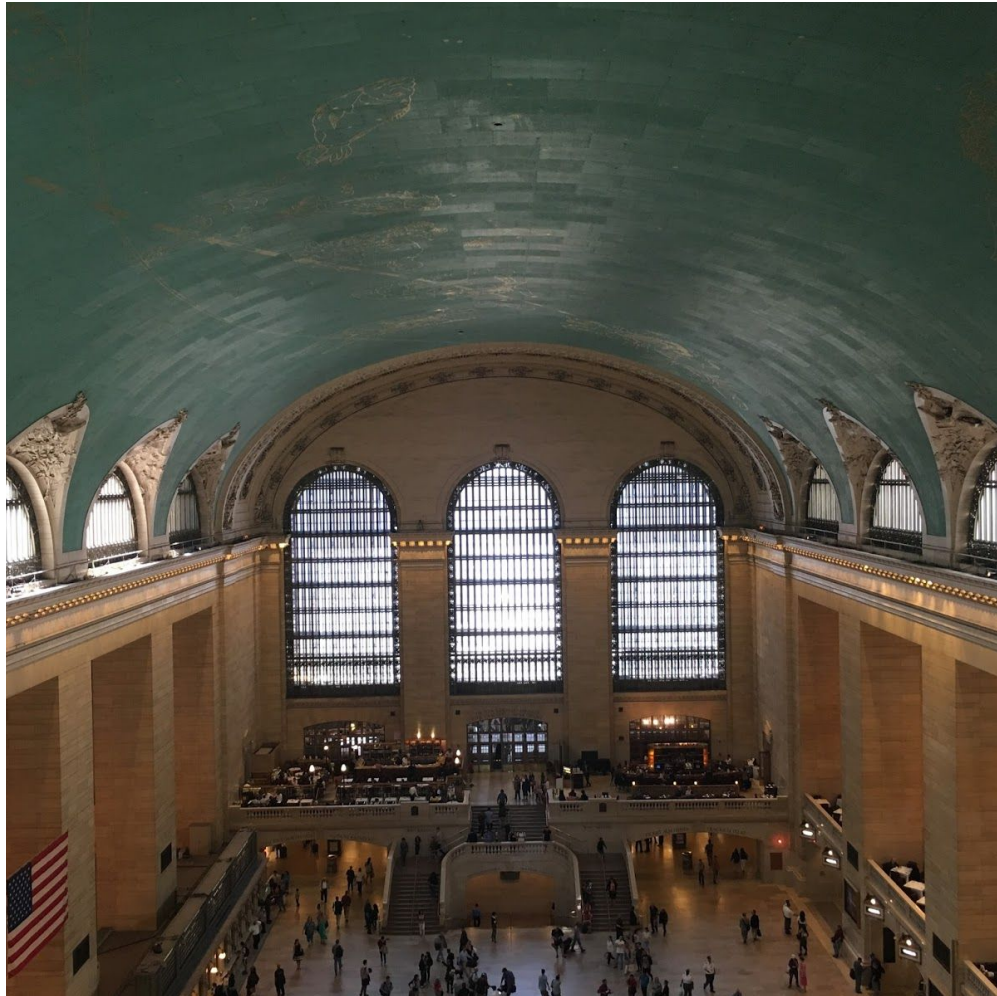


Learning Places Summer 2016

SITE REPORT #1

Grand Central Terminal



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INTRODUCTION

On our two visits to the Grand Central Terminal, we explored the halls and tracks of the building while learning about the history of its creation within the class and also through our tour guide Dan. We also spent time understanding why and how structures were made in certain ways and were encouraged

to consider the state of the time at the turn of the century during the creation of Grand Central Terminal. We were able to connect what we learned from our lecture to the current state of the terminal.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches/notes)



Vanderbilt Hall. One of the first rooms we visited during our tour was the Vanderbilt Hall, previously

used as the waiting room at Grand Central Terminal. Currently a spacious, blocked off room it used to hold many commuters waiting for their train to arrive and depart. When looking at the floor at a kneeled down, straight ahead angle, you can noticed slight grooves on the floor. These are made by the benches that were lined up along the room and the shuffling of commuters walking to and fro. The lower half of the walls were made of a superior material than the upper half which was made of sandstone, as absorbent and cheaper material.



