

IRT SUBWAY SYSTEM UNDERGROUND INTERIOR, comprising: portions of the Borough Hall Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Wall Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Fulton Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the City Hall station consisting of the walls, platform, ceiling vaults, skylights and staircases; portions of the Bleecker Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the Astor Place station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 33rd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions) and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 59th Street-Columbus Circle Seventh Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and the downtown entrance area, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways); portions of the 72nd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the tracks, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, and terra-cotta panels; portions of the 79th Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions and resurfaced walls); portions of the 110th Street-Cathedral Parkway Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platform and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 116th Street-Columbia University Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and resurfaced walls), and platform columns surfaced with glazed tile; Boroughs of Brooklyn and Manhattan. Completed 1904 (Contract 1), 1908 (Contract 2); Chief Engineer Samuel B. Parsons; architects Heins & LaFarge.

On September 11, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the IRT subway system underground interior, comprising: portions of the Borough Hall Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform

extensions); portions of the Wall Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Fulton Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions); portions of the City Hall station consisting of the walls, platform, ceiling vaults, skylights, and staircases; portions of the Bleecker Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions and connecting passageways), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the Astor Place station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 33rd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions) and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 59th Street-Columbus Circle Seventh Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and the downtown entrance area, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways); portions of the 72nd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the tracks, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, and terra-cotta panels; portions of the 79th Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions and resurfaced walls); portions of the 110th Street-Cathedral Parkway Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platform and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 116th Street-Columbia University Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and resurfaced walls), and platform columns surfaced with glazed tile; (Item No. 10). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. No witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There was one speaker in opposition to a portion of the designation. The New York City Transit Authority has submitted a statement on the designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The underground interior of the IRT subway system is among the most important aspects of the New York City subway system.¹ In recognition of the historic and artistic significance of the IRT system, portions of 12 of the original 45 underground stations built under Contracts 1 and 2 of the IRT system are being designated an Interior Landmark. Designed by the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge in conjunction with Chief Engineer William Barclay Parsons, these stations vividly represent the artistic character of the IRT system, now celebrating its Diamond Jubilee.

The subway system of New York is only 75 years old, but proposals for an underground rapid transit system to alleviate traffic congestion in New York had been put forward as early as the 1860s. In 1864 the Metropolitan Railway Company was incorporated; the intent was to build an underground railway. Because of political opposition and the competition for franchise rights, the scheme was not successful. Between 1868 and 1870 Alfred Ely Beach (1826-96), inventor and editor of Scientific American, secretly constructed a subway to be operated by pneumatic power beneath Broadway between Murray and Warren Streets. While it proved a popular novelty, Beach's subway ultimately failed due to the opposition of Boss Tweed and lack of financing to expand the subway tunnel.² Instead of an underground system, elevated steam railroads were built, beginning in 1868, which quickly spanned important sections of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

The New York State Legislature created a Rapid Transit Commission in 1891 to explore the possibility of a subway system. To meet the problem of construction costs, the City of New York was authorized in the Rapid Transit Act of 1894 to issue bonds and enter into contract with a private corporation to build and operate an underground railroad. Although several years of delay and litigation followed, a contract was finally let by the City on October 11, 1899, to the Rapid Transit Subway Construction Company, formed by John B. McDonald with the financial backing of banker August P. Belmont, Jr. Belmont created the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) in 1902 to lease the subway from the City and to operate it for fifty years.

The 1899 contract called for the construction of a subway system according to the route and plan that had been devised by William Barclay Parsons (1859-1932). Parsons, who had received his engineering training at Columbia University, had begun his career with the New York, Lake Erie & Western Railroad and had written several books on railroad problems. In 1891 Parsons had been appointed deputy chief engineer of the Rapid Transit Commission and in 1894 he had been named Chief Engineer. Parsons devised a subway route in 1895 which was revised in 1897. It began with a loop under City Hall, went up the east side of Manhattan along Lafayette Street and Fourth Avenue to Grand Central Station at 42nd Street, then went west to Times Square and turned north along Broadway to 96th Street; there it branched into two lines leading to the Bronx. Construction began in March 1900. A second contract extended the route south from City Hall into Brooklyn where it terminated at the Long Island Railroad Terminal at Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues. Work was begun on this section of the route in 1902.

