

## WHAT'S WITH THAT?



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# WHAT'S WITH THAT? LANDMARKS, YES, BUT SO FAMILIAR THEY'RE A MYSTERY.

By Andrew Rapp  
Globe Correspondent

**L**ive in Boston for more than a year and the Bunker Hill Monument blends into the background. You know the stories; the whites of their eyes, etc., etc. Maybe you've even clambered up to its base to satisfy visiting relatives. How much more wonder can a gray obelisk hold?

But there are other landmarks in Boston whose allure is enduring. No red brick line leads you to them. They aren't in guidebooks or pamphlets. Rather, you remember them because they are mysterious.

Their locations or forms reveal just enough to discourage serious scrutiny, while concealing just enough to cultivate curiosity. Why is that tall glass building there? Why have a lookout tower that no one looks out? Who paints a chemical tank chiffon pink? Rest easy Bostonians, these answers and more are revealed: Behold, Boston's mystery landmarks. ■

In the 1960s, color mattered. Rabbits were white, submarines were yellow, and the haze was all purple. Such things were

particularly important to the residents of Cambridge. Fitting then, that when exiting the Mass. Pike for Cambridge and passing through the tolls, behind the

Doubletree Guest Suites you are treated to an unusual

and dazzling display of color. It is the "tank farm" of Houghton Chemical Corp.

A committee of staffers in the 1960s selected

the color palette that is still in use. Today about 30 tanks share the pastel hues of pink, green, orange and purple. The cylindrical tanks range in size from under 2,000 gallons to larger than 30,000 gallons and store the many chemical products Houghton distributes to its customers, from antifreeze for Jettas to wing deicer for jets.

The business has a homey quality more often associated with ice cream makers than distributors of petrochemical products. It was founded by the grandfather of the current president Bruce E. Houghton, who says the colorful tanks are a natural expression of the company ethos.

"In all facets of our operation we have a desire to be unique and special and go beyond what our community, customers, and all who deal with us would expect," says Houghton. "There is an expectation in people's minds that industry is ugly. Therefore we wanted it to be an artwork."

"There's no reason other than to spread beauty and joy," counsels Houghton. ■

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