

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 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 Astor Place Subway Station (IRT)

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

**2. Location**

street & number Intersection of Bowery, Astor Place and Lafayette Street ☐ not for publication

city or town New York ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10003

**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 80. 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

7/22/04  
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

Astor Place Subway Station (IRT)

New York County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

<b>Ownership of Property</b> (check as many boxes as apply)	<b>Category of Property</b> (check only one box)	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b> (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	1	0	Structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object			Objects
		1	0	<b>TOTAL</b>

**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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Astor Place Subway Station  
(IRT)

Name of Property

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## 7. Narrative Description

The Astor Place Subway Station (Lexington Avenue Line) is located in Lower Manhattan. The station was built in 1904 and opened in 1905 as part of IRT Contract 1. It is aligned in a north-south direction beneath and parallel to Lafayette at the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. The original station measures approximately 200 feet in length and 55 ½ feet in width. Platform extensions, which are clearly visible due to changes in wall treatment, 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 Astor Place 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 "T" section columns of varying height are spaced 5 feet on-center along the outer walls and between the tracks. Concrete was used to infill between the columns, creating the exterior walls. The "cover" for the station is trough shaped, 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 cast iron Tuscan columns placed at 15-foot intervals and the roof girder webs are stiffened above each of the Tuscan columns. On the north end of the downtown platform the structure of the subway is tied into the foundation of the Wannamaker Building, also built in 1904. Here large brick piers form the support for the ceiling.

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.

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In the utility-free areas of the cut, generally beneath the sidewalk in the platform areas.

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.

The side walls of the station are of four-inch brick, separated by a one-inch air space from the outer structural walls. The platform walls largely retain the original white glass tile (ceramic tile is used for repairs) and decorative motifs in Roman brick, terra cotta and faience. The walls of the platform extensions have been decorated with modern artwork. Floors throughout are of three-inch thick graded concrete and covered in grey encaustic tile. 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. An example is the plaster molding on the soffits that run parallel to the tracks on the station ceiling. The soffit ornamentation lines each exterior edge of the track where the track and platform meet. Although covered with many layers of paint, the elaborate design is still visible and features an alternating foliate and cartouche pattern. This central band is flanked by thin lines of leaf-and-dart and egg-and-dart patterned moldings (Photo 1). The station is lit primarily by banks of modern fluorescent box lighting which is suspended from the platform ceiling.

#### Station Circulation

The circulation pattern for this station incorporates three stairways that exit out to the street level from the original station platform; the uptown platform is reached via a reconstructed kiosk located on a traffic island located in the center of the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Lafayette and Astor Place. The Downtown Platform is accessed via a modern subway entrance located at the corner of 8th Street and Astor Place. There is no underpass in use at this building. An entrance to the Kmart also provides access to the control area on the northern end of Downtown side.

#### Downtown Platform

The northern end of the Downtown platform ceiling is supported by massive brick piers (Photo 2). The piers also form the foundation support for the Wanamaker Building (Now Kmart). The west wall of the platform at this end is decorated with modern enamel artwork. The store windows of Kmart are also set along the west wall. Continuing south

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~~to the control area, the entrance to Kmart is located on the north wall. The wall here is~~

to the control area, the entrance to Kmart is located on the north wall. The wall here is also decorated with modern enamel artwork and modern Roman brick. Modern maps and signage are located along this wall at the bottom of the steps. The original wall decoration begins approximately mid way along the length of this wall.

The ceilings adjacent to the stairwell are approximately 15 feet in height as opposed to the eight feet seen throughout the majority of the station. The southern wall of the control area features a doorway that has been closed and clad in white tiles. The marble lintel, decorated with paterae, reads "Clinton Hall" – a former Opera House and Mercantile Library that is still standing at 13 Astor Place. Modern metal security gates and a bank of turnstiles separate the control area from the platform (Photo 3).

The wall decoration is fairly consistent throughout the control area, with slight variations. The most prominent feature of the IRT-era wall decoration is the blue faience plaques. The plaques are set at fifteen-foot intervals atop Roman brick pilasters that divide the wall into 15-foot sections (Photo 4). A band of blue mosaic tile lines the pilasters, wainscot and cornice above. Each plaque features a yellow beaver in honor of John Jacob Astor. The plaques are framed in a green faience border decorated with scrolled and foliate motifs. At the top corners of each plaque are two tiles featuring a geometric design. Flanking the beaver plaques are tiles featuring stylized cornucopia (Photo 5). The cornice at this station is often plain with a few sections of that feature a decorative rinceau pattern.

The large name tablets have been completed in faience instead of the more commonly seen mosaic and continue the color scheme of white letters on a blue background trimmed in green.

