew a couple of lines pointing out just a few of the larger carbon pieces. If you look just a little, you'll see lots of them. CC



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[Lee Little](#). Location: Ohio and Thailand, 6 months each per year  
Hi Classy,  
Great pics. do these stones pass a white glove test? In other words will any of the carbon rub off? It would seem that magnification would be one test to ID this treatment.  
Thanks, Lee

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[ClassyCarat](#). Location: San Diego  
Hi Lee,  
The Opal Express

Nope, once it's there, it's there. The white glove test leaves no residue whatsoever. This slab was sugared over 40 years ago. The carbon is entrapped in the opal pores. The pic I sent is at fairly high magnification. Because of that, you really don't get the picture of how small these particles of carbon are. They are not easy to see with a 10X loupe. The other thing I didn't mention is that in this case at least, the carbon extends completely through the thickness of the slab. It is about 3.5 mm thick. There is a 'fresh' edge because I had this slab in a shirt pocket and bent over to pick something up. Well, it used to be much larger. CC

-----  
[Crystal Star](#). Location: Ozark Mtns. NW Arkansas, the only state where diamonds are mined

Richard Wise has this short note on this, taken from his website: "OPAL ENHANCEMENT AND TREATMENT. Opal is subject to a number of treatments most of which are traditional and well known to the jeweler/gemologist. The two best known are smoking and sugaring. Each aim to darken the body color in order to enhance the play of color."

If memory serves me right, my guy in Australia said the miners 'cook them in sugar water' to darken and enhance the color of the opals. That's about all he said, and I don't recall him mentioning the smoking Richard mentions, at all. With any luck, Richard will chime in here and give us more detail on this sugaring treatment...  
Crystal Star Collector of physical and spiritual gems.

-----  
[Jung Kee](#). Location: Sweden, above the Polar Circle  
Great pics and text, ClassyCarat! Of course it was Virgin Valley opals I had in mind earlier. The piece you show is impressive in size and play of colour still, even if it is broken; I never cease to marvel over your pics, you must have a gorgeous collection/stock indeed!

Crystal: Dunno what Mr. Wise means with smoking, but a common treatment on traditional sami carvings in reindeer bone around here is to simply rub the polished face in tobacco ash to let the unpolished valleys be darkened by it. I suppose something like that could be done to porous opals too.  
Carpe Diem!  
From <http://www.yourgemologist.com>

+++++  
**March 2009 Gem & Mineral Shows**

6-8--HAYWARD, CA: Annual show and sale; Mineral & Gem Society of Castro Valley; Centennial Hall, 22292 Foothill Blvd.; Fri. 10-6, Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; adults \$6, children under 12 free with adult; \$1 off admission with Web site flier; contact Larry Ham, P.O. Box 2145, Castro Valley, CA 94546, (510) 887-9007; e-mail: showchair@mgs cv.org; Web site: www.mgs cv.org  
7-8--ARCADIA, CA: Show; Monrovia Rockhounds; LA County Arboretum & Botanical Garden, 301 N. Baldwin Ave., one block south of 4210; Sat. 9 4:30, Sun. 9-4:30; jew elry, findings, beads, displays, books; contact Jo Anna Ritchey, (626) 359-1624; Web site: www.moroks.com  
7-8--VENTURA, CA: 47th annual show; Ventura Gem & Mineral Society; Seaside Park, Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; dealers, displays, gems, minerals, fossils, lapidary arts, lapidary demonstrations, door prizes, silent auctions, children's activities; contact Andy Anderson, (805) 987-0043; e-mail: vgms\_editor@roadrunner.com; Web site: www.vgms.org  
13-15--VICTORVILLE, CA: 38th annual tailgate; **Victor Valley Gem & Mineral Club; Stoddard Wells Road**; contact Gil Gilbert, (760) 868-6900  
14-15--SAN MARINO, CA: 51st annual show, "Tournament of Gems"; Pasadena Lapidary Society; San Marino Masonic Center, 3130 Huntington Dr.; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; free admission; member displays, demonstrations, dealers; contact Drew Wilson, (626) 298-1534  
14-15--SPRECKELS, CA: 63rd annual show; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5: Spreckels Veterans Hall, 5th St. and Llano St.; displays, beads, finished jewelry, rough rock, fluorescent display, kids' activities, demonstrations, free hourly door prize, raffle, dealers, silent auction, minerals, fossils, lapidary; contact Ernie deFever, (831) 422-3422, or Karin Salomon; e-mail: kcbakes27@sbcglobal.net; Web site: Salinasrockandgem.com  
14-15--TURLOCK, CA: Show, "Treasures from the Earth"; Mother Lode Mineral Society; Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; adults \$5, children 12 and under free; vendors, 80 educational exhibits, 20 demonstrations, fine jewelry, beads, minerals, fossils, dinosaurs, tools, large children's area with free activities, fluorescent tent, silent auction,

speakers: Bob Jones, Dr. Alan Schaffert, Walter Wright, Richard Wade, David K. Lynch; contact Bud & Terry McMillin, P.O. Box 1263, Modesto, CA 95350; (209) 524-3494; e-mail: terry.mcmillin@yahoo.com; Web site: www.turlockgemshow.com

21-22--ESCONDIDO, CA: Annual show; Palomar Gem & Mineral Club; Army National Guard Armory, 304 Park Ave.; Sat. 9-5, Sun. 9-4; adults \$2, seniors \$1, children free; dealers, rough rock, finished stones, jewelry, tools, related products, gem identification; contact Van Lynch, 30135 Cole Grade Rd., Valley Center, CA 92082, (760) 749-4164; e-mail: michelleandvan@hotmail.com; Web site: www.palomargem.org

