

NPS Form 10-900  
(Oct 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Bleecker Street Subway Station (IRT)

other name/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number Intersection of Bleecker and Lafayette Streets ☐ not for publication

city or town New York ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10014

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/20/04  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ see continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ see continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Bleecker Street Subway Station (IRT)

New York County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building (s)			Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district			Sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site			Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure			Structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure			Objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0	TOTAL
		1	0	

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic Resources of the New York  
City Subway System**Number of contributing resources****previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/rail-related

Government/public works

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/rail-related

Government/public works

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/

Beaux-Arts

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick, concrete, glass tile, ceramic tile

Roof Steel, concrete

Other Decorative finishes: faience, terra  
cotta, plaster, marble**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheet

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## 7. Narrative Description

The Bleecker Street Subway Station (Lexington Avenue Line) is located the NoHo section of Manhattan. The station was completed in 1904 as part of IRT Contract 1. It is aligned in a north-south direction beneath and parallel to Lafayette Street at the intersection with Bleecker Street. The original station measures approximately 200 feet in length and 55 ½ feet in width. Platform extensions were added to both ends of the station at an unknown date. The areas associated with these extensions fall outside the boundary limits established for this nomination, which are the same as those for the local landmark designation.

### General Characteristics and Construction Methods

The Bleecker Street Station is a side platform station that was constructed using the newly-perfected cut-and-cover method of construction. The base of the cut is lined by a concrete foundation with a minimum thickness of 4 inches. The basic structural frame of the station consists of built-up "I" section columns of varying height are spaced 5 feet on-center along the outer walls and between the tracks (Photo 1). Concrete was used to infill between the columns, creating the exterior walls. The "cover" for the station is trough shaped in section, with the U running generally parallel to the tracks in order to accommodate such infrastructure necessities as steam, sewer, gas, and water lines, as well as electrical and telecommunications cables beneath the roadway. The infrastructure enters the adjacent buildings above the control area, necessitating a transverse U in that location as well. The lowest portion the U is supported by 5-foot-wide transverse concrete arches that spring from the bottom flange of transverse beams that in turn frame into the center columns of the station. The platform sides of these arches frame into the bottom flanges of longitudinal built-up steel girders with a depth of approximately two feet. The top flanges of the longitudinal girders do not reach street level. Consequently, the flanges are topped with concrete walls that rise just beneath sidewalk level. Along each platform, the roof girder is supported by tiled columns set at fifteen foot intervals, and the roof girder webs are stiffened above each of these columns.

The roof trough construction method results in the subway cut roof being a different height beneath the roadway than in areas where utilities do not enter adjacent buildings. In the utility-free areas of the cut, generally beneath the sidewalk in the platform areas, the ceiling is approximately 15 feet above the platform and the sidewalk above is supported by tapered beams of concrete encasing steel I-sections. These beams frame into the concrete wall above the longitudinal girders. At the northern ends of the

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platforms, small trusses with riveted diagonal webs provide lateral support to the girder and the wall atop it.

The side walls of the station are of four-inch brick, separated by a one-inch air space from the outer structural walls. The walls of both platforms exhibit some extensive repairs with more opaque ceramic tiles, but largely retain the original decorative motifs in roman brick, terra cotta and faience. Floors throughout are of three-inch thick graded concrete divided into three-foot squares. Tracks are constructed of broken stone ballast, timber cross ties and 100-pound rails. All ties are fitted with tie plates ([www.nysubways.org](http://www.nysubways.org)).

Throughout the station there are unifying decorative elements that are remarkable for their material quality and level of craftsmanship, but overall the station is in need of repair. There are no remaining plaster soffit decorations, as is commonly seen in other IRT stations. Water infiltration of the ceiling appears to be a major problem on both the uptown and downtown sides of the station. Although the station is lit primarily by banks of modern fluorescent fixtures, some of the original incandescent, single-bulb light fixtures are located above and to one side of each of the faience plaques.

