

Learning Places Fall 2016

# SITE REPORT #1 Expanded

## Grand Central Terminal



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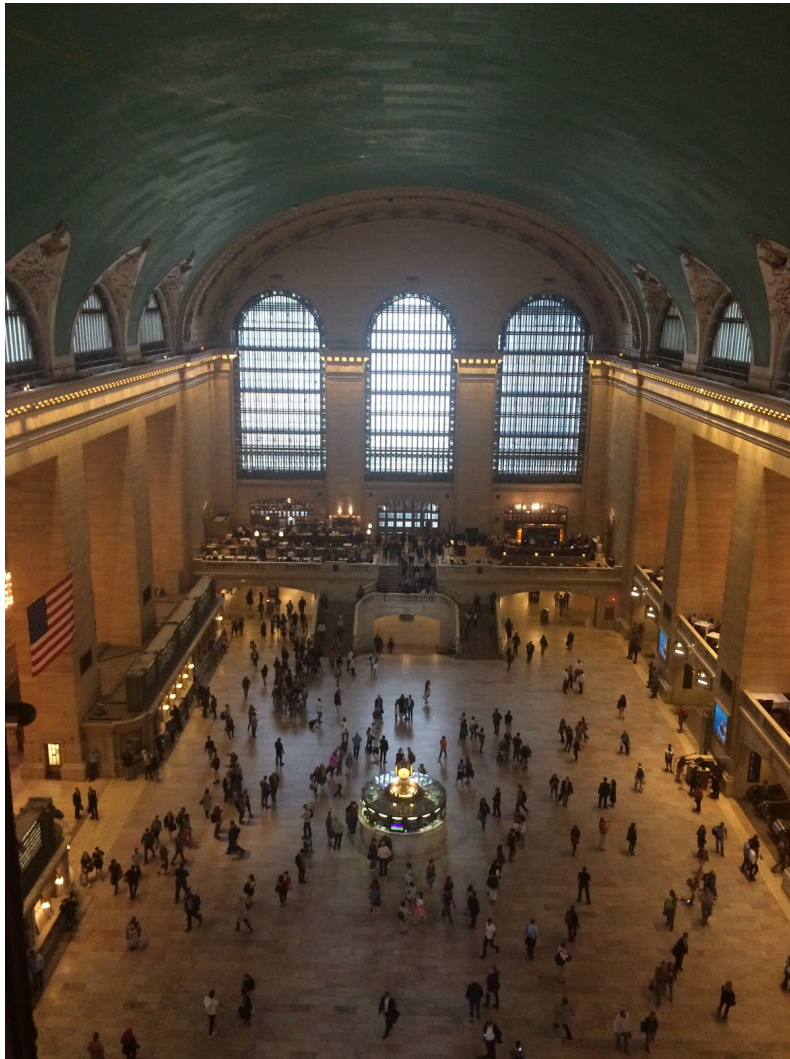
### INTRODUCTION

The class visited the Grand Central Terminal which is located on East 42nd Street. It was constructed on the site of an older the Grand Central Depot, which was replaced in gradual steps. The terminal of today stands as a beautiful and iconic building. The Grand Central Terminal is one of the world's most

visited tourists attractions. The building is adopted Beaux-Arts architectural style and the one of architects is Cornelius Vanderbilt. We observed both the exterior and the interior of the building, sculptures, complex designs, decoration, and spaces for specific purpose. Also, we understood the structure of the Grand Central Terminal generally.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos\*)

\*3 photos minimum required per site visit



Many people are walking at the main concourse. This space is usually filled with crowds. Over 750,000 people visit the Grand Central Terminal daily for traveling, dining and shopping. This number is about the same as population of Alaska.

There is the information booth in the center of the main concourse. We can see four big clocks on top and each clock is made from opal glass. Also, the information booth has a secret stair, is concealed inside the booth. A person can walk the kiosk to descend easily to another kiosk on the terminal's lower level using the secret stair.

We cannot see it from this picture, but there is a secret train track hidden in the Grand Central Terminal. The track was more

famously and frequently used by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He used this track to transfer himself into an employed custom-made train cart. The vehicle would commute him straight to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and was armored for the traveler's protection.

This is the display board in the main concourse. Passengers check their destination and departure time. Every single time shown on the display boards is wrong. All trains leave a minute later than indicated on the departure boards. The reason is the safety and comfort of passengers who are making a mad dash to catch the trains.



We could curious experience in this space, the Whispering Gallery. Voice is thrown clear across the chamber via a mechanism by which it telegraphs across the surface of the arch, thereby appearing audibly in corners into which you did not speak.