21-22--VALLEJO, CA: Show and sale, "Spring Bling"; Vallejo Gem & Mineral Society; Vallejo Elks Lodge, 2850 Redwood Pkwy., at the intersection of Redwood Pkwy. and Admiral Callahan Rd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-5; adults \$3, ages 12-18 \$2, children under 12 free; contact Phyllis Malicki, (707) 745-3255; (707) 745-3255; e-mail: vgm01@yahoo.com; Web site: www.iwired.org

27-29--FRESNO, CA: Show, "The New Jewelry, Gem, Bead & Mineral Show", 848 M St.; Fri. 12-6, Sat. 10-7, Sun. 10-5; adults \$6, seniors and students \$3, children free; door prizes, gold panning specialist and certified

gemologist and appraiser on hand; contact High Sierra Investment Group Inc., 20385 Pahute Rd., Apple Valley, CA 92308, (760) 961-2728; e-mail: GEFisher39@aol.com; Web site: www.HighSierraInvestments.net

28-29--LEMOORE, CA: 1st annual show; Lemoore Gem & Mineral Club; Trinity Hall; Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-6; free admission; contact Judy Pereira, 335 W. D St., Lemoore, CA 93245, (559) 924-4052

28-29--ROSEVILLE, CA: 47th annual show; Roseville Rock Rollers; Roseville (Placer County) Fairgrounds, 800 All America City Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; adults \$5, seniors (60+) \$4, children 12 and under free; information; contact Gloria Marie, (916) 216-1114; or e-mail: g16marie@ftcnet.net; Web site: www.rockrollers.com

28-29--TORRANCE, CA: 60th annual show, "Nature's Treasures"; **South Bay Lapidary & Mineral Society**; Torrance Recreational Center, 3341 Torrance Blvd.; Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4; free admission; exhibits, demonstrations, children's workshops, slabs, rough, tumbled stones, jewelry, lapidary items; contact Larry Hoskinson or Leslie Neff, (310) 318-2170; Web site: www.palosverdes.com/sblap/

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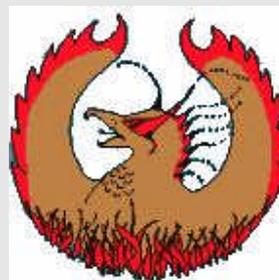
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Please make check or money order payable to "**American Opal Society**". Mail payment and application to:  
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 An optional, quicker method of payment is via the **Internet**. To pay, just visit the membership page on our website at [http://opalsociety.org/aos\\_application\\_by\\_web.htm](http://opalsociety.org/aos_application_by_web.htm) and complete the form. You March 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](mailto:membership@opalsociety.org).

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**MEMBERSHIP ROSTER and NEWSLETTER MAILING:** 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.

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 The American Opal Society.  
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**Are Your Dues Due Now?**  
**PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL.** If your label shows the current month/year your dues are DUE NOW. If the date is older, your dues are overdue.  
**A Renewal Grace Period** of two months will be provided. If your dues are due now you will receive two additional issues of the newsletter. 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



# The Opal Express

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

**Volume #42 Issue #3  
March 2009**

TO:

### Some Topics In This Issue:

- New Venue for Opal & Gem Show
- LaVerne Christenson as Treasurer
- Opal Canyon Field Trip on March 21st
- Fire Opals in El Paso Mountains
- Leo Nowak
- Diamonds in the Lightning Ridge Area?
- Opals and Their Treatments

### Important Dates:

March 10<sup>th</sup> - Board Meeting

March 12<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting. Speaker: Famous wildlife jewelry designer Daniel Toledo on wax working techniques and design applications.

March 13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> - Stoddard Wells Swap Meet

March 21<sup>st</sup> - Opal Canyon Field Trip

— GENERAL MEETINGS —

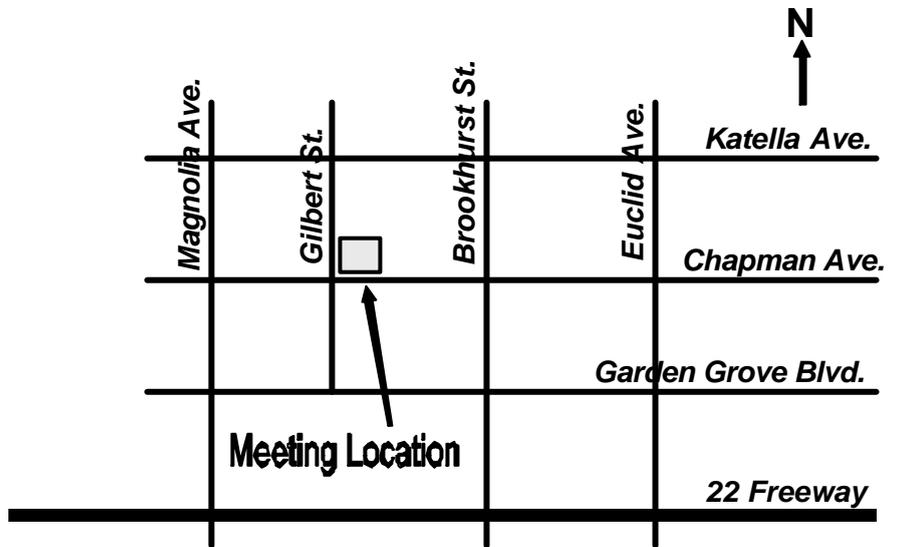
2nd Thursday of the Month  
7:00 pm - 9:00 PM

Garden Grove Civic Women's Club  
9501 Chapman Ave.  
Garden Grove, CA 92841  
(NE corner of Gilbert & Chapman)

MEETING ACTIVITIES

Opal Cutting, Advice, Guest Speakers,  
Slide Shows, Videos, Other Activities

# March 12th Daniel Toledo on Wax Working Techniques



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