The construction methods and station plans were determined by the engineers of the Rapid Transit Commission working under Parsons, but a consulting architect was sought to design the decoration of the underground stations, the control houses, and the kiosks of the subway, and a search committee was appointed in 1901. The firms of Carrère & Hastings and Robert Gibson were considered, but on March 7, 1901, the firm of Heins & LaFarge was selected.

George L. Heins (1860-1907) and Christopher Grant LaFarge (1862-1938) both received their architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology under the supervision of French-born and -trained Eugene Letang. LaFarge, the son of the noted painter John LaFarge, then worked in the architectural office of Henry Hobson Richardson, while Heins acquired experience in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The two formed a partnership in 1886, which continued until Heins' death in 1907. They are best remembered for their ecclesiastical architecture, especially the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Winning the competition for the cathedral design in 1891, they served as architects for the first phase of construction. Among their other major church designs are the Fourth Presbyterian Church and Parsonage at West End Avenue and 93rd Street in New York and St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Washington D.C. They also designed residences for prominent people in New York and Washington. In 1899 the firm began to design buildings for the New York Zoological Gardens in the Bronx. There were no obvious prototypes for such buildings, so the architects chose modified classical designs, ornamented with appropriate animal motifs.³ Perhaps through the influence of August Belmont, Jr., for whom the firm had designed a chapel in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the architects received the subway contract in 1901. They were faced with a problem similar to that in the Zoological Gardens--devising an architecture for which there was no obvious historical prototype.

The artistic treatment of the subway stations had been only dealt with in very general terms previous to the appointment of the consulting architects. In 1891 the Report of the Rapid Transit Commission stated that every effort should be made "in the way of painting and decoration to give brightness and cheerfulness to the general effect" of the stations.⁴ The IRT contract of 1899 specified white or light-colored tiles or enameled brick for the station walls, except where color was to be "introduced for architectural effect."⁵

Parson had undertaken a study of European transit systems which he issued in 1894.⁶ In it he discussed various aesthetic features and treatments of those systems, and they in turn affected his planning of the New York system.

As designed by Parsons and his engineers, the underground stations are of two basic types: local, with platforms located outside the tracks adjacent to the tunnel walls; and express, with island platforms between the local and express tracks. Local platforms south of 96th Street were 200 feet long, while express platforms

and local platforms north of 96th Street were 350 feet long. The stations built under Contract 2 have platforms of the local type, but these were also 350 feet long.⁷ The City Hall station with its single looped track has a short curved platform. Entrance areas, also known as control areas, provide access to the platforms. While most of these are on the same level as the platforms and close to the surface of the street, some control areas are located on a mezzanine above the platforms.

The stations are constructed of steel beams five feet between centers with jack-arch concrete roofs and either straight or jack-arch concrete walls. The side walls of the stations are of four-inch thick brick separated by a one-inch air space from the outer structural walls. Cast-iron columns placed at fifteen-foot intervals carry the station roofs. Floors are of three-inch thick concrete graded to drain into catch basins. While this basic construction was the responsibility of the engineers, the artistic treatment and decoration of the stations were the responsibility of the architects, subject to the final approval of Parsons, who delegated authority to D.L. Turner, assistant engineer in charge of stations for the Rapid Transit Subway Construction Company. It seems certain that Parsons influenced certain aspects of the decorative scheme. As carried out in New York there are similarities to the decorative scheme of the Paris Metro stations which had favorably impressed Parsons.⁸

The architects devised a decorative scheme which had certain features in common for each station but incorporated distinctive elements to give each station its own identity. A sanitary cove base joins the floor and the side wall with its two and a half foot wainscoting of buff-colored Roman brick⁹ or rose-colored marble, completed by either a brick or marble cap. Above the wainscoting the wall is covered with three by six inch white glass or glazed tile. Classically-derived moldings of glazed terra cotta or faience¹⁰ form cornices near the ceiling level. The wall is divided into 15-foot panels, corresponding to the spacing of the platform columns, by colored encaustic mosaic tile or by brick or marble bands, and faience plaques designating the name of the station are set at 15-foot intervals in the cornice or frieze. These plaques are often in the form of symbols which have some local association with the station. Large name tablets of mosaic or faience are set into the middle of the wall panels. Not only variations in symbols and name treatment but also variation in color, made possible by the use of faience and mosaic tile, help make each station distinct. This use of color aroused favorable comment from architectural critic Herbert Croly.¹¹ The general treatment of the entrance areas at platform level is similar.