Door of Vanderbilt Hall. The architecture on the doors of Vanderbilt Hall are important because of its fusion of typical Roman architecture and the Vanderbilt family's symbol. Through this piece of architecture, we learned about the detailed pediment above the door which holds a clock and the entablature that contains the cornice, frieze, and architrave which is stylistically Roman.



Details of Door. The scroll leading down from the door's entablature is sculpted with the Vanderbilt family's symbol of oak leaves and acorns. Most noticeable around the Vanderbilt Hall's doors but also prevalent throughout Grand Central Terminal, the family's symbol is integrated into many of the structures. This shows the significance the family had in the creating of this terminal.



Sketch of GCT. This is a quick sketch of the main concourse of Grand Central Terminal. Because of its vast space and beautiful designs, there are certain parts of the hall that catches people's eyes. After we sketched and viewed one another's work, I noticed some sketched the main door, others sketched the center information desk, and so on. I focused my attention on the grand windows above one of the main doors and the windows on both the sides and the front. The beauty of the lunettes (half windows) and the overarching windows that dwarf the commuters is beautiful and shows how great Grand Central Terminal is.



Lights. The three light images I took throughout our tour of Grand Central Terminal are important because they represent the significance of electricity during the time of the terminal's creation. When we walked around Grand Central Terminal, we noticed that all the light bulbs were displayed on the outside of the chandeliers and light fixtures. This is because at that time, electricity was being introduced and it was to be known that Grand Central was part of this major development. This was an ode to the "all electric train terminal." It was also used as a way to show off the gold plating as it was also the Gilded Age. We also noticed that when we look directly below the light fixtures, they look like brooches. Not only are the sculptings throughout the terminal intricate and detailed but even the lighting is ornamented and beautiful.

DISCOVERIES

Before starting the tour with Dan, we were given a brief overview on the grandness of the terminal. The first day it was opened was on February 1913 as a small depot and now over 750,000 people frequent the terminal daily. We also learned throughout our tour that there are thirteen more stories underground that are inaccessible to the public. We were also given the opportunity to have a look at the Operations Control Center where a team of people watched over and controlled over 2,000

switches for all the tracks leading in and out of the terminal.

By the end of the tour, Dan privied us to some interesting and not well known facts about the terminal. For one, there is a secret train station that was used for Franklin D. Roosevelt during his time as president. The train led to a limousine would drove to a platform elevator which was designed specifically for the dimensions of the vehicle. Then, the president would be driven to Waldorf-Astoria where the president would reside. Even now the whereabouts of the track are unknown. To go along with the hidden room theme, there is also a hidden staircase beneath the center information booth which leads to the underground information booth.

We were also told some interesting discoveries about the zodiac mural on the ceiling. Dan pointed out a tiny black hole in the ceiling which actually comes from the dawn of the space age. In 1967, when a rocket was mounted to be displayed to the public, it was 6 inches too tall and created a hole in the ceiling. There is also a small dark smudge in the corner of the ceiling painting which is actually the same color that the entire ceiling used to be before its restoration. Finally, what Dan claims to be the biggest error in the terminal is that although artist Helleu's painting of the constellation is beautiful, it is actually painted backwards. I've made so many discoveries and secrets about Grand Central Terminal throughout our two trips and there are certainly more that will come up in the following years.

KEYWORDS

Cornelius Vanderbilt

New York Central Railroad

Grand Central Depot (1871)

Grand Central Station (1900)

Grand Central Terminal (1913)

John Snook

Bradford Gilbert

Train Shed

Reem and Stem

Warren and Wetmore

William K. Vanderbilt

Jules Coulton

Guastavino Ceiling

Helleu's Zodiac

New York City's Landmark Preservation Commission

Pediment

Thermal windows (lunettes)

Gilded Age

Repatriotism

Space Age

Balustrade

Cornice

Entablature

Frieze

Crown moldings

Architrave