



# Newport Through Its Architecture: A History of Styles from Postmedieval to Postmodern

*James Yarnall*

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A remarkable coincidence of unplanned historical events has preserved Newport, Rhode Island's architectural heritage in a way that is rare among American cities. Newport has the largest number of pre-Revolutionary War buildings in North America, with some 800 in its old historic districts.

In the nineteenth century, Newport was the summer home to America's most prominent families and patrons of outstanding architecture. With a diverse range of styles, Newport exemplified the greatness of mid-nineteenth-century American architecture. As Newport gained social importance in the 1880s, the Bellevue Avenue and Ochre Point neighborhoods became the sites of lavish Beaux-Arts palatial residences.

Newport's twentieth-century architecture explored all modern currents, ranging from progressive Bauhaus functionalism as it evolved into the International Style of the 1950s to more conservative Art Deco and Scandinavian Modernism. After 1975, the postmodern era gave rise to a spirit of preservation and adaptive reuse, inspiring the Modern Traditionalism of architects such as Robert A. M. Stern. In a more vernacular vein, postmodern shopping centers, restaurants, and commercial establishments provided fertile ground for an especially well-informed postmodern kitsch.

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