

HISTORICAL PROPERTIES SURVEY: PHASE II

archival entry date • 7-14-94  
 field inspection date • 6-6-94  
 survey team • JB

IDENTIFICATION

1.  South Ferry Subway Station (Bway/7)  Station  302210

**Name** **TA property type** **TA identification #**

2.   Original IRT

**Other Names (formerly known as)** **Historical System**

3. At grade  Below grade  XX Above grade

4. County/Borough • New York/Manhattan

5. Street Location • Near foot of South Street, entrance at Ferry Terminal

6. Nearest Cross Street • Whitehall Street

7. Block # • Lot # •

8. Route/Section  Con 2-2/ Sec. 1A 4 & 38 Site Locator #

9. Current Line • Broadway/7th Avenue

Date of Initial Construction: beginning • \_\_\_\_\_ completed • 1905

Contract No./Name • Contract 2

Responsible Organization • Rapid Transit Board

Contractor • McDonald

Architect • Heins & LaFarge

Engineer • W.B. Parsons

10. Use: Original • Station Current • Same

11. Accessibility to Public

Exterior visible: Yes  No  XX

Interior accessible: Yes  XX No

*DESCRIPTION*

**12. Number of Resources within Property**

contributing •  noncontributing •

(see attached pages)

**13. Current Photo (see following pages) 14. Current Location Map (see following pages)**

**15. Overall Stylistic Theme:** •

**16. Foundation Type and Material:** •

**17. Plan Shape:** • Elliptical

**18. Main Orientation:** • East-west

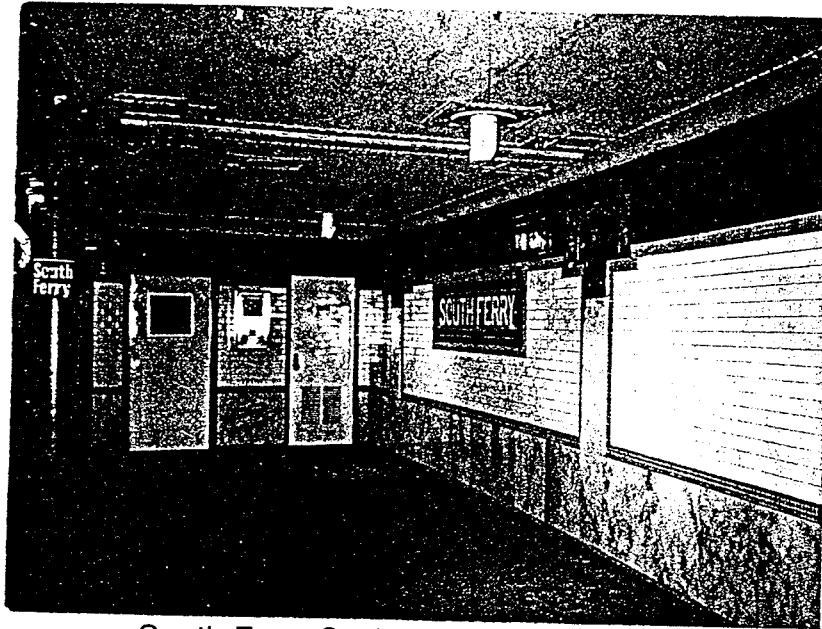
**19. Stories/Levels:** • One

**20. Structural System**

• Cut and cover construction which includes the use of exposed metal columns and concrete arched infill ceilings.

**21. Mechanical Electrical Systems**

ventilation	•
electric lighting	• Mainly fluorescent with some incandescent bulbs.
natural lighting	• 1950s control area has natural lighting because of large glass windows.
elevator(s)	•
escalator(s)	•
equipment (explain)	• Movable platform extenders fill gap between train doors and curved platforms.

