

Learning Places Summer 2016

# **SITE REPORT #1**

## *Grand Central Terminal*



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## INTRODUCTION

Grand Central Terminal has a rich history that continues on up to this present day. Once the original property was built, it had gone through two main different stages of reconstruction as well as part of its name establishing its purpose. From Grand Central Depot to Grand Central Station and finally to Grand Central Terminal, it is active in serving the public and is established as the #2 tourist attraction in the United States, and #6 in the world. The site has been and is still used in making motion pictures. Included in this site report are screenshots of movies made in four different decades displaying similarities and differences that is visible to the eye—obtained from YouTube.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches/notes)



Capus, S. (Producer). (2013). *Touring Grand Central Terminal* [CBS Evening News]. United States: CBS Broadcasting Inc.

Our Tour Guide Danny Brucker. Dan had taken our group on a special tour that included areas of the Grand Central Terminal not available to the public. Thank you Dan “my man” for an awesome experience!



Simon, S.S. (Director). (1942). *Grand Central Murder* [Motion Picture]. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios.

“Grand Central Murder” – a combination of a comedy and mystery movie released in 1942. This image shows that throughout time, the chandeliers remain to be the same as for the most part of Grand Central Terminal. Scrutinizing this image, one can find subtle differences. The differences purposely is not pointed out, this I will leave as a task for the viewer.



Hitchcock, A. (Producer and Director). (1959). *North By Northwest* [Motion Picture]. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios.



“North By Northwest” – a 1959 action thriller directed by the legendary Alfred Hitchcock starring the famed actor Cary Grant along with Eva Marie Saint and James Mason. It is a thriller based on a tale of mistaken identity.

These two particular screenshots displays the original lamps attached to the ticket booths. They remain the same with one slight difference –the numbers displayed on each lamp are now a bit smaller and leaves me wondering if the ones today are the same as the one in the past. It is

clearly visible that the ticket booths also went through some type of transformation. Looking closely at the first image, one can see the words “Tickets” and “New York Central System” inscribed over the booths which today are replaced with other words that can be seen later on in this report.

## Rock Hudson... Seconds



Frankenheimer, J. (Director). (1966). *Seconds* [Motion Picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures

“Seconds” – 1966 film Starring Rock Hudson is a Science Fiction Drama entered in the Cannes Film Festival.

Large portions of the movie “Seconds” had been filmed in Grand Central Terminal in 1966. This particular image shows the announcement boards that displayed arrival and departure information.







“Superman” – released in 1978. This screenshot shows Lex Luthor’s (character played by Gene Hackman) hideout underneath Grand Central Terminal. The image displays

an exit to 45<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> Streets and the Hotel Roosevelt. I don’t think this area is open to the public. It is believed to be located in one of the lower levels of Grand Central Terminal not open to the public. Since I am not sure, a plan for a future adventure is being made on my behalf for more discoveries.



It is rumored that this area does not exist. I believe that it does since the inscription on the wall below the arch, “To Lower Level Baggage Delivery,” is clearly visible. The room is interestingly round-shaped. The lighting fixture does not coincide with the ones normally scene on the Main Concourse floor.



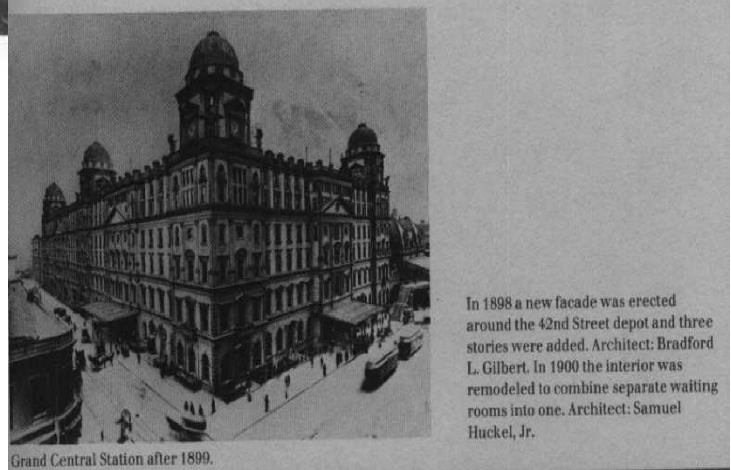
Donner, R. (Director). (1978). *Superman* [Motion Picture]. United States: Warner Bros.



Park Avenue and Grand Central Depot from 41st Street, before 1886.

Grand Central Depot first opened On October 9, 1871. This image depicts the first original building of Grand Central.

Between 1899 and 1900, the main building of Grand Central was transformed and renamed “Grand Central Station.”



Grand Central Station after 1899.

In 1898 a new facade was erected around the 42nd Street depot and three stories were added. Architect: Bradford L. Gilbert. In 1900 the interior was remodeled to combine separate waiting rooms into one. Architect: Samuel Huckel, Jr.