The City Hall station, because of its role in serving the seat of New York City government, was conceived as being of special importance. As such it has a unique design. When the IRT plan called for City Hall as the southern terminus of the route (Contract 1), the station was planned with four tracks on a loop to allow for train turnaround. However, with the 1898 plan to extend the line to Brooklyn (Contract 2), changes were made in the City Hall station plan to provide a single loop track for the use of local trains, while express trains by-passed the station.

The unique feature which gives City Hall station its distinctive quality is the use of thin-shell timbrel vaults constructed according to the methods perfected and patented by Rafael Guastavino (1842-1908). Guastavino, a Catalan who immigrated to the United States in 1881 with his son Rafael (1872-1950), had become, by 1900, the foremost engineer with the construction of thin-shell masonry vault systems in the United States. Using methods he had learned in his native Catalonian region of Spain, Guastavino perfected the vaulting system to a high art, devising special tiles and mortars for vault construction. As devised by Guastavino the system consisted of a series of timbrel vaults composed of broad terra-cotta tiles laid with the curve of the vault in two or more layers and held together by mortar. Such vaults were very quick to construct for they did not require centering, falsework, or scaffolding.¹² Heins & LaFarge had previously utilized the Guastavino vaulting system for the main crossing of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The curve of the vaults is ideally suited to the curved configuration of the station as it follows the single loop track. The vaults are constructed of white mat-finished tiles with contrasting green and brown glazed tiles at the edges of the vaults. The younger Rafael Guastavino was especially interested in the development of ornamental and colored ceramic tile for Guastavino vaults.¹³ Leaded-glass skylights are placed in three of the vaults as well as in the Guastavino vault over the entrance area. The platform floors are constructed of poured concrete, and Roman brick forms the wainscoting and the wall surfaces within the curves of the vaults. A marble wainscot cap is provided. Decorative faience plaques in brown, blue, and white with the inscription "City Hall" are set in the side walls. A large name tablet adorns the arch above the wide staircase leading from the platform to the entrance area. Two narrower staircases lead from the entrance area to the street level. All components of City Hall station except the tracks are encompassed by this designation. The station has been closed to regular transit traffic since December 31, 1945, when trains and cars became too long to be accommodated by the curved platform. It is still used as a turnaround loop for No. 6 trains, and the station can be visited on tours.

The Borough Hall station (Contract 2) in Brooklyn is symbolically the parallel of the City Hall station in Manhattan. Because of its importance in serving the seat of government in Brooklyn, special attention was paid to the decoration, much of which is executed in richly-colored faience and mosaic tile. The symbolic plaque which identifies the station is a wreath encompassing the letters "BH." These faience plaques in shades of blue, green, and yellow are set at 15-foot intervals along the frieze and cornice at the upper edge of the platform walls. The faience cornice in green is composed of classical motifs and set above a mosaic tile frieze of green, white, and buff yellow in a classical fretwork pattern. Buff yellow faience brackets are placed at intervals in the cornice. Marble forms the wainscoting. Mosaic tile panels in shades of green and rose with classical swags in brown and buff yellow subdivide the wall into 15-foot panels below the plaques. The large name tablets

have white letters set in a field of dark green mosaic tile enframed by a wide border with swag motifs--all done in mosaic tile in shades of dark red, blue, buff, pink, violet, and green. The wall adjacent to the original 350-foot long platforms are encompassed by this designation.

The Wall Street Lexington Avenue line station (Contract 2) is symbolically identified by vividly-colored faience plaques depicting the original wall built by Governor Stuyvesant at Wall Street during the Dutch colonial period. Each incorporates a classical swag in blue faience and is set above a blue faience plaque with the letter "W." Several of these Wall Street plaques may be seen on the west wall (downtown platform) of the station. The cornice of dark green faience is composed of vine motifs with swags. Marble forms the wainscoting and subdivides the walls into the standard 15-foot panels. The vertical marble bands are surmounted by fretwork panels above blue and green plaques with the letter "W." This is further accented by bands of dark blue-green mosaic tile. White letters set in a field of dark blue tile form the large name tablets which are enframed by foliate and floral motifs in shades of blue. Three entrance areas leading from Broadway near Rector Street have walls treated in a similar manner. These walls and those adjacent to the original 350-foot long platforms are encompassed by this designation.

