

## SITE REPORT #1-Expanded

# Grand Central Terminal



Street view of Grand Central Terminal

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## INTRODUCTION

Grand Central Terminal is one of countless icons in New York City and one of the City's top 10 tourist destinations. There are many reasons to visit this historic building whether as a commuter, tourist or student. Understanding the building's architectural style, decorative details, and the history behind its construction greatly enrich our appreciation of it.

This site report contains a brief description of visual and verbal observations collected after a second tour inside of the terminal led by one of the Grand Central Station's employees. In addition, the information provided by the tour guide helps reinforce our understanding of the history of this New York City Landmark.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION



Main Concourse of Grand Central Terminal

This picture helps illustrate the height of the ceiling, the three arch windows and the size proportion between people and the structure at the East Balcony. It also shows the interior ornamental details of the ceiling and columns. In addition, the tour guide explained that there is a catwalk behind the windows and people are able to go there and see a view the main concourse.



Main Concourse View from the catwalk

This picture shows the height of the building and the proportion of the people. According to the tour guide, the main concourse was used for a NASA exhibition during the late 1950s. A rocket ship was displayed in this space. Today Grand Central station serves more than 700,000 commuters every day.



West Balcony

This picture reveals many important aspects of the building. It shows the elevation of two levels and the flow of people walking in several directions. It also reveals the amount of natural light entering the building. Architects take into consideration all of these aspects and others, when producing an efficient design. Grand Central Terminal is a symbolic icon, a destination for people who visit New York City from all over the world as well as the suburbs. In this photograph, the tourists at the west balcony are taking pictures of the building.



Waiting Room Ceiling at Grand Central Terminal

This picture shows a partial decoration of the column and ceiling. It reveals the one of the uncountable ornamental details that the building contains. All structural members such as the columns, beams, arches, and lintel ceilings, are decorated in the style of the late 1800s and early 1900s, known as the revival of the neo-classic period.



Waiting Room Chandelier

This picture shows the decorated ceiling and the chandeliers at the waiting room. An interesting fact mention by the tour guide was that the waiting room used to have a red carpet that led the passengers to the trains. Today this space is used for exhibitions and rented for commercial purposes.



Door Frame and Clock at the Waiting Room

The Vanderbilts used the acorn leaf as their family symbol. Therefore, Grand Central contains many decorated detail resembling the acorn leaf as it depicted in this picture.

# SITE DOCUMENTATION

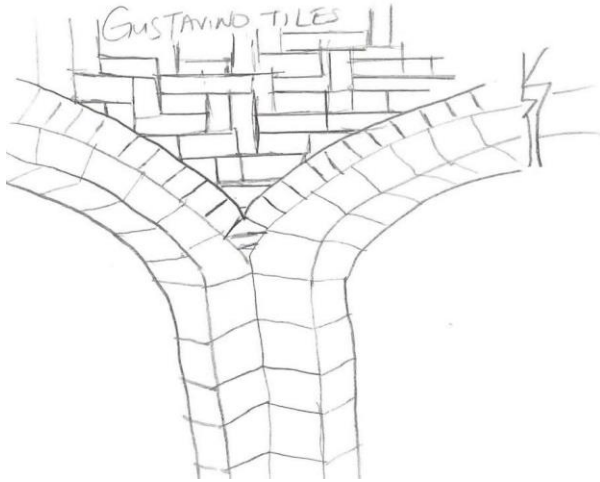


The sketch illustrates Grand Central Terminal Clock, an emblematic symbol of time. It is a spherical golden clock that shows the four faces pointing out the cardinal directions. The clock is sitting on top of a round kiosk.

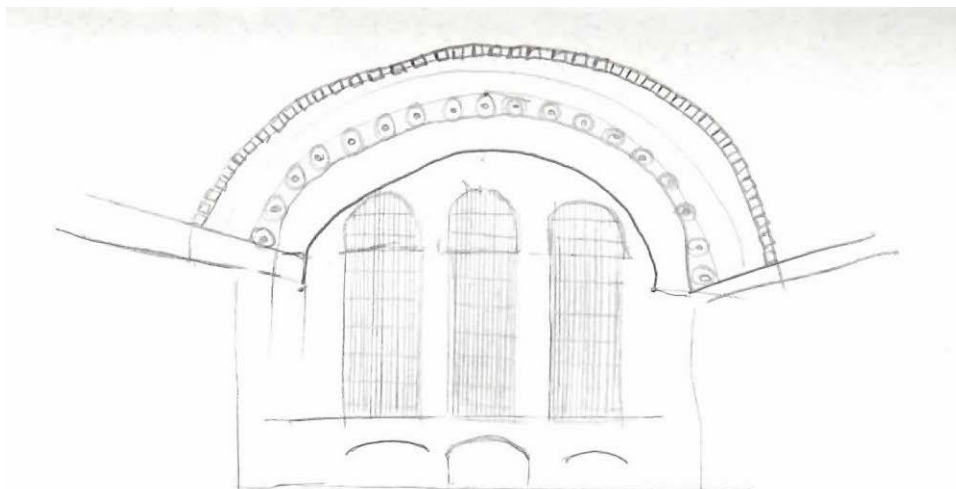
The tour guide explained that the clock has four opal faces and its worth more than \$20 million dollars today. The clock was installed in 1913. Under the kiosks, there is a secret stair that connect to the ground level.