Grand Central Terminal, 42nd Street facade, 1914.

Grand Central Terminal first opened on February 2, 1913. This amazing building still stands and is actively in use by commuters. It is especially attractive to tourists from all around the world. As a Brooklynite, I have visited this site many times. As a teenager, with several friends, I have played hide and seek within this building on many occasions until it became too dangerous to do so. These three images were scanned from the book “Grand Central Terminal—City within the City,” Deborah Nevins, General Editor.

Nevins, D. (1982). *Grand Central Terminal: City Within The City*. United States: Library of Congress.





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It has been quite a while since I last visited Grand Central Terminal. I had taken this image when I arrived on my first site visit. It stills takes my breath away when I see it. The bare light bulbs makes the Terminal shine even during rainy weather. As I stood across the street taking photos, I have seen the expression on the tourists' faces when they first laid their eyes on this grand structure. The eagle is monumental and one can't help but to admire it.

The upper level roadway coincides with the design of the building. The distinctive arch seen underneath the upper roadway concurs with the structure's design.



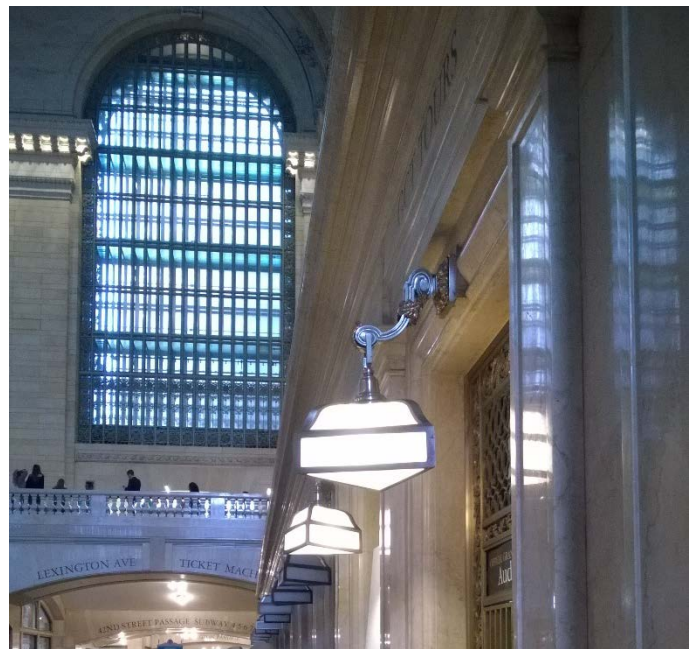




The Beaux-Arts Style gives a feeling of traveling back into time. The statues of Hercules, Mercury and Minerva remains intact. Jules-Félix Coutan’s name lives on forever through this grand creation.

Mercury—the God of Commerce which may represent “export” and “import.” Minerva represents intelligence and Hercules represents strength.

This image of the lamps and comparing it with the screenshot of “North By Northwest” makes it evident that it is not the same. However, the hooks that the lamps are hanging from remains the same.





I was trying to take a photograph of the sculpted embellishments and, unintentionally, shot Professor Montgomery while he was taking photographs. As I was going through the pictures that I have taken of GCT and saw this one, I started to imagine this image in black & white and was instantly taken back to a scene from an old movie of a reporter taking pictures. All Professor Montgomery needed was a ticket on his hat identifying him as the “Press.”