Faience plaques with the colorful relief of Robert Fulton's steamboat, the Clermont, symbolically identify the Fulton Street Lexington Avenue line station (Contract 2). Each incorporates and is flanked by a swag motif in beige faience, and is set above a blue and green faience plaque with the letter "F." Several of these Clermont plaques may be seen on the west wall (downtown platform) of the station. The cornice is of green faience executed with vine forms. Marble is used for wainscoting and wall subdivisions in a fashion similar to the Wall Street station. Fretwork panels placed above blue and green plaques with the letter "F" surmount the vertical marble bands. Bands of buff yellow and blue-green mosaic tile accent the 15-foot wall panels. The name tablets have white letters set in a field of blue tile which is enframed by vine and bell-flower motifs in mosaic tile in shades of blue. Three entrance areas at John Street, Dey Street, and the westside of Fulton Street have walls which employ the original decorative scheme. The entrance area walls and the walls adjacent to the original 350-foot long platforms are encompassed by the designation.

The Bleecker Street station (Contract 1) is particularly memorable for its name tablets, executed in faience with white letters set on a bright blue ground and encompassed by an oval enframement. The enframement in turn is set in a series of plaques with unified vine and swag motifs. The cornice with its foliate motifs and cornice plaques with the letter "B" set in tulip-adorned cartouches at 15-foot intervals are in the same vivid blue faience. Bands of blue mosaic tile are set below the frieze and above the brick wainscoting with a marble wainscot cap. The two entrance areas have walls with the same treatment. These walls and the walls adjacent to

the original 200-foot long platforms are encompassed by this designation, as are the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with white glazed tile.¹⁴

The Astor Place station (Contract 1) recognizes John Jacob Astor (1763-1848), after whom Astor Place was named. Owner of one of 19th-century New York's largest land holdings, Astor had begun to make his fortune in the furtrading business and especially in the trading of beaver skins. The faience plaques of blue with their yellow beaver motifs symbolize this. They are set at 15-foot intervals in a green faience cornice with urn and vine motifs. Roman brick is used for the wainscoting and is also carried up the walls to subdivide them into 15-foot panels. Bands of blue mosaic tile also accent the walls panels. The large name tablets have white letters set in a field of blue faience. The wall treatment is similar in the two entrance areas. These entrance area walls and the walls adjacent to the original 200-foot long platforms are encompassed by this designation, as are the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with white glazed tile.

The 33rd Street station (Contract 1) is identified by faience plaques of stylized eagles set in a green ground holding blue and white shields with the number "33." The eagle symbolizes the 71st Regiment Armory which once stood at Park Avenue and 33rd Street. These plaques are set at 15-foot intervals in a yellow-brown cornice with stylized vine and fretwork motifs. Bands of buff and green mosaic tile create and accent the 15-foot wall panels, and the large name tablets have white letters set in a field of blue mosaic tile enframed by classical motifs in buff and green tile. The wainscoting is formed of Roman brick. The two original entrance areas off 33rd Street have similar walls. These walls, the walls adjacent to the original 200-foot long platforms, and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with white glazed tile are encompassed by this designation.

The 59th Street-Columbus Circle Seventh Avenue line station (Contract 1) is symbolically identified by faience plaques in blue, green, brown, and cream depicting Christopher Columbus's sailing ship, the Santa Maria, which is of the sort known as a caravel. Each is enframed by a rope motif with flowers and set above a green faience swag. They are placed at 15-foot intervals along a wide green faience cornice with urn and vine motifs. Bands of mosaic tile in green and red create and accent the 15-foot wall panels. The name tablets are of two types. In one, white letters saying "Columbus Circle" are set in a green mosaic field. The other, also with white letters saying "Columbus Circle," is of green faience with Renaissance-inspired moldings and half-circle motifs at the ends. The wainscoting is of Roman brick with a marble wainscot cap. The wall treatment in the original downtown entrance area is similar. Those entrance area walls and the walls adjacent to the original 200-foot long platforms are encompassed by this designation.