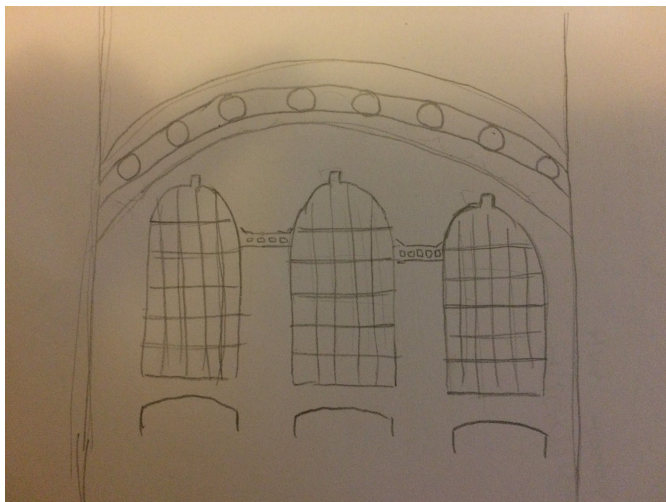
The tile work in the gallery is known as Gustavino tile system. This named for the patented material and methods of Spanish tile worker Rafael Guastavino. His meticulous work and herringbone patterns can be admired here and elsewhere in the city.



The Vanderbilt Hall, including the caen stone walls, marble wainscoting and floors, ornamental plaster, cast metal light fixtures, iron grillwork, and wood benches. The place was a waiting room for long-distance commuters. Hall embodies elegance and grandeur. Now, this space have changed to the food hall and special exhibition. As America shifted its transportation habits from trains to cars, there was a steep decline in long-distance traffic, so there was no need for a waiting room.

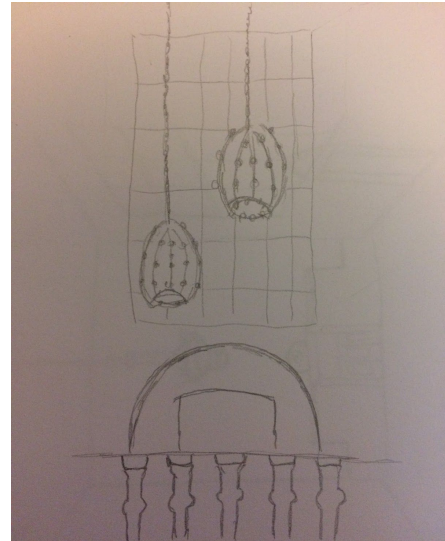
## SITE DOCUMENTATION (sketches\*)

\*2 sketches minimum required per site visit



I sketched three windows at the main concourse. When I drew this, some people was walking behind these windows. There are several catwalks and the guide took us to the topmost one, where 110 feet of the main hall were visible, because it was the only level where you could open windows.

I sketched two chandeliers and the mirror behind. These chandeliers (each with its light bulbs bare and exposed) demonstrate how those who built the Grand Central Terminal a century ago wanted train users to feel an experience of grand luxury. The mirror reflects light, this makes elegant atmosphere more.



## GENERAL NOTES:

- The Grand Central Terminal opened in 1913.
- It was preceded by the Grand Central Depot.
- Over 750,000 people visit the Grand Central Terminal daily for traveling, dining and shopping.
- The celestial ceiling of the main concourse depicts the zodiac.
- The restoration team left one black patch on the ceiling, we can all appreciate the difference.
- There is also a small hole on the ceiling, where a rocket was hung.
- Outside, the clock is flanked by more Beaux Arts touches, statues of Hercules, Mercury, and Minerva.

## INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

We had a guide in the second site visit of the Grand Central Terminal, so I gathered more detailed information. I was surprised that there was a rocket in the main concourse. It was erected by the US military as a piece of showmanship to counter the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik. The rocket was

displayed in the terminal few weeks. We can see a small hole toward the center of the ceiling. The rocket wasn't fit the main concourse and it was rammed in. Leaving the hole in the ceiling that is still there. The hole is a curious legacy of the space race.

At the first site visit of the Grand Central Terminal, I saw some acorn marks in the terminal: walls, the main information booth, and water fountains. They are actually acorns, a Vanderbilt family symbol. Acorns is all over the map and they were made finely. It represents Vanderbilt's greatness and wealth.

## KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

**\*5 keywords minimum required per site visit**

Beaux-Arts: Relating to the classical decorative style, esp that of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (Collins Dictionary)

Cornelius Vanderbilt: A self-made multi-millionaire who became one of the wealthiest Americans of the 19th century (HISTORY.com)

Opal: An amorphous form of hydrated silica resembling chalcedony (OED).

Rafael Gustavino: One of the most prolific New York architects (NY Times).

Gustavino tile: Uses layers of terra cotta tiles set in a herringbone pattern in Portland cement (archdaily.com).

## QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. How many passengers visited the Grand Central Terminal in 1913?

2. When catwalks were set up?
3. How much are the opal clocks?
4. Can we find Vanderbilt's symbol acorns other his building?