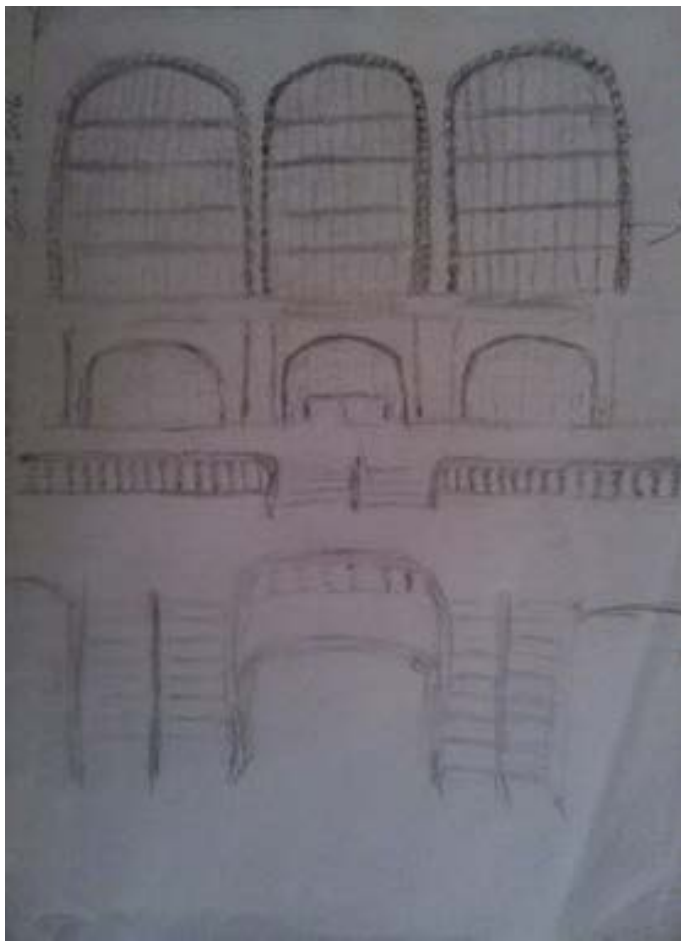




There are two things that I would like to point out about this image:

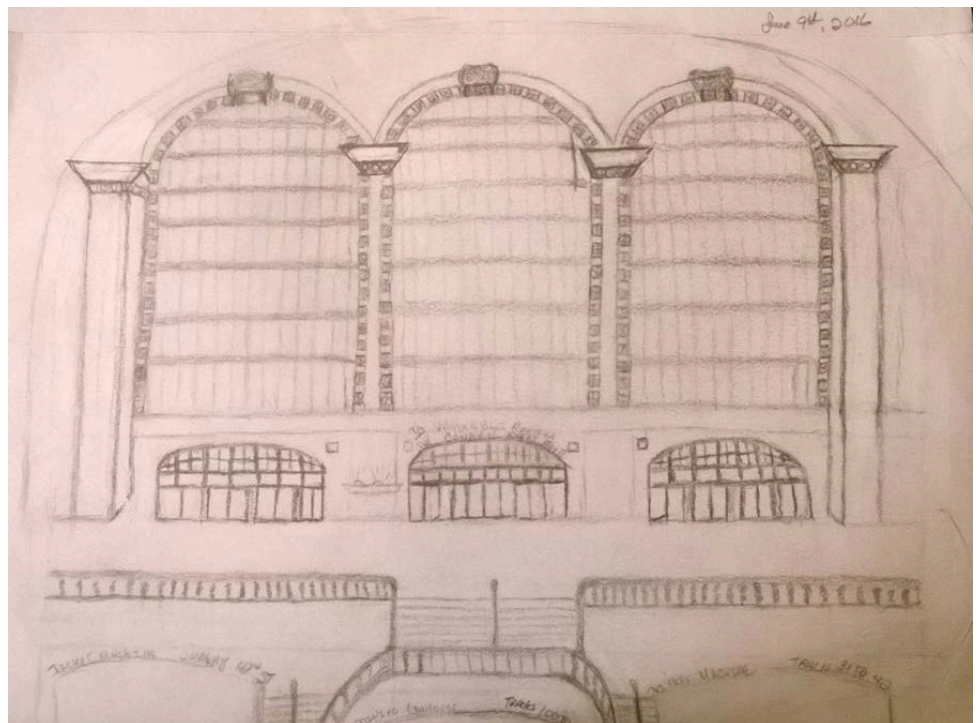
1. The chandelier seen in this image is an original that was installed when GCT was built and the metal frame was dipped in 24 carat gold.

2. If you look carefully at the floor, you will be able to see “rib” imprints. The rib imprints are the results of the removal of the benches that were installed when GCT was built. The benches were removed purposefully due to the homeless people taking refuge for the night in this area during the 1970s and early 1980s.



My first attempt of drawing one of my favorite features of Grand Central Terminal. Professor Montgomery gave us about ten minutes to do a “on the spot” sketch during our first visit to the site. I was nervous since I haven’t drawn for over 30 years. That did not stop me from trying.

Since I was not too happy with my first sketch, on our second trip to GCT, after our official tour, I sat on one of the steps of the grand stair case and tried to do a better drawing. It is not the best sketch, but I think it’s a big improvement. I will try again (however many times it will take me) until I get better results.





Saving the best for last.....



This image is of a glass catwalk located in between the huge windows. Dan, our tour guide, had given us the privilege of taking us there and letting us take videos and pictures from way up above, close to where the arch of the window is positioned.

### “A View from Above”



From this image one can clearly see the shape of the Grand staircase—an imitation of the Paris Opera House staircase done in reverse.



A breath-taking view that just leaves you in awe of the beauty of Grand Central Terminal. The many windows allows natural light to flow in.

## DISCOVERIES

I have discovered that the original benches in the waiting hall have been removed and had left “rib” impressions on the floor. The waiting room have been converted into one big hall where on one side restaurants are being built and the other side is used for exhibits. The sculptured trimmings found in various parts of Grand Central Terminal are a combination of scrolls, rosettes and acorns. An acorn can be seen on top of the four-faced clock located in the center of the main concourse. The acorn was taken as a symbol by the Vanderbilt family and the family’s motto is as follows: “From the acorn grows the mighty oak.”