The 72nd Street station, since it is an express station with only an island platform, has a wall treatment which differs from those stations with local platforms. Nonetheless, the walls adjacent to the tracks are covered with the same white glass tile as in the other stations, interrupted at regular intervals by large multi-colored mosaic tile panels, five by eight feet. The overall design of each panel incorporates floral, rope, and fretwork motifs in shades of blue, buff, and cream. A frieze created by bands of blue and buff mosaic tile extends along the walls. There are no name tablets, for in this station signs on the island platform were intended to state the location. However, the decorative tile treatment gives the 72nd Street station a distinctive identity. The walls of the station adjacent to the tracks are encompassed by this designation.

The 79th Street station features the unusual decorative motif of stylized pilasters created in buff and green mosaic tile and set at 15-foot intervals. A tile panel with the number "79" intersects each pilaster. Blue faience plaques with cornucopia motifs act as capitals for the pilasters and intersect the blue faience cornice with egg and dart and bead and reel moldings. Buff tile bands set off the 15-foot wall panels as well as the large name tablets. These tablets have white letters set in a field of green mosaic with an enframing of buff and green mosaic tile. Set at regular intervals within the wall panels and below the cornice are yellow faience plaques with cornucopia flanking the number "79." The wainscoting is of Roman brick. In the two original entrance areas, the wall treatment is similar. The wall areas and those adjacent to the original 200-foot long platforms (except those areas that have been resurfaced) are encompassed by this designation.

The 110th Street-Cathedral Parkway Broadway line station features a colorful and elegant decorative treatment. Most striking are the large name tablets with the inscription "Cathedral Parkway." The white letters are set in a green mosaic tile field enframed by floral, foliate, and geometric motifs in shades of buff, pink, and red. Mosaic tile bands in the same colors create and accent the 15-foot wall panels. Also set at 15-foot intervals above the tile bands are blue faience plaques with the number "110." A green faience cornice with foliate motifs surmounts each wall. The wainscoting is of Roman brick. The walls in the entrance areas have a similar treatment. These walls, the walls adjacent to the original 350-foot long platforms, and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile are encompassed by this designation.

It seems likely that chief engineer Parsons, as an alumnus and member of the board of trustees of Columbia University, took a special interest in the decoration of the 116th Street-Columbia University Broadway line station. It is vividly identified by the seal of Columbia University created in blue and cream faience plaques. The seal, devised by Dr. Samuel Johnson, the first president of King's College (the original name of Columbia), depicts a seated woman

holding the book of knowledge with three children at her feet. The seal is set within a wreath and enframed by blue faience plaques with classical foliate and fretwork motifs that are integrated with the blue and green faience cornice. Placed at 15-foot intervals, these plaques and wreaths are alternately set with the Columbia seal and shields holding the number "116." Below the plaques bands of light blue mosaic tile create 15-foot wall panels. Large name tablets with the inscription "Columbia University" accent several wall panels. The white letters are set in a field of blue tile which is enframed by floral and geometric motifs. Roman brick forms the wainscoting. The walls adjacent to the original 350-foot long platforms and the platform columns surfaced with glazed tile are encompassed by this designation.

The segment of the IRT subway system built under Contract 1 was officially opened to the public on October 27, 1904, to wide acclaim. When the Contract 2 link was opened on May 1, 1908, it was greeted with equal praise. The artistic aspects of the system were singled out for special praise. The stations were described as "a delight to the eye,"¹⁵ while the city was congratulated for its contribution to "Civic Art."¹⁶ The ornamental decoration was commended as being an integral part of the station and for fulfilling "that high requirement of being ornamented construction and not constructed ornament."¹⁷ Fortunately many of the original stations still remain to remind us of the artistic character of the IRT system. The decoration still gives each station a distinctive character and still delights the eyes of the users of the transit system.

