

*Yorke → KLINKER*



**Western Canadian Gemstone Newsletter**

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**Okanagan Opal**

*Successful development at the Klinker Opal Deposit*

By: Bob Yorke-Hardy

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**Discovery and development**

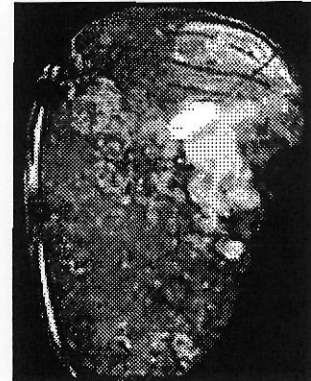
The Klinker Opal Deposit was discovered on October 14, 1991, Canadian Thanksgiving Day, and has been technically reviewed in two articles co-authored by the Geological Survey of Canada and the B.C. Geological Survey. There have also been several articles in past issues of both the Lapidary Journal and Rock and Gem Magazine about the deposit.

Since its discovery, extensive progress has been made towards commercial development of the property. Likewise, during the past few years there has been considerable activity and some success by others looking for additional precious opal deposits in British Columbia.

**Natural boulder black opal**

Beginning in 1994, Okanagan Opal Inc. has explored and developed the Klinker Property to the stage where adequate reserves of opal have been identified to support small scale mine production, provided an adequate market can be developed. Since 1995, the company has developed various techniques for product manufacture. Market testing to assess consumer acceptance has also been on-going, through its in-house retail outlet located near Vernon, B.C. The company is now preparing to expand its market base through a wholesale marketing distribution plan, the implementation of which, is the final remaining hurdle to commercial production.

Black boulder opal  
Courtesy Bob Yorke-Hardy



An introductory opal product line, in a variety of gold and silver jewellery settings, has been developed by the company in order to test the marketability of "Okanagan Opal" in its various forms. This effort is increasingly meeting with both success and amazement:

- Success in that, annual sales have been increasing through our retail outlet in Vernon, B.C. Success also in that product quality and variety has been improving steadily. In addition, sales are developing at other outlets displaying Okanagan Opal products.
- Amazement in that, as we introduce our product on a wholesale basis for sale through other retail outlets, it is repeatedly viewed with surprise as to colour brilliance, variety in opal types, and base colour variations. This is truly a unique Canadian product.

The most common statement made by consumers and wholesale buyers alike is: "This opal doesn't look like the Australian opal that I am familiar with!" Our typical response is: "No, you are right!"

Then we proceed to show these potential customers solid white to honey base colored opal from the Klinker deposit that is very comparable to, or better than, the average white opal found in many jewellery stores. We go on to explain that there are other "types of opal" which are not often seen in the average jewellery store - these are generally more expensive.

#### **Characteristics**

Opal from the Klinker Deposit (and what we have seen from other more recently discovered opal occurrences in B.C.) would be generally classified as "boulder opal". This material exhibits variable base colours ranging from transparent, water clear to clear amber, to translucent/opaque white, to dark brown, and exhibiting a variable intensity "play of colour" in a flash to broad flash pattern. The brightness and pattern of the play of colour in Okanagan Opal is second to none, often covering the full spectrum and full brightness scale.

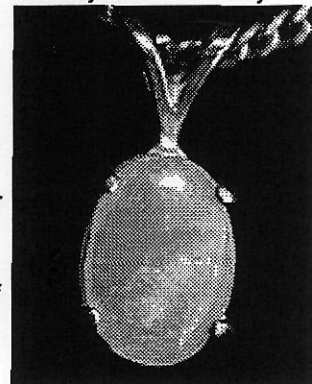
*Boulder opal doublet in setting  
Courtesy Bob Yorke-Hardy*



Yes, there is "solid" opaque to translucent, white base colored opal on the Klinker property, similar in appearance to Australian white opal. The Okanagan Opal found on the Klinker Property has a variable play and intensity "play of colour" and it generally exhibits "flash to broad flash fire patterns", rather than the more typical pinfire pattern found in much of the Australian white opal. In fact, on the Klinker Property there is solid opaque, solid semi-crystal and solid crystal opal, all with broad ranging base colours and broad ranging pattern and intensity of colour play. However, the economic potential of the Klinker deposit is at this stage reliant on the development of the "boulder opal" segment of the market, because to date the volume of "solid" opal is not sufficient to justify commercial production on its own.

Perhaps this should be considered a blessing, because when comparing different types of opal, boulder opal is generally more highly valued than opaque white base colored opal. *Although the Australians are still producing considerable quantities of white base colored opal, it would appear that they are no longer producing the historic quantities of high quality solid black and crystal opal, because of its rarity. As an alternative, the Australians appear to be increasingly involved in marketing boulder opal to take up the slack. This should result in the increased awareness and value of boulder opal in the marketplace which as a consequence will result in an increased acceptance of precious opal from British Columbia.*

*Solid white opal in setting  
Courtesy Bob Yorke-Hardy*



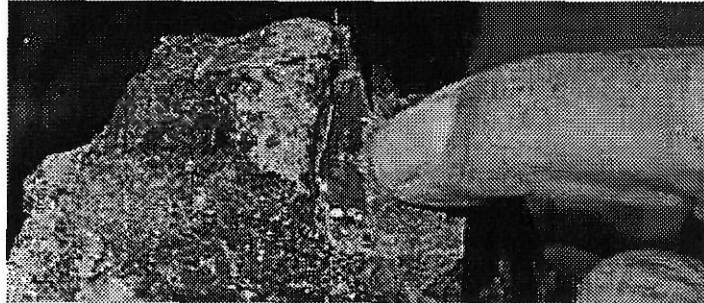
#### **Summer fee digging**

The property is readily accessible from June to October each year and can be reached by most two wheel drive vehicles provided they have sufficient ground clearance. There are some 20 kilometres of gravel / dirt logging road to travel, and portions of this road are quite steep.

"Fee digging" trips commence when weather and ground conditions permit in June, and run until late September or early October. They

operate rain or shine, but are normally restricted to Friday, Saturday and Sunday (also Monday on long weekends). Please phone for special arrangements for groups of 4 to 6. Groups meet in Vernon and are escorted the 40 kilometres to the site, which is 1,500m (5,000ft) above sea level.

Red and green "fire" in boulder matrix, Klinker deposit.  
*Courtesy Bob Yorke-Hardy*



Best opal hunting results will be obtained on sunny days, when the play of color in the opal will be much more easily detected. Your trip guide will provide an orientation which will assist in finding opal under most weather conditions.

A daily fee of \$30 CDN. is charged. We will provide transport to the site for an additional fee. This will allow each individual paid guest to remove up to 2.5 kilograms. (~5 lbs.) of "material" (opal, agate, rock, etc.) from the property.

Safety equipment is required to be worn while actively digging, hammering and chiseling rock - specifically safety glasses and good gloves and boots are recommended. A list of equipment and supplies required or recommended is given below but please assess your own needs. No mechanized equipment will be allowed - hand tools only. Rental tools are available by the day.

**Required:**

- Personal food, water and clothing needs
- Safety glasses or other face/eye protection device
- Good gloves (leather work gloves recommended)
- Good foot wear (leather hiking boots recommended)
- Pick and shovel
- Various shovels, bars and hammers as desired
- Sample bags and/or buckets
- Water spray bottle (please bring it full of water)

**Recommended:**

- Butt cushion
- Ground sheet
- Camera
- Penlight flashlight
- Mineral glass (hand lens)
- Bug repellent
- Sun screen
- Hat

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*Scratch Patch*

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