

Quonset hut

Summary: A Quonset hut is a lightweight prefabricated structure of corrugated galvanized steel with a semi-circular cross-section. The design was developed in the United States based on the Nissen hut introduced by the British during World War I. Hundreds of thousands were produced during World War II, and military surplus was sold to the public. The name comes from the site of their first deployment at Quonset Point at the Davisville Naval Construction Battalion Center in Davisville, Rhode Island....

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Design and history

The first Quonset huts were manufactured in 1941 when the United States Navy needed an all-purpose, lightweight building that could be shipped anywhere and assembled without skilled labor. They could be assembled in a day by a 10-person team using only hand tools.

The George A. Fuller construction company manufactured them, and the first was produced within 60 days of signing the contract. In 1946, the Great Lakes Steel Corporation claimed "the term 'Quonset,' as applied to buildings and building materials, is a trade mark owned by the Great Lakes Steel Corporation." But the word is often used generically. Today similar structures are made by many contractors in countries around the world.

The original design was a 16-by-36-foot (4.9 m × 11.0 m) structure framed with steel members with an 8-foot (2.4 m) radius. The most common design created a standard size of 20-by-48-foot (6.1 m × 14.6 m) with a 16-foot (4.9 m) radius, allowing 960 square feet (89 m²) of usable floor space with optional 4 feet (1.2 m) overhangs at each end for protection of entrances from the weather. Other sizes were developed, including 20-by-40-foot (6.1 m × 12.2 m) and 40-by-100-foot (12 m × 30 m) warehouse models.

The sides were corrugated steel sheets, and the two ends were covered with plywood which had doors and windows. The interior was insulated and had pressed wood lining and a wood floor. The building could be placed on concrete, on pilings, or directly on the ground with a wood floor.

The original design used low-grade steel, which was later replaced by a more rust-resistant version. The flexible interior space was open, allowing use as barracks, latrines, medical and dental offices, isolation wards, housing, and

bakeries.

Between 150,000 and 170,000 Quonset huts were manufactured during World War II, and the military sold its surplus huts to the public after the war. Many remain standing throughout the United States as outbuildings, businesses, or even homes, and they are often seen at military museums and other places featuring World War II memorabilia. Many were also used around the United States for temporary postwar housing, such as Rodger Young Village for veterans and their families in Los Angeles, California, and the Quonset Park complex of married student housing at the University of Iowa. Some are still in active use at United States military bases. The U.S. Department of Energy continues to utilize Quonset huts as supporting structures (fabrication and machine shops, warehouses, etc.) at the Nevada National Security Site. The repurposed huts were common enough that Sherwin-Williams introduced a line of paint called "Quon-Kote" specifically designed to stick to the metal structures.

In popular culture

After World War II, surplus Quonset huts became popular as housing in Hawaii. They became known as "kamaboko houses" due to their half-cylindrical shape, similar to a slab of kamaboko.

The situation comedy *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*, which aired on CBS from 1964 to 1969, featured Quonset huts as the barracks housing at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California.

Gallery

See also

Daniel House (Knoxville, Tennessee)

Dymaxion deployment unit

Iris hut and Romney hut, similar British prefabricated structures used in WWII

Jamesway hut

Longhouses of the indigenous peoples of North America

Nissen hut

Patera Building

Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity, a former Trappist monastery in Utah housed in Quonset huts.

References

External links

Fe

ature article on the design and origin of the Quonset Hut from the Varnum Continentals historical organization in East Greenwich, RI.

Quonset Hut History in Washington State from 1941 - 1960 from the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation.

Quonset Huts at Guampedia, Guam's Online Encyclopedia

Quonset Huts, At National Airport, Arlington, Arlington County, VA at the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)

Quonset and Pacific Huts at the Kodiak Military History Museum

Pacific Huts at the online encyclopedia of Washington State History

Quonset Hut (search Pacific Hut Company) at the Seabee Museum and Memorial Park