

Tillinghast's Esoterica and Exotics

No one quite seems to recall when the name Tillinghast's Esoterica and Exotics first appeared over a mysterious doorway tucked away in one of the more ancient streets of Arkham. Certainly, the name has recently achieved more prominence than ever, and accordingly some speak of Tillinghast as a newcomer. Yet for every local repeating such a claim there is a neighbor adamant that a shop bearing that name has been around for generations, albeit perhaps without quite so much oddity and mystery surrounding it.

Tillinghast's describes itself as "a purveyor of sundry delights, exotic treasures, wondrous baubles and innumerable secrets." Advertisements for the store and Tillinghast's own business cards omit both telephone number and address, reflecting one of the proprietor's many eccentricities, and leading to confusion as to the shop's actual location. Taller tales even speak of the shop appearing in different locations around the city at different times, although more sober explanations put the difficulty in describing its exact location down simply to being tucked away in a street older than many of those around; a street whose name has perhaps changed many times over the years.

Indeed, the shop's entrance appears to occupy what was likely once the rear of the building, its original frontage and entrance lost or obscured amidst the changing street names of Arkham, concealed by newer and grander buildings, cut off by wider, more modern thoroughfares. The mysterious door sits within a plain brick wall, with no shop window beside it, though the door itself is possessed of a most remarkable stained glass window depicting a cyclopean eye, staring out at would-be patrons with unfeeling affection.

Opening the door is said to both feel and sound like a seal being broken, for the world within is quite different from the store's humble surroundings. Within, Tillinghast's is an ancient tabernacle of a store, lit by brass lamps, crammed with shelves crowded with books, statuary, and paraphernalia of the most remarkable kinds.

Whatever the store's actual provenance, the Tillinghast of today's Tillinghast's Esoterica and Exotics is Randall Tillinghast, a tall, thin, grey-haired man, perhaps in his sixties, with the manners and bearing of New England aristocracy, a man full of centuries of dignity, possessed of the very same odd charm and beguiling air of mystery as the store bearing his name. He is without staff, and when the store is open – which, some say, is by appointment only – Tillinghast himself is always to be found behind its long, antique glass counter. Many mysteries surround this most curious emporium; the truth of them, whatever it may be, is undoubtedly to be found in those mysteries surrounding Mr. Randall Tillinghast himself.