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FOOTNOTES

1. There are 265 underground stations in the entire New York City subway system.
2. Beach's subway was closed in 1872 and was generally forgotten until 1912 when construction for the BMT subway broke through the wall of the Beach tunnel.
3. David J. Framberger, Architectural Designs for New York's First Subway, unpublished typescript for the Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 1978, pp. 18-19.
4. Report of the Board of Rapid Transit Commissioners (New York, 1891), p. 72.
5. Contract for the Construction and Operation of Rapid Transit Railroad (New York: Board of Rapid Transit Railroad Commissioners, 1899), p. 156.
6. William Barclay Parsons, Rapid Transit in Foreign Cities (New York, 1894).
7. All platforms have been lengthened, some more than once, since the system opened.
8. Parsons, pp. 46-47. Framberger, p. 7.
9. Sources also refer to it as Norman brick or Pompeian brick. When laid in stretchers it is 12 by 1-1/2 inches.
10. Faience is a type of terra cotta which is subject to a double-glazing process to produce brilliant colors. The firms who produced the faience for the stations were the Grueby Faience Company and the Rookwood Pottery Company. Heins and LaFarge also used faience on the lion house at the Bronx Zoo and at St. Paul's Church, Rochester. See Sturgis Laurence, "Architectural Faience," Architectural Record, 21 (January 1907), 71.
11. Herbert D. Croly, "Glazed and Colored Terra Cotta," Architectural Record, 19 (April 1906), 321.
12. For a detailed discussion of the Guastavino system see George Collins, "The Transfer of Thin Masonry Vaulting from Spain to America," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 27 (October 1968), 176-201.
13. Collins, p. 195.
14. These columns were originally of cast iron, but were encased and surfaced with white glazed tile in the late 1940s to harmonize with the wall tile.
15. New York Sunday Sun, October 23, 1904.

16. "The Old Rapid Transit and the New," Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, 74 (October 29, 1904), 896.
17. "The Ornamentation of the New Subway Stations in New York," House and Garden, 5 (June 1904), 292.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the IRT subway system underground interior, comprising: portions of the Borough Hall Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Wall Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Fulton Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the City Hall station consisting of the walls, platform, ceiling vaults, skylights and staircases; portions of the Bleecker Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the Astor Place station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 33rd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions) and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 59th Street-Columbus Circle Seventh Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and the downtown entrance area, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways); portions of the 72nd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the tracks, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, and terra-cotta panels; portions of the 79th Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions and resurfaced walls); portions of the 110th Street-Cathedral Parkway Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platform and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 116th Street-Columbia University Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and resurfaced walls), and platform columns surfaced with glazed tile; have a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior or parts of thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the IRT subway system underground interior is among the most important historic and artistic aspects of the New York City subway system; that the underground stations built under Contracts 1 and 2 of the IRT system vividly represent the fine artistic character of the IRT system; that the stations were designed by the architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge in conjunction with chief engineer William Barclay Parsons; that the architects devised a decorative scheme which had certain features in common for each station but gave each station a distinctive identity; that this identity was created through the use of color, symbolic plaques, and name tablets; that fine materials such as faience, terra cotta, glass and mosaic tile, marble and Roman brick highlight the artistic qualities of the stations; that the City Hall station employs distinctive Guastavino vaults which enhance the curved loop of the station; that the IRT subway stations were a significant contribution to the creation of a public art; and that the stations of this underground interior continue to enhance the IRT subway system.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the IRT subway system underground interior, comprising: portions of the Borough Hall Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), portions of the Wall Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the Fulton Street Lexington Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience and terra-cotta plaques and moldings, and marble wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions); portions of the City Hall station consisting of the walls, platform, ceiling vaults, skylights, and staircases; portions of the Bleecker Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the Astor Place station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 33rd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions)

and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 59th Street-Columbus Circle Seventh Avenue line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and the downtown entrance area, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, brick wainscoting and marble wainscot cap (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and connecting passageways); portions of the 72nd Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the tracks, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, and terra-cotta panels; portions of the 79th Street station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms and original entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to the platform extensions and resurfaced walls); portions of the 110th Street-Cathedral Parkway Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platform and entrance areas, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions), and the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile; portions of the 116th Street-Columbia University Broadway line station consisting of the walls adjacent to the platforms, encompassing the mosaic tile, glazed tile, faience plaques and moldings, and brick wainscoting (excluding the walls adjacent to platform extensions and resurfaced walls), and platform columns surfaced with glazed tile; have special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public, and to which the public is customarily invited. Boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

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