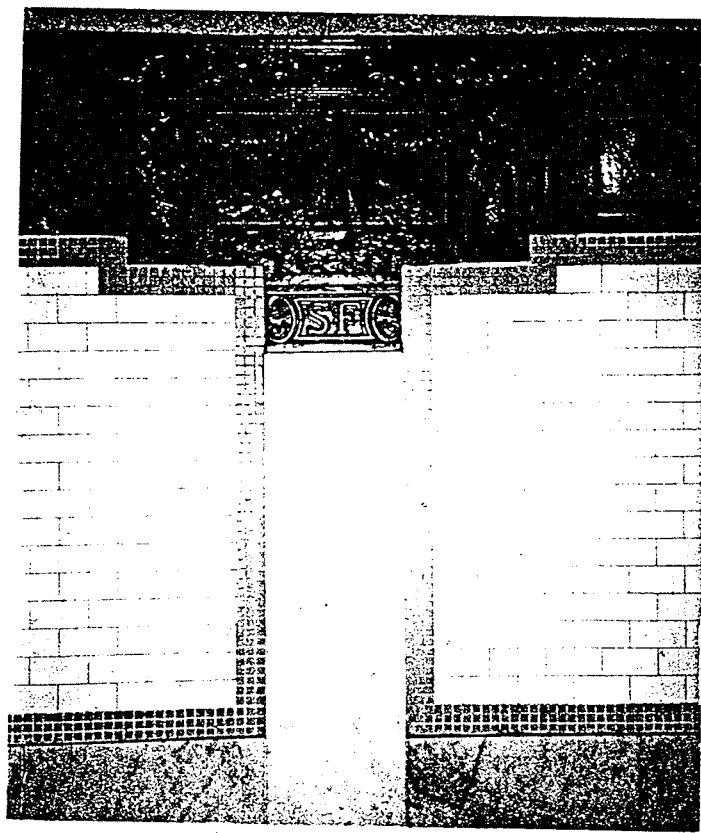


South Ferry Station:  
View of Platform on Original Outer Loop Showing  
Wall and Ceiling Treatment.

