

## Quonset huts: Emerging Housing Solutions

Quonset huts are a unique architectural phenomena, a revolutionary concept in temporary housing. Quonset huts are in basic terms lightweight structures that have been manufactured using iron that is galvanized and has a semi circular cross section. The original design of Quonset huts was similar to the Nissen hut building, and gained acceptance post World War I when the English used these structures. The Nissen hut itself had several disadvantages such as the complicated unit of corrugated steel and the insulation which was derived from the way the panels were put together, so the Government suggested improvements to make shipping and assembly easier. The name Quonset was derived from the initial site of manufacture, Quonset Point in Davisville, which is a village in Rhode Island. The original design was 5 m by 11 m and was framed with semicircular steel pipes 2.4 m in radius, which were covered on the sides with corrugated steel sheets. The doors and windows were designed off the side of the main structure with regular ply, and the insulated interior contained a wood floor.

The concept of this kind of temporary accommodation increased in use during the 1941 when the US Navy required a dependable housing facility. The answer lay in constructing a lightweight shelter that could be readily shipped anywhere and did not require expert hands during assembly. In fact the building itself could be assembled just about anywhere, on concrete, iron pilings or even directly on the ground. The interiors could be used as needed and the open area could be concerted into residential units, military offices, storage structures or even be used as barracks. These buildings provided the US military with enhanced facilities and were a far cry from the inconvenient tenting on wooden bases that were usually used at that time.

From its application as military shelters, many other contractors began developing their own versions of the Quonset hut for other uses. The basic structure has undergone several redesigns and the major one occurred in 1943 when the manufacturing unit at Quonset Point was reestablished as part of the Stran Steel Division of the Great Lakes Steel Corporation. This modified Quonset hut was more stretched out and had a structure that used the original full arch rib. Versions of the Quonset hut model were manufactured to meet specific requirements, a prime example being the Pacific huts, which helped even conserve metal reserves. Some designs of Quonset huts were even constructed as air raid cover. Several larger units and multi arched Quonset huts have also been built as a response to special requests, government or civil.

Although Quonset huts began as a product of a military necessity, it has rapidly diversified into an iconic symbol of sorts. Quonset huts have with time become a more accepted mode of housing and are a reflection of the American spirit of invention. Quonset huts are truly a one of a kind blend of practicality, and a unique mixture of the unusual and the innovative.

### About the Author

More coverage of quonset huts, read [PowerBiltBuildings.com](http://PowerBiltBuildings.com).

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