South of the control area, the platform widens even further (extending approximately 15 feet to the west). The ceiling height again changes to approximately 15 feet. Above the cornice in these areas, the wall is treated with a simple skim coat of plaster over concrete. At this point the track begins to curve slightly to the east as it progresses south and the platform again narrows (Photo 6). The walls along this portion of the platform up to the southern end of the station are covered in modern ceramic tiles that mimic the color and style of the original walls decoration.

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### Uptown Platform

At the northern end of the Uptown platform is an angled section of the wall covered in modern ceramic tile. It appears to lead to a passageway that has been closed off. This section area features a mixture of modern enamel artwork and original wall treatments—a single floor-to-ceiling panel of modern artwork is juxtaposed between two of the original faience beaver plaques and Roman brick pilasters (Photo 7). A recessed area featuring rounded seating area is located north of the control area – construction is taking place in this portion of the station.

The control area is separated from the platform by modern safety gates and turnstiles. Large lockers are located south of the gated entry. The walls of the control area are decorated with the original Roman brick, mosaic, and faience plaques. As seen on the Downtown side, the area adjacent to the stairwell is approximately 15 feet in height. The original IRT-era railings with the ball finials are again used to block the open portion of the stairs (Photo 8).

Beneath the stairway, there is a window opening for a concession area flanked by the former entrances to the men's and women's rooms (Photo 9). Both doors are modern and feature marble lintels above them that are carved with paterae and the words "Men" and "Women." Both of these are now closed to the public. On the wall above the doorways, the wall is roughly parged with plaster.

South of the control area, the platform again narrows and the original wall decoration is replaced by modern ceramic tile— in the same style and colors used on the northern end of the Downtown platform.

### Exterior Elements and Stairwells

The stairs that lead out to the corner of Lafayette and Astor Place from the platform level are clad in white ceramic tile (Photo 10). At street level they have been lined with modern iron railings, constructed in a manner similar to the original IRT railings. Rows of small spikes line the top rail, and at each corner there are squared plinths, two of which support composite column/lampposts on either side of the entrance. Globe lights top each of the lampposts. Modern "Subway" plaques indicate the lines served by this station and are affixed to the sides and rear railing of the each stairwell. The open interior side of the stairwell is lined with original IRT railings topped with knob finials.

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The station was renovated in the late 1980s and during that renovation a replica of an original IRT Budapest-style kiosk was placed at the Uptown entrance of this station (Photo 11). The quality and construction of this kiosk is reminiscent of an original structure, most likely due to the fact that this replica was made in the same factory as the originals. The domed hood of the cast iron structure is covered with an imbricated design and is topped by two ball-shaped finials. Glass panels form the roof and the upper portion of the side walls (Photo 12). The lower walls are decorated with a recessed panel design. A hexagonal-shaped canopy supported by decorative brackets shield the entrance.

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**8. Statement of Significance****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 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

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/Bullder**

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 Astor Place 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 Astor Place 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). The Astor Place Station retains a relatively high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The early IRT stations, including Astor Place, 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 served. At Astor Place, the plaques depict a beaver in honor of John Jacob Astor (1763-

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In the Astor Place Station the high quality of the materials and the architectural detail are magnificent. Faience plaques, marble wainscoting, ceramic cornices and mosaic tablets are still visible throughout the station. Although not original, perhaps most significantly, a replica of an original IRT Budapest-style kiosk serves as the Uptown entrance. The Astor Place Station, as part of the original IRT subway system, displays high quality craftsmanship and architectural detail in addition to superior materials.

The Astor Place Station contributed to the ongoing development of the East Village after the original IRT subway line was opened in 1904. The surrounding area was a very fashionable address in the 1840s, but over time, the area had developed into more of a mixed use residential and commercial community. Wanamaker's department store (whose foundation was tied into the construction of Astor Place Station in 1904) was one of many large anchor stores that supplied the surrounding middle and upper middle class community. The subway's creation of quick and easy access to the rest of the city from this part of Manhattan ensured that this already crowded district continued to become more densely populated in the period between 1904 and World War I.

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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.