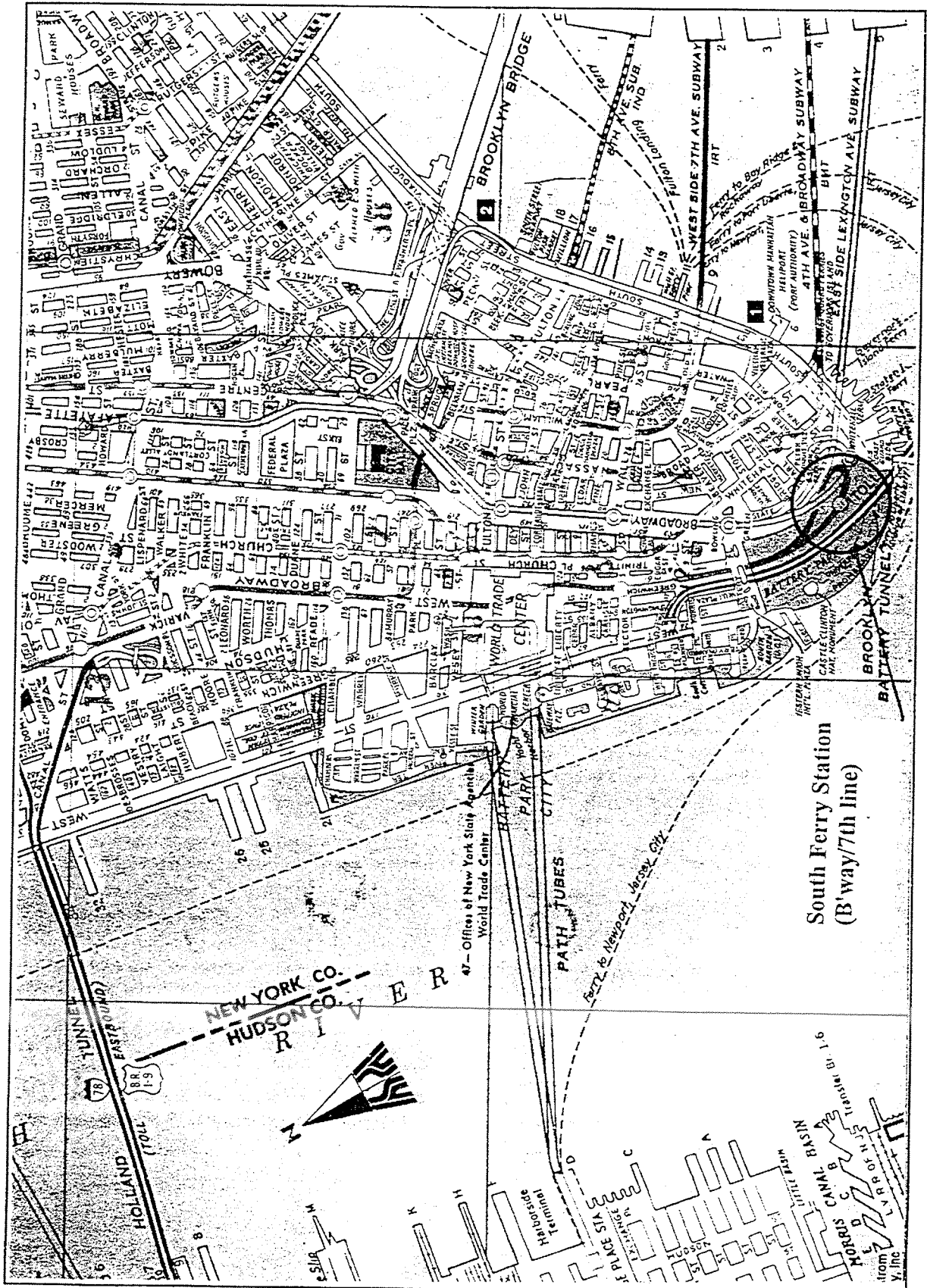


South Ferry Station:  
Platform Walls on 1918 Inner Loop Showing  
Original Mosaic Banding.

South Ferry



South Ferry Station:  
Close up View of Original Ceramic  
Plaques Over Marble Pilasters.



South Ferry Station  
(B'way/7th line)

## 22. Interior/Exterior Description:

- The original 1905 platform area of the South Ferry Station and much of the decorative detail are still intact. The single elliptical-shaped platform on the outside of the curve acts as the southern terminus for the Broadway/Seventh Avenue local. Twenty-two original cast-iron columns line the edge of the concrete platform, which cannot be accessed by passengers from the rear cars of the train because this IRT Contract 2 platform was never extended to serve longer trains. Fifteen movable platform extenders, equally spaced along the platform floor and separated by simple metal rails, fill the gap between the car doors and the curved platform.

The platform walls retain the elaborate 1905 classical decorative finish, featuring 15 terra cotta bas relief plaques of a sloop sailing across green waters against a background of clouds and blue sky decorated by a festoon of garlands with a monogram below. The plaques are in excellent condition and said to be among finest of all the ceramic works commissioned by the transit authorities. They are incorporated into a complex entablature comprised of a multi-colored mosaic frieze, surmounted by a cornice which includes two rows of deep-brown glazed terra cotta. The top row has a classical flower and foliage design in bas relief. The walls are covered with white ceramic tile on a wide marble base. The same marble joins each plaque, so it appears the platform walls are divided into 13 separate panels, with 6 panels on the west side of the platform entrance and 7 on the east side. In the center of the three end panels is a large mosaic plaque announcing "South Ferry" in white letters surrounded by a maroon field and a multi-colored border. The decorative plaster ceiling features classical detail, including raised bead and reel moldings. Between two centrally placed stairways leading to a passageway over the tracks is a modern glass signal control booth. The walls next to the booth on the platform level leading to the stairs were renovated in 1992. They are covered with white tile with a maroon terra cotta border, incorporating a modern interpretation of the classical foliage and flower motif found on the original wall cornice tile into the design. The small control area on the north side of the tracks and the passageway over the tracks have been completely renovated. Of note is the colorful 1992 tile mural of a sail boat on the south wall of the passageway.

