



**THE H.P. LOVECRAFT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

presents

THE REAL SHINING TRAPEZOHEDRON

*An intriguing theory
by*

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LUDO FORE PUTAVIMUS

Cover illustration by Darrell Tutchton.

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE H. P. LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY:



I have recently pieced together some dissociated knowledge, the results of which I believe will be of interest to the Society. I can prove nothing, and I may rightly be accused of mere speculation and conjecture, but I can offer strong circumstantial evidence for my hypothesis: that *the Shining Trapezohedron* was inspired by a real object which can still be seen in a museum in New Jersey.

1. In “The Haunter of the Dark”, Lovecraft describes the Shining Trapezohedron as “egg shaped or irregularly spherical” and, at least while covered in dust, as “a seeming sphere”.
2. In geometry, a trapezohedron is something quite different (see Figure 1). Though the angles and number of faces vary, none of them could easily be mistaken for a sphere under any circumstance. Nonetheless, many artists depict the Shining Trapezohedron this way.

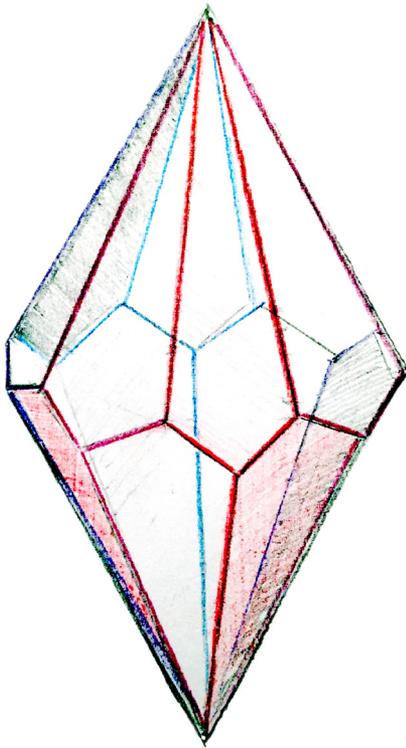


FIGURE 1: A TRAPEZOHEDRON IN GEOMETRY.
Sketch by the author.

3. This definition, however, only applies to geometry. When used in geology, it refers to a completely different shape (see Figure 2). This shape could easily be mistaken for an irregular sphere, especially at a distance in a dark room and when covered by dust.

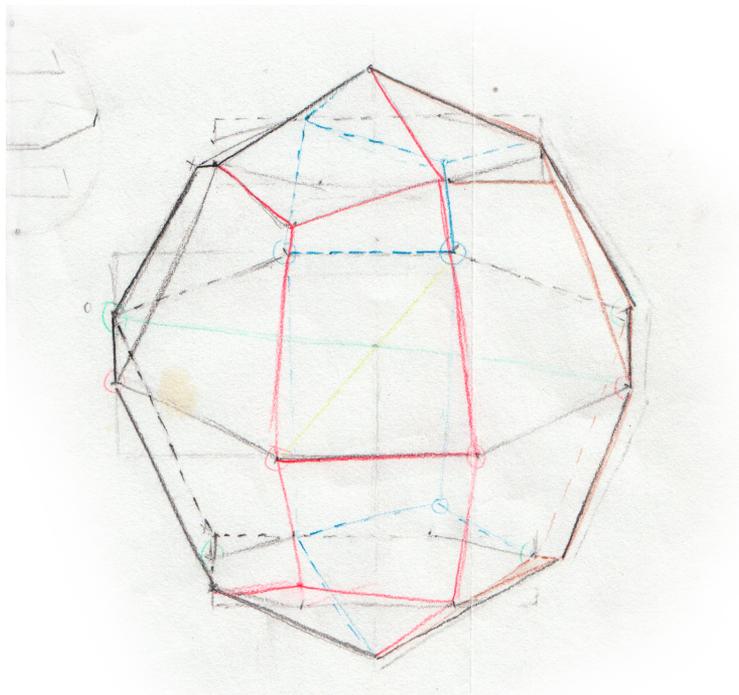


FIGURE 2: A GEOLOGIST'S TRAPEZOHEDRON.
Sketch by the author.