The tour guide also mentioned about the secret gateway that lies below ground. It is a special track that connects the Astoria Hotel and the terminal. It was built exclusively for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the 1930s to accommodate his dependence on a wheelchair.





This sketch illustrates a partial column and arch that support a vault. The vault ceiling is decorated with the Gustavino's Tiles, which were hand carved by the artist, himself. The vault is located at the ground level and connected by ramps.



This sketch shows the large windows and the catwalk path. According to the tour guide, the catwalks serve three main functions. First, they allow air and light to the building. Second, they provide access to another building adjacent to Grand Central. Third, they serve as a medium for connecting piping utilities.

## GENERAL NOTES:

Ecole des Beaux Arts was the training school of the Architect Whitney Warren, thereby influencing the design style of Grand Central Terminal.

Egg acorn and oak leaf are ornamental detail that the Vanderbilt family used in the decoration of the building.

New York City Landmark Preservation Law in 1965 saved Grand Central from destruction.

Neo-Classicism style refers to the simplicity used in many New York City Landmark Buildings.

Reed and Stem Architectural Firm was where the Architect Whitney Warren worked.

Gustavino's tiles are found in the lower level vaults.

Hellio's Zodiac is depicted on the main concourse ceiling.

Chandeliers located at the waiting room ceiling.

Retail stores inside of Grand Central Station increase revenue.

Reverse ridership a strategy to serve commuter after off hours.

## INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

Visiting Grand Central Terminal, I learned many historical facts and details about the building. Walking by East 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, I viewed an electrical canopy, representing the invention of electrification. Walking down the ramps and arriving at one of the many vaults, I saw the decoration and vault ceiling. There are more than 20,000 carved tiles by Gustavino.

At the main concourse, I saw the Heliios' zodiacal ceiling and understood why it seemed to be backwards. Also, I was reminded that the original building only had one set of stairs at the West Balcony. During the 1990s renovation, the equivalent staircase was installed at the East Balcony.

During the second visit, I learned more historical facts and hidden secrets about the building. For instance, the tour guide revealed many historical details about the struggle and challenges that the Vanderbilt family had in order to preserve the building.

He explained after WWII, the country shifted into the use of airports and cars as mean of transportation. Revenue declined and the building was set for sell to developers. However, the New York City Landmark Preservation Law in 1965 saved Grand Central from destruction. Another challenge faced by the family was how to increase revenues.

After the renovation of Grand Central Station, new marketing strategies were proposed in order to increase revenues. For example, because ridership declined after peak hours, another brilliant idea was to use some sections of the building as retail spaces. The food courtyard at the lower level and retail stores optimize the return on investment.

## KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

**Railroad:** compared earlier with railway n. A roadway laid with rails (originally of wood, later also of iron or steel) along which the wheels of wagons or trucks may run, in order to facilitate the transport of heavy loads, originally and chiefly from a colliery; a wagon way. Formerly also: †the lines of rails along such a road (obs.). Cf. rail n.2 Now hist.

**Beaux-Arts:** The fine arts. Also used ellipt. for the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris; freq. attrib., of the standards of architecture and art maintained by the École in France in the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century and imitated elsewhere, characterized by the influence of older styles and a reliance on decorative and period design.

**Commodore:** Navy. An officer in command, ranking above captain and below rear-admiral.

**Concourse:** The running or flocking together of people; the condition or state of being so gathered together. †to have concourse: to resort in crowds to, unto.

**Neoclassicism:** Neoclassical style or principles in the arts, or adherence to these; spec. (a) Art and Archit., an 18th cent. Style characterized by a rejection of baroque and rococo ornamentation in favor of classical simplicity and regularity of form; (b) Music an early 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Style of composition characterized by a revival of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> cent. Baroque and classical forms, procedures, and styles, esp. as a reaction against 19<sup>th</sup> cent. Romanticism.

**Opal:** An amorphous form of hydrated silica resembling chalcedony, often white or colourless (common opal), but varying through blue-green and orange almost to black and valued in those forms showing colourful iridescence (precious opal). Also: a stone of this, usually of the iridescent form and cut en cabochon.

Reference: Oxford English Dictionary

**Return on investment:** ROI is an estimate of the return or financial gain on an investment. ROI measurement is often utilized to gauge the profitability of a specific project or investment made by an e-commerce business.

Source Citation (MLA 7th Edition)

"Return on Investment (ROI) Metrics for E-Commerce Services." Gale E-Commerce Sourcebook. Ed. Virgil L. Burton, III. 2nd ed. Detroit: Gale, 2012. 80-81. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 6 Oct. 2016.

## QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. What is the annual amount of commuters in a year in comparison to the annual average of 1913?
2. Prior the New York City Landmark Preservation Law in 1965, what was the average of commuter that used Grand Central Station?
3. What were the most critical challenges of the renovation of Grand Central Station?