Upon entering Grand Central Terminal, through the entrance located on East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street between Vanderbilt Avenue and Park Avenue, inscribed on the walls appear these marvelous words:

“To All Those Who With Head Heart And Hand  
Toiled In Construction Of This Monument To  
The Public Service This Is Inscribed”



The Chandeliers are dipped in 24 carat gold. The constellations on the ceiling of the main concourse was always there, it is not a new mural as I once thought (before restoration, the ceiling was black due to

tobacco smoke as can be seen in one of the screenshots of movies above). Grand Central Terminal has an “Echo Hall”, a phenomenon made possible by Guastavino Tiles or its “vault” design or maybe a combination of both and is located in front of the entrance of the Oyster Bar. So many things discovered including some secrets, but as the saying goes, some secrets are meant to be kept as secrets.

## KEYWORDS

**Cornelius Vanderbilt** (1794–1877) - US businessman and philanthropist. Vanderbilt amassed a fortune from shipping and railroads, and from this made an endowment to found Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee (1873). Subsequent generations of his family, including his son William Henry Vanderbilt (1821–85), increased the family wealth and continued his philanthropy. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/>

**Neo Classicism** - Term coined in the 19th century to describe the overwhelmingly dominant style in the fine and decorative arts in Europe and North America during the 18th and 19th centuries. NEO-CLASSICISM is not one distinct style, but rather the term can describe any work of architecture or art that either copies or imitates ancient art, or that represents an approach to art that draws inspiration from Classical models from ancient Greece and Rome. The most influential theorist of Neo-classicism was the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose major work, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, was translated into English in 1765. The Neo-classical style in

Ciregna, E.M. (2016). Oxford Art Online. Retrieved From

[http://www.oxfordartonline.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/North America was most popular from about 1780 to 1850.](http://www.oxfordartonline.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/North%20America%20was%20most%20popular%20from%20about%201780%20to%201850)

**Guastavino Tile** - is the "Tile Arch System" patented in the United States in 1885 by Valencian (Spanish) architect and builder Rafael Guastavino (1842–1908). Guastavino vaulting is a technique for constructing robust, self-supporting arches and architectural vaults using interlocking terracotta tiles and layers of mortar to form a thin skin, with the tiles following the curve of the roof as opposed to horizontally (corbelling), or perpendicular to the curve (as in Roman vaulting). This is known as timbrel vaulting, because of supposed likeness to the skin of a timbrel or tambourine. It is also called "Catalan vaulting" and "compression-only thin-tile vaulting". Guastavino tile is found in some of New York's most prominent Beaux-Arts landmarks and in major buildings across the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu:2048/search?q=Guastavino+tile&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true>

**Restoration** - the action of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu:2048/search?q=Restoration&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true>

**Preservation** - the act or process of returning something to its original condition by repairing it, cleaning it, etc. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:

**Conservation** - the things that are done to keep works of art or things of historical importance in good condition. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:



**Reconstruction** - is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:

**Beaux-Arts Style** - Beaux-Arts architecture (*/ˌboʊˈzɑːr/*; French: [bozaʁ]) expresses the academic neoclassical architectural style taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu/>

**Vault** - a roof in the form of an arch or a series of arches, typical of churches and other large, formal buildings. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:

**Cornice** - an ornamental molding around the wall of a room just below the ceiling. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:

**Ovolo** - a rounded convex molding, in cross section a quarter of a circle or ellipse. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.citytech.ezproxy.cuny.edu>:

**Balustrade** - a kind of low wall that is placed at the sides of staircases, bridges, etc., and that is made of a row of short posts topped by a long rail. Retrieved from

**Pediment** - A pediment is an element in classical, neoclassical and baroque architecture, and derivatives therefrom, consisting of a gable, originally of a triangular shape, placed above the horizontal structure of the entablature, typically supported by columns. The tympanum, or triangular area within the pediment, was often decorated with relief sculpture depicting scenes from Greek and Roman mythology or allegorical figures.

**Scrolls** - The scroll in art is an element of ornament and graphic design featuring spirals and rolling

incomplete circle motifs, some of which resemble the edge-on view of a book or document in scroll form, though many types loosely represent plant forms such as vines, with leaves or flowers attached. Scrollwork is a term for some forms of decoration dominated by spiraling scrolls, today used in popular language for two-dimensional decorative flourishes and arabesques of all kinds, especially those with circular or spiraling shapes.

**Lunette** - something crescent-shaped, in particular. An arched aperture or window, especially one in a domed ceiling. A crescent-shaped or semicircular alcove containing something such as a painting or statue

**Rosette** - a disk of foliage or a floral design usually in relief used as a decorative motif