Astor Place Subway Station (IRT)

New York County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property Less than one acreAcreage of Property Less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	8	5	8	5	1	4	4	5	0	9	0	5	0	3										
	Zone		Easting				Northing				Zone		Easting				Northing								
2															4										

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By (\*See Continuation Sheet for authors\*)**name/title Contact: Kathleen A. Howe, Historic Preservation Specialistorganization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic PreservationDate July 26, 2004street & number Peebles Island, PO Box 189Telephone 518-237-8643 ext. 3266city or town Waterfordstate NY zip code 12188**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional Items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name MTA New York City TransitContact: Hollie Wells, Project Administratorstreet & number 2 Broadway, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, D6.125telephone 646-252-4268city or town New Yorkstate NY zip code 10004

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, As amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**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 Astor Place Subway Station – Lexington Avenue Line is shown as the bold line on the accompanying site plan entitled, "Astor Place 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 Astor Place 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 the platform and entrance area columns surfaced with glazed tile.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries for the Astor Place 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:**

Steven Bedford, Principal Architectural Historian  
Stacey Vairo, Architectural Historian  
Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.  
72 Cedar Street  
Hartford, CT 06106  
860-247-7200

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County and State

**Additional Documentation**

List of Black and White Photos  
Astor Place Subway Station (IRT)  
New York County, New York

