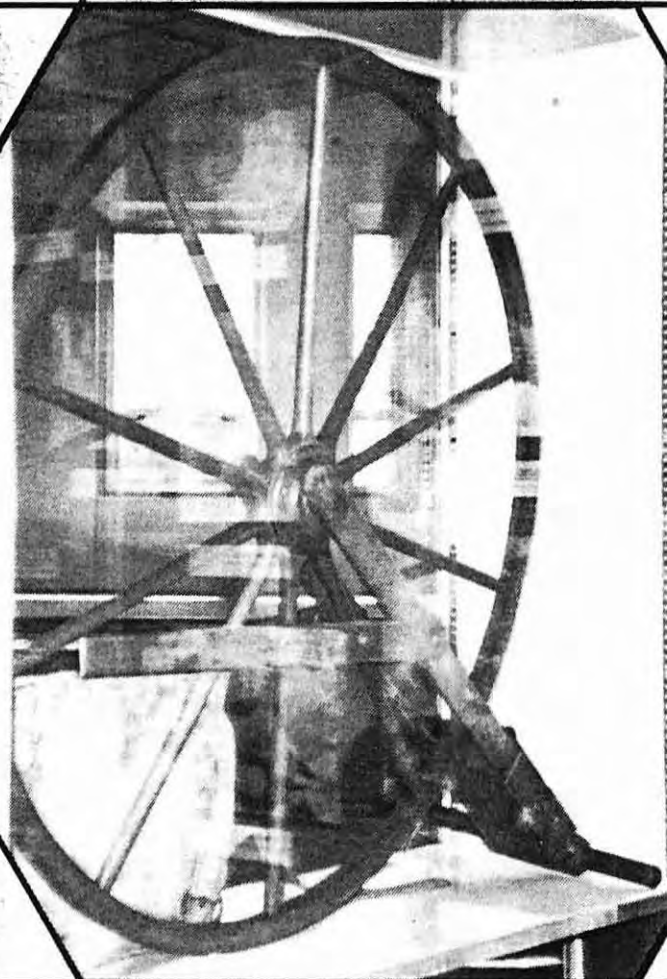


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CAR & CRYSTA

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*Wheel used as odometer
by Sir William Logan to
measure distances*

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- Fire Opal found in British Columbia
- Gems in BBS World of Computers
- Molybdenite from Moly Hill, PQ
- How to Carve Soapstone

82 LSW/25

Photo by Marilyn Fraser

Near Brett deposit George Simard

We truly can be thankful!

Fire opals in British Columbia, believe it or not!

R.W. (Bob) Yorke-Hardy, Box 298, Vernon BC V1T 6M2

It all started innocently enough in the early summer of 1991 but little did we realize what we had found or what lay in store for us. Until October 14, 1991 there were no confirmed and documented occurrences of precious opal in British Columbia; or anywhere else in Canada.

Tony Grywacheski has rock-hounded in the Vernon area for many years. It was one of the few ways he had to really get away. The discovery, in early June 1991 of numerous large agates and some smaller pieces of white, common opal was soon put aside when he discovered an area of red-rusty, pumice-like, volcanic rocks. Could this have some value as a landscaping material- market quality 'Lava Rock'? After comparing this to the material being sold at the Swan Lake Fruit and Garden Market it was obvious that there was some potential.

Alana and I had just started our third season running our small Rock and Gem Shop, a separate business leasing space at the Swan Lake Fruit and Garden Market complex, when Tony, one of the founders of the complex brought in his newly found treasures for me to look at. The landscape material looked interesting and we were all intrigued by the prospects of finding enough to supply the area's needs; but, it was the agate and the white opal with those thin bands of transparent yellow-amber opal attached that kept drawing Glen Grywacheski's and my attention.

After several weeks Tony and I found time to make a quick trip to the site. It didn't take us long to gather some ten to fifteen pounds of grayish translucent agate. The largest piece measured fifteen by eight by ten centimetres and weighed in at over two pounds; however it was cracked along an opaque white, common opal band that passed through the center

and it had obviously been broken from another piece. Another, smaller piece exhibited botryoidal features with some bands of opaque white, common opal. This was obviously broken from a larger piece which had a hollow center. The inner surface or that part that had been the 'cavity lining' was covered with tiny quartz crystals. However, none of the transparent yellowish-amber opal material was found.

Near the end of the afternoon, our attention turned to the 'lava rock'. It only took us a half hour to fill half of Tony's small pick-up with pieces of this material. Some pieces, measuring up to 18 inches in all dimensions, weighed only two or three pounds. Hopefully there will be a large volume of this material as most of it has already sold.

I considered the property of enough merit to warrant staking, so this was done in order to protect what could turn into a valuable source of 'lava rock' and an interesting source of agates- and then there was the opal potential. Where did those pieces with the yellowish-amber bands come from? Was that really 'fire' that we could see or was it our imagination?

Although we all wanted to take the time to further explore the property, it seemed almost impossible to get away. One more trip in mid-September resulted in our collecting additional 'interesting' pieces of agate. It seemed that the ground at this location was very 'drummy', a good sign that there were numerous vugs and cavities and we imagine that many will be filled with agate.

The Tertiary aged basalts and other volcanic flows in the North Okanagan region are well-known for this. The area around Monte Lake, B.C. is particularly well documented, but our specific area is quite a distance from there.