#### Station Circulation

The circulation pattern for this station incorporates five stairways that lead to the street level – three on the Uptown side and two on the Downtown side. There are no underpasses or crossovers at this station. At the south end of the Downtown platform there is a passageway that leads to the IND/6<sup>th</sup> Avenue line at the Broadway/Lafayette Station.

#### Downtown Platform

Throughout the station, and on both platforms, the walls are clad in white glass tiles in poor condition. Whole sections of the walls have been replaced with ceramic tiles and large chunks of the original tiles have spalled in many places. The wall decoration at this station includes the eight large faience name tablets (four are located on each platform). The cobalt blue tablets feature the words "Bleecker Street" in white letters set in an oval frame (Photo 2). The frame is surrounded by tiles decorated with elaborate scrollwork and paterae. A faience cornice featuring foliate motifs in the same cobalt blue lines the station walls. Small cartouche-shaped plaques decorated with the letter "B" flanked by stylized tulips are set at 15-foot intervals (Photo 3). The bottom two and one half feet of the walls is clad in Roman brick topped by a marble belt course forming a wainscot. Bands of blue mosaic tiles are set below the cornice and in a double band above the

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wainscoting. Beneath each of the cartouche "B" plaques, the double band of mosaic tiles is raised in relief for approximately a foot in width. This suggests the base of a pilaster. The double band of mosaic tiles is raised in relief for approximately a foot in width. This suggests the base of a pilaster and provides a visual reference point for the plaques above (Photo 4).

The control area on the Downtown side is separated from the platform by modern security gates and a bank of turnstiles. It has the same wall treatment as the platform and is in a similar state of disrepair. The control area ceiling is in poor condition and is supported by cast iron Tuscan columns (Photo 5). There is no fare control on this side of the station. A double stairway leads up to the street level. The platform width is fairly narrow and uniform for its entire length—it widens only slightly in front of the entrance to the control area.

#### Uptown Platform

The area south of the control area retains the original wall cladding as previously described. Many of the white glass tiles are missing, particularly on the corners where the platform widens for the control area. Continuing northward along the platform the wall is recessed to form a transition into the control area, which is separated from the platform by a security gate and a bank of turnstiles (Photo 6). Within the control area, the walls are covered in the original IRT-era materials but they are also in a general state of disrepair. The ceiling in the control area is supported by narrow tiled columns and includes a modern freestanding ticket booth (Photo 7). On the north wall of the control area are two stone lintels set above doorways. They spell out "MEN" and "WOMEN" and both are flanked with paterae (Photo 8). Approximately 100 feet north of the control area, the original wall decoration ends and the walls are clad in buff-colored modern ceramic tiles. At the northern end of the station, the walls have been reclad in modern ceramic tile.

#### Exterior Elements and Stairwells

The stairways leading below-ground on both the Uptown and Downtown sides do not retain any of the original wall cladding. They have been covered in modern white ceramic tiles that appear to be in poor condition.

At street level, the stairs that lead out onto east and west corners of the intersection of Lafayette and Bleecker are modern and constructed of extruded steel. Modern security gates are fixed along the inside wall of each stairway.

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**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Architecture; Art

Engineering

Engineering, Planning and Development

Community Planning and Development

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1904

**Significant Dates**

1904

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Parsons, William Barclay (engineer)

Heins, George L. and

LaFarge, Christopher G. (architects)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☒ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Repository name:

NYC Transit Archives

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

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## 8. Narrative Statement of Significance

As part of the Multiple Property Submission of the Historic Resources of the New York City Subway System, the Bleecker Street Subway Station (IRT), Lexington Avenue Line, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of transportation, community planning and development, and social history. The station also meets Criterion C in the areas of engineering, architectural design, and art. The Bleecker Street Subway Station was completed in 1904 as one of several stations built as part of the original Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) system (Under Contract 1). Despite the need for general repair and maintenance, the Bleecker Street Station retains a relatively high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The early IRT stations, including Bleecker Street, are significant at the local and national levels.

