

SECRETS IN STONE (Grand Central Station to 6th Avenue)



It might as well be ancient Rome. The street is adorned with statues and reliefs depicting flora, fauna and human figurines in epic poses. Arches and columns proliferate, some with elaborate filigreed designs, others more humble. Words are carved into the stone itself, denoting months, describing names, delivering prophesy.

But what does it all mean? What are the stories behind these ornaments? What are the secrets carved in the stone? Most of these are lost to the modern-day urban archaeologist. We know that the area used to house a row of luxurious turn-of-the-century hotels and clubs, once playing hosts to important politicians, celebrities and other famous rogues. But many of these have been torn down in the course of a century, replaced by the same cadre of towering skyscrapers one sees throughout this street.

Where it used to be that new was built upon old, and old continued to linger beneath layers of structure and sediment, today, the old is eradicated altogether, with only traces of it remaining, suggesting the existence of a completely different civilization and way of life a mere century ago.



19 – Beaux-Arts exterior of Grand Central Terminal, Vanderbilt Avenue.



20 – No. 9 E 43rd St: Fifth Church of Christ Scientist.



21 – A Firefighter’s Prayer – statue dedicated to the firefighter’s who braved 9/11. The statue stands at No. 6: The Emigrant Savings Bank.



22 – Detail of a girl and an amphora of roses at No. 4.



23 – Lefcourt National Building (1929), with its relief of dozen rams. It was designed by Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, who later designed the Empire State Building.



24 – No. 7: The Century Association Clubhouse (1891), an artistic and literary society. Italian Renaissance Building designed by McKim, Mead & White.



25 – No. 8 W 43rd St: The entrance to the building is adorned with beautiful stone reliefs depicting the twelve calendar months



26 – No. 33: Fire Engine Company No. 65 (1898), another Italian Renaissance Building from the same era as the Century Association Clubhouse.



27 – No. 45: The words LEX and JVS are inscribed on the building's façade.



28 – To the left is No. 1114 Avenue of the Americas: Grace Building (1974).



29 – Nos 113 – 123: The Town Hall (1921), designed by McKim, Mead & White. It was built for the League of Political Education, before becoming a performing arts venue.