It was on Thanksgiving Day,

October 14, 1991 that the real potential was located. Gwen, Darryl and Carolyn Grywacheski had decided to take the day to explore the ground. It was only Glen's second trip to the site and he was having some difficulty locating the spot where we had been digging out some larger agates several weeks earlier. As they walked and prospected the area, Glen would describe what to look for, but could find very little to show as an example- no agate, no opal- only acres and acres of vuggy basalt. Where was it?

Finally, there it was, a small band of opaque white, common opal and yes!- there was that yellow-amber material as well. Each member of the group selected a location and started to dig. Glen in the middle, Carolyn just down slope and Darryl just up slope along the apparent strike of the opal band. Within minutes Carolyn had noticed something quite different.

"What is this green shining material?" she asked!

In the brilliant afternoon sunlight it looked like a green light shining out of the small hole she had excavated.

"Yes!! It's FIRE OPAL!!", exclaimed Glen.

Once removed from the hole and turned in the light there were broad flashes of green and blue from one side and a brilliant red from the other. The piece of yellowish-amber opal measures some 20 mm by 10 mm by 3 mm and it was (is) still attached to a somewhat larger piece of vuggy basalt.

Within minutes, several other pieces of opal exhibiting some quite spectacular coloured fire were found. In all over thirty pieces of fire opal were located on this date. In addition to the above referenced piece located by Carolyn, Darryl found a 5 cm diameter piece of basalt having a

BC Opal-Continued on page 27

13 Cab & Crystal, Winter, 1991

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BC Opal—Continued from page 13
thin surface coating of bluish-white opal which exhibits broad flashes of purple and blue coloured fire. Glen located a 20 mm long by 15 mm diameter nodule of transparent yellowish-amber opal exhibiting predominantly red, but also green and yellow plays of colour.

Three more trips, including a major offensive on October 27, have gathered together several hundred pounds of opal bearing material (most of the weight due to the attached basalt matrix material). Already several small jars of fire opal have been segregated. A full spectrum of colours is evident, varying in intensity from pin points to broad flashes of various colours. Some of the matrix material is white. However, the majority of the fire opal to date has a transparent yellowish-amber to dark amber matrix, with some being a translucent to opaque brown colour.

Carolyn's THANKSGIVING OPAL, the first precious fire opal to be found in Canada, is destined for the National Museum in Ottawa along with several other pieces for identification, documentation, evaluation and display. Still other material is presently being worked into finished cabs and freeform pieces.

C&C

Obituary

PAUL E. DESAUTELES (1920-1991) Retired curator of the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Gems and Minerals, passed away on July 25, 1991 in Seminole, Florida.

Rocks & Minerals magazine will publish a tribute to Paul Desautels documenting his considerable influence on generations of collectors. This tribute is being prepared by the Smithsonian's Dr. Daniel Appleman for publication in the January/February 1992 issue.

C&C

The hours that make us happy make us wise.

JOHN MASEFIELD

Fred Dorward— A Canadian Rockhound

by Dave Engberg, Editor. A.F.R.C. Fossil Trails

Fred grew up in the Sedgewick area of mid eastern (Wainwright) area of our Alberta province's Battle River country. Fred has always been interested in the outdoors, collecting rocks, fossils and minerals. He graduated from the University of Alberta with an engineering degree and worked at several jobs in Canada and I believe other countries, also at Brooker Engineering in Edmonton.

Fred was an original member of the Tumblewood Rock and Gem Club back in 1964 and is an honorary member of the present Edmonton Tumblewood Lapidary Club as well as a member in the Whitehorse Rock & Lapidary Club.

He led us on a great many successful field trips all over Western Canada, western United States and the Yukon. He initiated many interesting activities for club members to participate in, e.g. mall jewellery sales, Christmas bazaars and charity jewellery sales.

Fred and his wife Chris Dorward have a large family who we know have taken part over the years on the field trips, etc. Fred was editor of *Tumblewood Tales* and very involved with G.M.F.C. jobs at its beginnings. Fred also gave a lot of his time in helping to set up Northern Alberta Gem and Mineral Society for the purpose of putting on an Edmonton area show comparable to Calgary's annual show and others. Fred instructed lapidary skills and he

also donated much of his time, I believe, to the Boy Scouts movement and the church.

When Fred and Chris moved to Whitehorse, Yukon, in the fall of 1980 after being the chief wagonmaster and organizer of the *Yukon '80 Expedition*, he helped revive the Whitehorse Rock Club and since has worked very hard and devoutly in establishing sites to hunt mineral specimens and semi-precious gemstones and tote roads in the Yukon. The Whitehorse G.M.F.C. Show was also one of his ambitious contributions which he and others of their club worked on. In the Yukon, Fred has been employed by Mines & Resources of Canada as mine electrical inspector for the Yukon Territorial region. Fred and Chris have graciously hosted and entertained many dignitaries, visitors, friends and rockhounds and have welcomed us all on our visits to the Yukon.

In a tribute and *Canadian Profile* such as this it is difficult to mention all the facts and contributions made to the hobby by Fred Dorward and to his and our much loved hobby, but we do have the finest warm memories of our shared activities with he and Chris and know he has contributed much more than has been mentioned in this article. Also, I would like to mention that Christina was the first lady President of the Tumblewood Rock and Gem Club.

In recent Periodicals

NEWSWEEK, October 28/91— *How Dinosaurs Lived. Sex, Day Care and Fast Food— 100 Million Years Ago.* New theories and old bones reveal the lifestyles of the dinosaur.

DISCOVER, November 1991— *Dinosaur Doctors— Tracing Modern Disease to the Ancient Reptiles.* Dead bones do tell tales of the lives of dinosaurs and the diseases of humans.



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