William Barclay Parsons (1859-1902), a Columbia University-trained engineer, began to devise the plan for the creation of the subway system after he was named chief engineer of the Rapid Transit Commission in 1894. Although Parsons was not the first to utilize building techniques associated with underground rail construction, such as the cut-and-cover method, the early IRT system is undoubtedly one of the greatest public works projects ever undertaken.

The engineering and architecture of the early IRT stations was strictly divided between Parsons and the architectural firm he hired – Heins & LaFarge. While all of the structural elements were completed by Parsons, the architectural and artistic design of each station was left to George L. Heins and Christopher Grant LaFarge, a team already famous for the design of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan and buildings at the New York Zoological Gardens in the Bronx. Heins & LaFarge drew on the ideas presented by the “City Beautiful” movement for their inspiration (HAER 1979:368). Proponents of the movement believed that by creating a beautiful municipality, its inhabitants would be inspired to a higher level of moral and civic virtue and the subway was to be no exception.

In 1891, the *Report of the Rapid Transit Commissioners* 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 (in NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, *IRT Subway System Underground Interior Designation Report* 1979: 4). Each IRT station had its own unique color scheme. In addition, each station had a repeated faience plaque that serves as a symbolic link between the station and the area above ground which it

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served. At Bleecker Street, the massive Grueby faience plaques depict the name of the station. At Bleecker Street, the massive Grueby faience plaques depict the name of the station in white letters on a cobalt blue background flanked by stylized tulips.

In the Bleecker Street Station the high quality of the surviving materials and the architectural detail are magnificent. Faience plaques, roman brick wainscoting, ceramic cornices and all eight of the original faience name tablets are still visible throughout the station. The Bleecker Street Station, as part of the original IRT subway system, displays high quality craftsmanship and architectural detail in addition to superior materials.

The Bleecker Street Station contributed to the ongoing development of the East Village after 1904. Although the area was densely populated prior to the construction of the rapid transit system, the area became filled with commercial spaces and factories after the turn of the last century. Immigrant families from Italy and Ireland came to live and work in the neighborhood. Those that did not live in the area had to find an inexpensive means of transportation to get to and from their factory jobs – a solution that was provided by the new subway system. The Bleecker Street station, as part of the original IRT line, undoubtedly had a great effect on the changing character and growth of this area of the city.



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**9. Bibliography**

Cudahy, Brian. *A Century of Subways: Celebrating 100 Years of the New York City's Underground Railways*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003.

Hood, Clifton. *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How they Transformed New York*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Interborough Rapid Transit Company. *The New York Subway: Its Construction and Equipment*. 1904. Reprinted on website managed by David Pirmann (2004). Retrieved 03/14/04 from source: <http://www.nycsubway.org/irt/irtbook/>.

National Park Service, Department of the Interior Historic American Engineering Record NY-122, "Interborough Rapid Transit Subway (Original Line): The NY Rapid Transit Decision of 1900: Economy, Society, Politics" prepared by Walter B. Katz, 1979.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. *IRT Subway System Underground Interior Designation Report*. New York: NYC LPC, October, 1979.

Orlando, Barbara. "Recapturing the Past: Station Architecture," *At Your Service: MTA New York City Transit Employee Newsletter*, March, 2004.

Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglas, Inc., Historical Perspectives, Inc. and Robert E. Olmstead, P.E. "Phase I: Reconnaissance Level Historical Survey of Transit Authority Properties," June, 1991.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503.

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## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Bleecker Street Subway Station – Lexington Avenue Line is shown as the bold line on the accompanying site plan entitled, "Bleecker Street Station, Station Plan, Lexington Avenue Line – IRT Division, 1998." The above-ground location of this station is also indicated on the map entitled, "East Village, MTA, 1999." The designation for Bleecker Street Station includes the following: 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.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the Bleecker Street Subway Station represent the portions of the original station completed by 1904 and exclude all platform extensions and other later additions. The boundaries are indicative of this station's period of significance.

