



KINGSCOTE

Kingscote is a landmark of the Gothic Revival style in American architecture. Its appearance in Newport marked the beginning of the “cottage boom” that would distinguish the town as a veritable laboratory for the design of picturesque houses throughout the 19th century.

OWNERSHIP AND ARCHITECTURE

In 1839, Southern planter George Noble Jones commissioned architect Richard Upjohn to design a summer cottage along a country road, known as Bellevue Avenue, on the outskirts of Newport. Upjohn created a highly original “cottage orne,” or ornamental cottage, in the Gothic Revival style. The general effect was romantic – a fanciful composition of towers, windows, Gothic arches and porch roofs inspired by medieval tournament tents.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the Jones family left Newport never to return, and the house was sold in 1864 to China Trade merchant William Henry King. His nephew David took over the house in 1876, and several years later decided to enlarge Kingscote. He engaged the firm of McKim, Mead and White to make the renovations, including the new dining room. The room combines Colonial American details with exotic ornament, reflecting the architects’ interest in combining Eastern and Western motifs. The innovative use of materials was also important, such as cork tiles as a covering for the wall frieze and ceiling, and an early installation of opalescent glass bricks by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The house remained in the King family until 1972, when the last descendant left it to the Preservation Society. Today, Kingscote is a National Historic Landmark. It is a rare example of a Gothic Revival house and landscape setting preserved intact with original family collections.