Photographer: Stacey Vairo

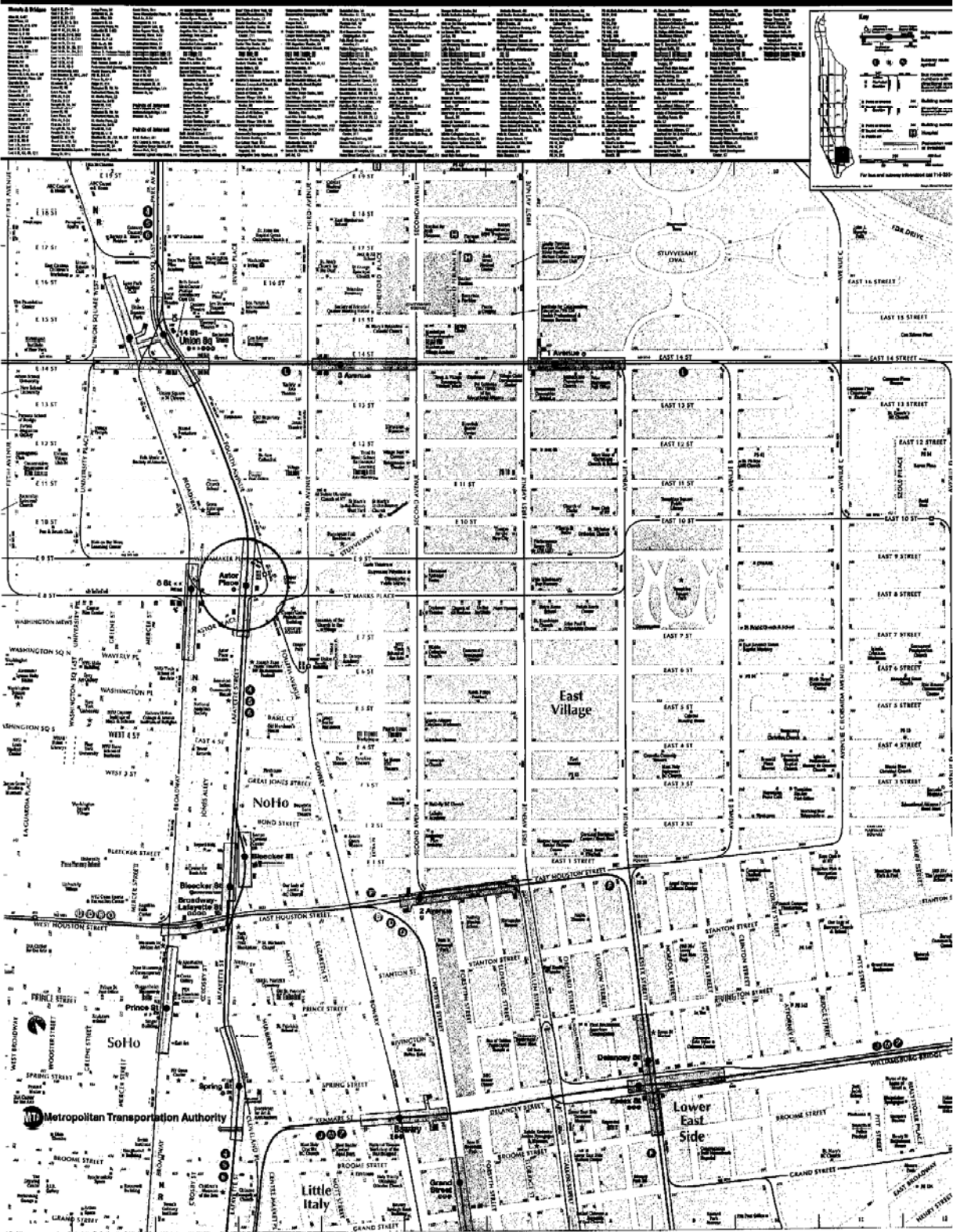
Date: March 2004

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

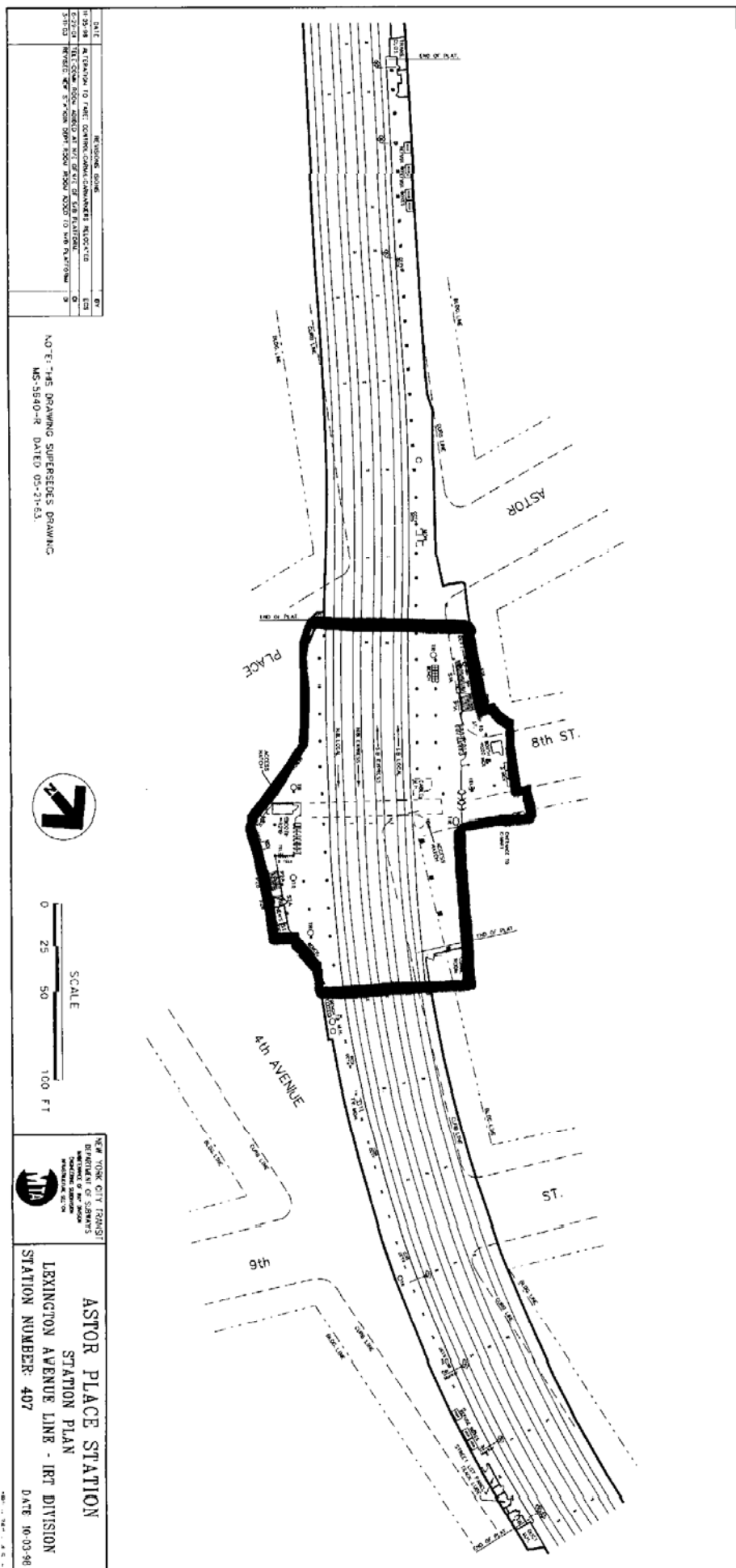
1. Plaster ceiling band. View west.
2. Northern portion of the Downtown platform. View northeast.
3. Turnstiles leading into the Downtown control area. View west.
4. Wall decoration on the Downtown platform. View west.
5. Detail of the beaver plaque located on the northern end of the Downtown side. View west.
6. View of the southern end of the Downtown platform. View south.
7. Southern end of the Uptown platform. View south.
8. Control area and stairwell of the Uptown platform. View south.
9. Control area and the stairwell of the Uptown platform. View northeast.
10. Stairway leading to the street from the Uptown control area. View northeast.
11. Kiosk entrance to the Uptown platform located on the island between Astor Place, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. View southwest.
12. Kiosk detail – entrance to the Uptown platform. View north.

# East Village

UNION SQUARE · NOHO · LITTLE ITALY · SOHO · LOWER EAST SIDE









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



Astor Place  
Subway  
Station (IRT)  
New York Co, NY  
Zone: 18  
Easting: 585140  
Northing: 4509050  
Brooklyn Quad  
USGS  
Scale: 1:24000