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**11. Form Prepared By:**

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Stacey Vairo, Architectural Historian  
Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.  
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Hartford, CT 06106  
860-247-7200

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**Additional Documentation**

**Additional Documentation**

List of Black and White Photos

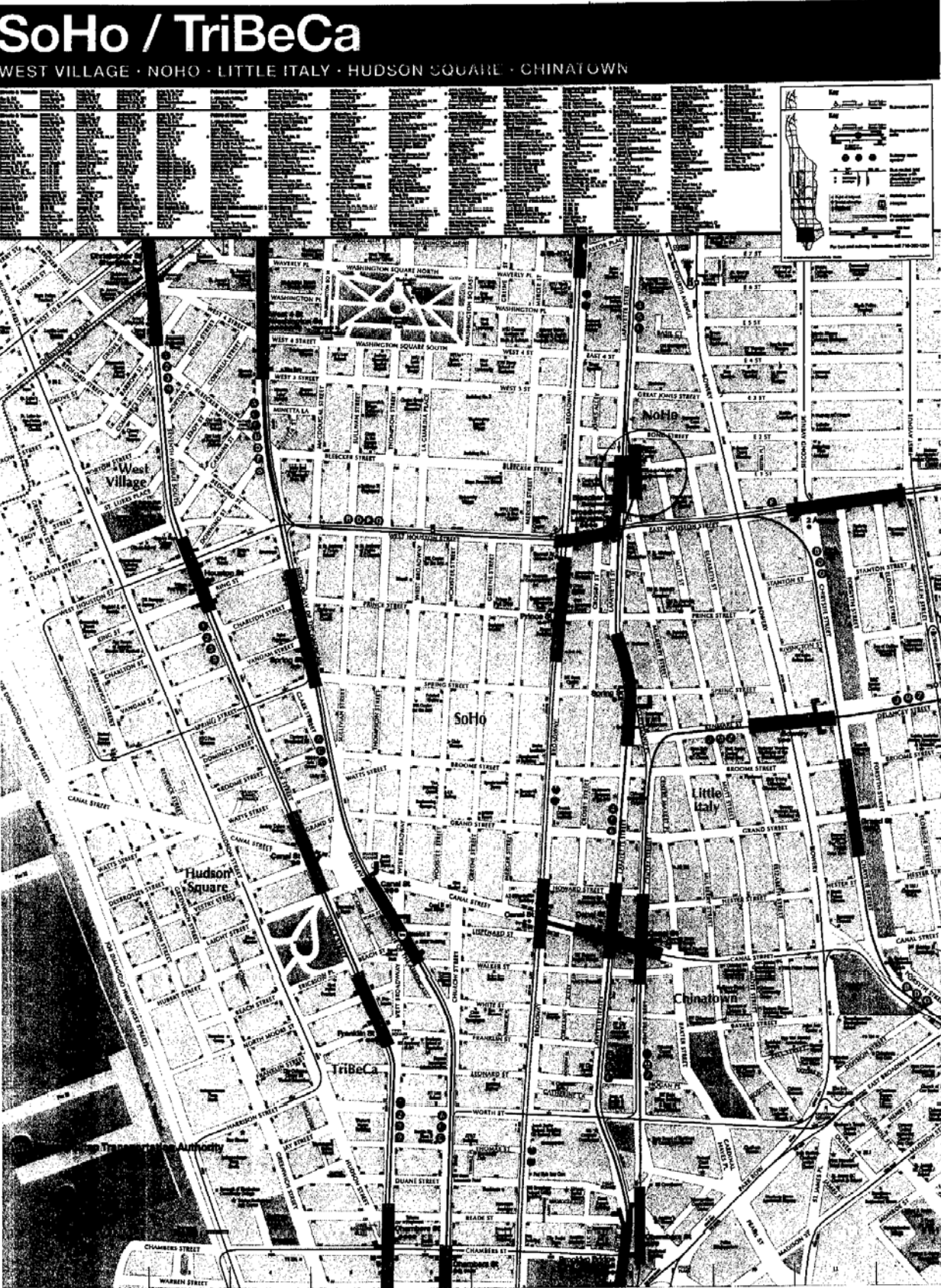
Bleecker Street Subway Station  
New York County, New York

