

## Quonset huts: A Novel Architectural Concept

Quonset huts are a unique architectural phenomena, a revolutionary concept in temporary housing. Quonset huts are essentially lightweight buildings designed from galvanized iron structured with in a hemispherical cross section. The design of [Quonset huts](#) was inspired from the Nissen hut model and was made popular by the British during World War I. Since the original design of the Nissen prototype was an intricate array of corrugated iron panels both inside and the thermal protection came from the space between the panel arrangements, the Government came up with a variation to avoid setbacks during shipping and reassembly. The name Quonset was derived from the initial site of manufacture, Quonset Point in Davisville, which is a village in Rhode Island. The first approved design had a surface area 5 x 11 m and was constructed from hemispherical iron rods with a 2.4 m radius, and these were then covered with ribbed iron panes. The sides of the main unit was cut out to include the doors and windows in wooden ply, and the thermal protected central area had wooden flooring.

The very idea of this type of provisional housing facilities increased in use post 1941 when the US Navy needed reliable shelters for its military bases. The solution was simple, and the Navy used the lightweight structures which could not only be effortlessly transported but also needed no skilled labor to set up the Quonset huts. In fact the building itself could be assembled just about anywhere, on concrete, iron pilings or even directly on the ground. The interior space is an open area allowing maximum flexibility, which means the facility could be used as housing, office or medical space, military storage units or even barracks. Quonsets instantly provided the US troops with better comfort than did other temporary shelters such as tents with wooden platforms, which were the common structures used then.

From its original usage as military structures, Quonset huts have seen many enhancements and other companies began to make variations to the model for other uses. From its initial design, Quonset huts have seen many enhancements, and the last significant one was in 1943 when the Quonset Point manufacturing factory was taken over by the Great Lakes Steel Corporation and established as the Stran Steel Division. The variant of the Quonset huts thus developed had a more elongated design and applied the full arch corrugated pipes that was part of the initial model. Some variations of the Quonset hut structures were created to serve special needs, such as the wooden Pacific hut, and many of these did save valuable metal resources. 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.

Originally Quonset huts did come up to solve military requirements, but have since risen to an architectural icon. 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. See also [Garage buildings](#) . [Metal barns](#) .

## About the Author

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