



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) ▼

Press Release

May 24, 2007

[Metro-North](#)

IMMEDIATE

Grand Central Terminal's Exterior Restoration Project Wins New York Landmarks Conservancy Award

Metro-North Railroad has been recognized for excellence by the New York Landmarks Conservancy for its recently completed cleaning and restoration of Grand Central Terminal's limestone facade and iconic clock and statuary grouping.

The railroad received the Lucy G. Moses Award for its \$27 million effort that kept the terminal under scaffolding and tarps for two years.

It is the third time in the award's 15-year history that Metro-North has won for excellence in historic preservation: In 1998, the railroad won for its elegant reclamation of the Harlem-125th Street Station and in 1999 the massive interior renovation of Grand Central Terminal took the prize.

"Metro-North is honored to receive the Lucy G. Moses Award for our work on the exterior of Grand Central Terminal," said Metro-North President Peter A. Cannito. "This project involved more than the painstaking removal of decades of grime - although that is what the public sees. It also allowed for the repair of time-worn sections of stone. As the modern-day stewards of this incredible landmark, Metro-North firmly believes that both restoration and cleaning are essential if the Terminal is to endure for another hundred years. This project combined the two beautifully."

Wayne Ehmann, Metro-North's chief architect and the project manager for this restoration and cleaning contract said, "As an architect, you don't get to work on a better building than this one. This restoration work insures the integrity of this international landmark for future generations to enjoy and demonstrates Metro-North's commitment to the ongoing preservation of this great building."

"Grand Central Terminal is an iconic midtown landmark that we went all the way to the Supreme Court to save," said Conservancy President Peg Breen. "In restoring it - inside and out - Metro-North has done a great service for all New Yorkers and preservationists everywhere."

The New York Landmarks Conservancy has been at the forefront of efforts to preserve, restore, and reuse the City's architectural legacy for more than 30 years. Hailed as a national model of enlightened and effective preservation, the Conservancy has loaned and granted more than \$30 million to building owners and has provided countless hours of pro bono technical advice. Its work enhances New York's quality of life and preserves the character of the City for future generations.

The Lucy G. Moses Preservation Awards are the Conservancy's highest honors for outstanding preservation efforts, named for a dedicated New Yorker whose generosity benefitted the City for over 50 years. Mrs. Moses' many gifts to parks, hospitals, schools, and cultural institutions are a record of caring and commitment that will live for generations. The Awards recognize preservation leaders, public officials, organizations, owners, builders, architects, and craftspeople who restore the beauty and utility of New York's great architecture.

The award, which was previously announced, will be presented to Metro-North on May 1, at a ceremony at the Temple Emanu-El on 65th Street and Fifth Avenue, which is also being honored for its restoration.

Soon after the interior renovation of the Terminal was completed in fall 1998, Metro-North began planning for the exterior renovation.

In December 2001, a contract was awarded to DMJM Harris of New York City for the design of exterior repairs and stabilization.

It took all of 2002 to perform a detailed assessment of the exterior's condition. Without original drawings to use, conservators had to map the entire building, numbering each piece of stone, tapping them with a mallet, one by one, to identify loose, missing or cracked stones.

Conservators from Building Conservation Associates, Inc. (BCA), the historical preservation consultants on the project, found several problems with the decorative cornice that encircles the Terminal 80 feet above the viaduct roadway.

In summer 2003, a contract for the exterior restoration and cleaning was awarded to Kafka Construction of Long Island City, New York.

A scaffold was erected around the building to allow workers to wash and repair each of the Terminal's 21,000 blocks of limestone. Section by section, the stones were meticulously bathed in a fine mist of filtered water. After six hours of misting, each stone was showered with a low-pressure rinse of purified water. The black layer of tailpipe emissions and city grime accumulated since the 1970s, when the facade was last cleaned, was washed away without damaging the soft Bedford, Indiana limestone.

In some places, where the stone was stained by copper or iron, a poultice of clay and reactive chemicals was applied to draw out the stain.

The project included two unseen and virtually unknown rooftop courtyards. These buff-colored brick light wells contain the pyramid skylights from which

the famed "melon" chandeliers hang over the North Balcony and the Oyster Bar ramps.

The courtyards also contain half-moon windows around the bottom edge of the vaulted sky ceiling over the terminal's Main Concourse.

Cracked and missing stones were replicated and replaced by inserting a dutchman, a piece of stone hand-carved to match the missing piece. Preservationists overseeing the work experimented until they perfected the recipe for grout, a combination of cement, mortar and sand.

Nearly two tons of deteriorated steel was replaced or reinforced.

The monumental, arched cast-iron windows, three on each side of the building, were stripped of old lead-based paint and repainted. With each window measuring a massive 30 feet wide by 60 feet high, nearly 10,000 panes of wired glass needed to be repaired or reglazed.

The iconic statue of three mythological figures by French sculptor Jules Coutan, received special attention. Mercury with his winged helmet, the messenger and god of commerce and travel, stands with arms stretched open in a 15-foot expanse. Seated on either side are Hercules, holding a hammer to represent strength, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom, who sits, her head resting on her hand, pensively, pen in hand poised to write. Minerva's pen was repaired and attached with a new stainless steel pin.

The 13-foot-wide, stained-glass clock that this triumvirate frames was cleaned and re-gilded with sheets of 23.75 karat Italian gold in a shade called "Rosenoble Double Gold."

The lesser-known statue of Cornelius Vanderbilt, founder of the New York Central Railroad, which built Grand Central from 1903-1913, needed new steel support beams and a cleaning. The four-ton, 12-foot tall bronze likeness of the Commodore, as Vanderbilt was known, is almost dwarfed by the Terminal as it stands at the viaduct level on the south façade.