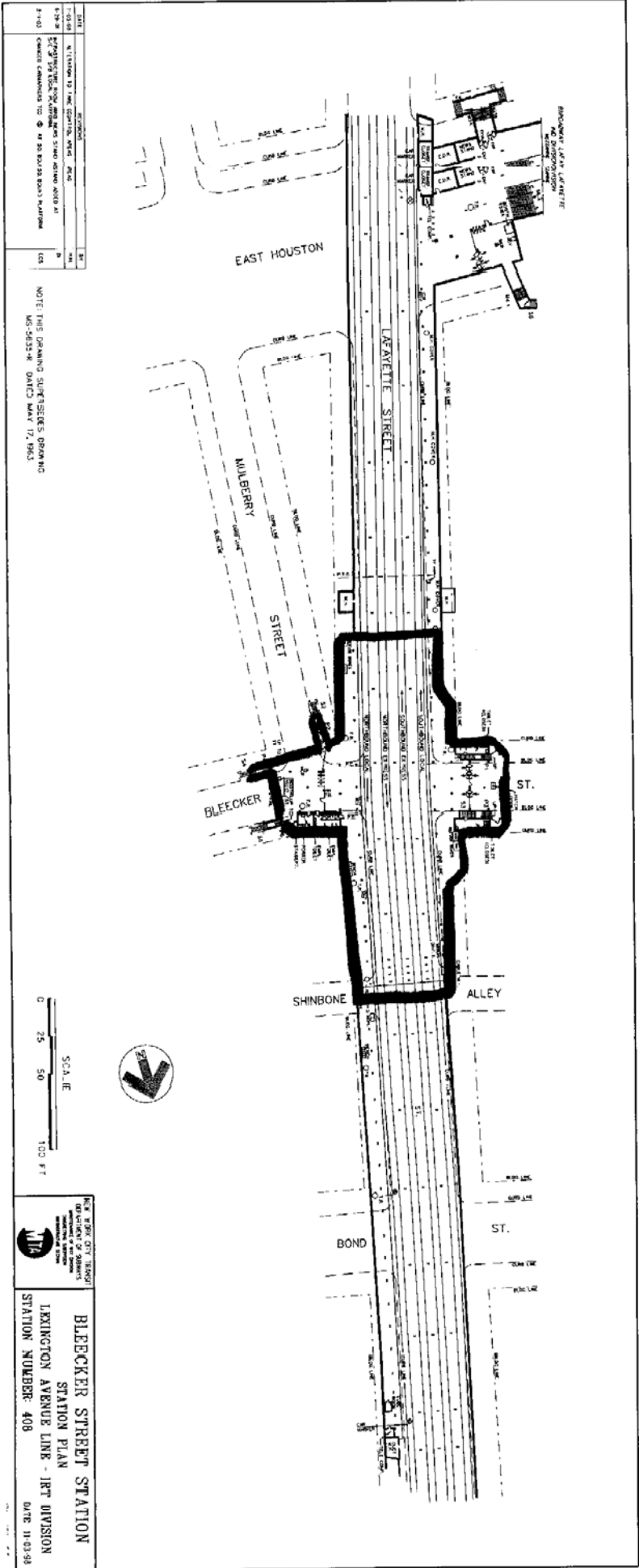
Photographer: Stacey Vairo

Date: March 2004

Negatives on file: Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.  
72 Cedar Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

1. Station tracks looking Uptown. View north.
2. Grueby Faience Co. plaque on the Uptown side. View northeast.
3. "B" plaque located in the Downtown side control area. View west.
4. Wall decoration on the Uptown platform. View north.
5. Downtown side control area. View southwest.
6. Uptown platform in front on control area. View south.
7. Ticket booth in the Uptown control area. View northwest.
8. Stone lintels over the former public bathrooms, Uptown control area. View north.







U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Bleecker Street  
Bleecker - 10001  
Subway  
Station (IRT)  
New York Co, NY  
Zone: 18  
Easting: 584860  
Northing: 4508670

Brooklyn Quad  
USGS  
1:24000

