



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

June 30, 2014

[Metro-North](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Metro-North Railroad Dedicates Restored Main Entry Vestibule at Grand Central Terminal to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

MTA Metro-North Railroad, the steward of Grand Central Terminal, today dedicated the Terminal's fully restored, main entry vestibule at 89 East 42nd Street and Park Avenue (Pershing Square), in honor of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the former First Lady and iconic New Yorker who led the historic campaign to save Grand Central from destruction in the 1970s. The newly renovated and renamed Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Foyer opens to the public at 1:30 p.m. today.

Mrs. Onassis' efforts with the Municipal Art Society (MAS) and other luminaries in New York City, including then-Congressman Ed Koch and MAS leaders Fred Papert and Kent Barwick, helped fight construction of a major office tower atop Grand Central Terminal during a lawsuit that was appealed all the way to the United States Supreme Court. It ruled in favor of preservation in a celebrated 1978 decision that marked the first time the Supreme Court ruled on historic preservation and led to the ongoing protection of other landmarks across the nation.

The major features of the historic restoration of the main entry vestibule include repair and cleaning of vintage glass lighting fixtures; fully renovated, cleaned and polished marble walls and floors, including removal and restoration of the inscription lettering over the doors leading into Vanderbilt Hall; extensive door refurbishments; a new, safety-enhanced, non-slip, entry mat banded with a brass border; energy-efficient lighting atop the cornices to help enhance illumination levels; and repainting of the walls and ceiling.

New features of the foyer include a plaque honoring Mrs. Onassis' work to save the Terminal; the name rendered in bronze letters on the wall and painted along the arch leading to 42nd Street; and two display vitrines rotating digital imagery that recount Mrs. Onassis' life and the 101-year history of the Terminal, including its preservation and renovation. The unique plaque, mounted on the foyer's west wall, is 43" high and 18" wide, made of bronze with an artist-created bronze relief of Mrs. Onassis and a narrative describing her role in saving the Terminal. The historic restoration of the main entry vestibule at 89 East 42nd Street and its dedication as the Jackie Kennedy Onassis Foyer was performed for approximately \$465,000.

"Grand Central Terminal, as we know it today as one of the world's premier transportation hubs and one of New York's top destinations in its own right, is the product of the men and women who built it. It is also the product of those who overcame great obstacles to preserve it for future generations," said Thomas F. Prendergast, Chairman and CEO of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. "The rededication of the Terminal's main entry vestibule to her is a fitting tribute to the woman who led those efforts, saving Grand Central during one of its most difficult hours."

"The dedication of the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Foyer is a significant moment for Grand Central and for Metro-North," said MTA Metro-North Railroad President Joseph Giulietti. "Mrs. Onassis is one of America's most cherished historical figures, and she is considered by many a renowned savior of Grand Central. This landmark building, universally acclaimed as one of the world's great public spaces, is still here today because of her leadership. Today, Grand Central Terminal recognizes Mrs. Onassis' achievements."

Renovation plans were initially conceived during Grand Central's 2013 Centennial celebrations, when Metro-North was developing a "legacy project" that would make a permanent improvement to the space and recognize the crucial role Mrs. Onassis played in helping the Terminal reach its Centennial.

The plans for the foyer were reviewed by Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, who served as Honorary Chair of the Centennial Committee and spoke at the Centennial celebration.

Randall J. Fleischer, Vice President of Grand Central Terminal and Corporate Development, said, "The main entry foyer is now a place that tells the story of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, along with the history of Grand Central. Peter Stangl, former MTA Chairman and first President of Metro-North, who served as Centennial Committee Chairman, helped inspire the foyer concept, and the employees of Metro-North renovated and enhanced the space to honor Mrs. Onassis and the Terminal."

On the occasion of her death in 1994, Mrs. Onassis was remembered at a memorial in Grand Central Terminal, a tribute to her contributions to keep the place an iconic part of New York City.

Grand Central Terminal opened in 1913 on the site of the Grand Central Depot, which had been conceived by "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt. The Vanderbilt family led the N.Y. Central Railroad in building the current Grand Central Terminal.