4. The geologist's trapezohedron (a deltoidal icositetrahedron in geometry) is a shape sometimes assumed by the mineral garnet, which is frequently black or dark red in color.
5. H. P. Lovecraft had a friend named James F. Morton, who was a famed mineralogist, a member of the Kalem Club, and the curator of a museum in Paterson, New Jersey. According to Lovecraftian scholar S. T. Joshi: "HPL visited Paterson on August 30, 1925... [and] commemorated the visit in "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), when the narrator finds an important newspaper clipping while 'visiting a learned friend in Paterson, New Jersey; the curator of a local museum and a mineralogist of note.'" —from *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, by S. T. Joshi and David E. Schultz.

6. A closer examination of this scene in “The Call of Cthulhu” has the narrator “examining... the reserve specimens roughly set on the storage shelves in a rear room of the museum.”

I confess that, by this point in the narrative, reason had given way to intuition. Something in the tone of that paragraph in “The Call of Cthulhu” convinced me that, despite any subsequent fictionalization, Morton really had taken Lovecraft into a storage room and shown him minerals that were not yet on display in this museum, which was new in 1925. Further, a nagging certainty came over me that in that storage room, Lovecraft had noticed an object which intrigued his curiosity and whose memory would remain with him until he wrote “The Haunter of the Dark” in 1935: a four-inch seeming sphere, black, and with many irregular flat surfaces.

I was convinced that this object, this black garnet, really existed, but research in print and online would take me no further. So on December 20th, 2015, I drove three hours from my home in Columbia, Pennsylvania to the Paterson Museum in New Jersey.

And there I found it.

It sat on a low shelf in dim light next to a door, in the company of dozens or hundreds of other crystals which outshine it in beauty, but which pale in comparison with the garnet’s literary-historical significance. (See enclosed photographs.)



FIGURE 3: THE PATERSON SPECIMEN.
Photo by the author.

Numerous attempts to confirm the provenance of this specimen have yielded only frustration. The Paterson Museum, while being a wonderful civic institution, is not a large one, and the friendly but overworked current staff have been unable to provide any records from the earliest days of the museum which would confirm whether or not this garnet was indeed part of the collection back in 1925. It may well be that no such records exist to be found. But knowing Lovecraft's penchant for weaving real-life objects and experiences into his fantastic fiction, I decided to put audacity before caution in bringing this matter to the Society's attention.



FIGURES 3 & 4: THE PATERSON MUSEUM.

*This former railroad machine shop is the current home of the museum.
In 1925, it was located in the assembly room of the Danforth Public
Library, pictured below.*

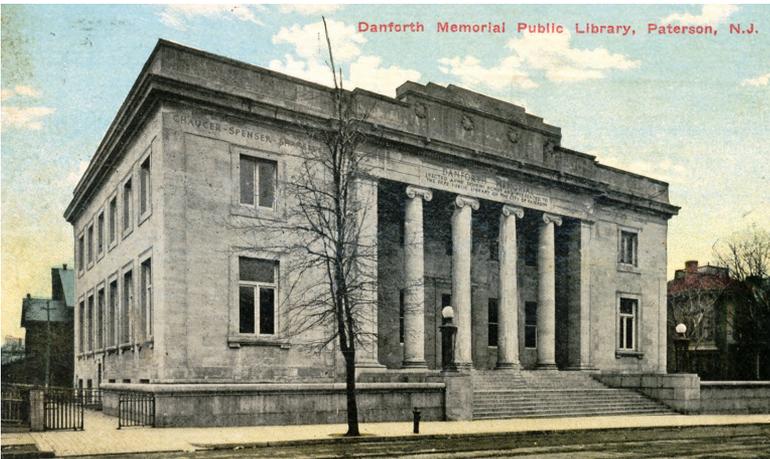




FIGURE 5: THE PATERSON SPECIMEN.

Photo by the author.

Yours sincerely,
Patrick Boerger
MEMBER No. 2237

POSTSCRIPT: A subsequent visit to the Paterson Museum on August 21, 2017 by HPLHS President Andrew Lemman revealed the following additional details. The accession records for the specimen indicate only that it was acquired by the museum prior to 1961. No more specific date can be determined. The label on the shelf is incorrect: the specimen is a sample of Almandine, another type of garnet. It was collected in Salida, Colorado. Many thanks to museum curator Bruce Balistrieri.

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