In 1918, under the Dual Systems Contract 3, a platform was added on the track's inside loop. Until then, the additional track had been used for midday storage of trains. Shuttle service to the Bowling Green Station was placed on the inside track and the original outside loop then served the Broadway/Seventh Avenue line, as it still does today. The Bowling Green shuttle service was discontinued c. 1970. Although the inside platform cannot be seen from the original platform because it is behind a solid wall, the platform and much of the original decorative features remain intact. This platform was identified by a mosaic frieze with the initials "SF" set in a hexagonal design, similar to other stations on that line. The area is now used for storage and as the station manager's office. The concession windows have been recently closed and metal gates and doors installed, but the area's white tile walls and mosaic frieze remain intact.

The South Ferry Broadway/Seventh Avenue Station is located at the southern tip of Manhattan under Battery Park, just north of South Street. Located on a looped track, the station is elliptical in shape, with the concave portion following the curve of the lower tip of the island. The single entrance to the station is through an aluminum and glass structure constructed in the 1950s -- when the Staten Island Ferry Tunnel was reconstructed -- located above ground adjacent to the ferry terminal.

**23. Intentionally Blank**

**24. List Notable Features:**

- Original plan of 1905 platform and original decorative features substantially intact.
- 1918 platform and decorative features largely intact.
- One of two early stations which have not had any platform extensions. The length of the platform is the same as originally built.

*CONDITION AND STATUS*

**25. Exterior Overall Condition**

a. good • XX

b. fair •

c. deteriorated •

**26. Interior Overall Condition**

a. good • XX

b. fair •

c. deteriorated •

**27. Future Considerations**

- The above ground control house may be replaced or incorporated into new Whitehall Ferry Terminal planned for late 1990s.

**28. Relation to Other Properties in the System**

- a. yard
- b. shop
- c. signal tower
- d. station
- e. substations
- f. bridges/tunnels
- g. surface locations
- h. other (explain):
- i. associations with landmark-designated TA holdings

• Formerly connected by shuttle service to Bowling Green Station.

**29. Relationship of property to neighborhood and streetscape:**

• The station serves passengers visiting lower Manhattan, Castle Clinton National Monument, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and is an important part of the intermodal transportation system around the Battery where ferries, subways, bus lines, and highways converge.

**30. Is property located in an historic district or landmark structure?**

Yes  No

**If yes, identify district/landmark below:**

• NOTE: Underneath southeastern edge of Battery Park control house -- a city landmark -- serving nearby Bowling Green Station at the north end of Battery Park.

*SIGNIFICANCE*

**31. Architect/Engineer notable? (Refer to Number 9)**

• Yes, Heins & LaFarge, Architects  
William B. Parsons, Engineer

### 32. Discussion of historical, social, architectural, technological importance

- The South Ferry Station, opened in 1905, was originally the southern terminus of the Contract 2 segment that extended the original IRT Contract 1 line (Lexington Avenue line) south from City Hall. Another Contract 2 segment split off this track just north of South Ferry Station to cross through the Joralemon Street Tunnel toward Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn. This was the first subway tunnel crossing completed under the East River.

The configuration of South Ferry is unique, initially designed as an underground station with a double-track loop. Of the 14 stations on the segment linking Times Square with South Ferry, this is the only loop. (City Hall, on the Lexington Avenue line, is also a loop.) Due to the curving track, moving metal platforms extend to fill the gap between cars and the platform. South Ferry, because of its unique and constricted layout, was one of only two IRT stations where platforms were never extended. Above grade, the modern station control building stands at the edge of Battery Park adjacent to the Staten Island Ferry terminal.

Under Dual Systems Contract 3, the South Ferry Station was modified around 1918, adding an additional platform on the inside of the loop. The Lexington Avenue line used this inside track, and the outside track served the Broadway/Seventh Avenue line (and still does). The inside-track shuttle between South Ferry and Bowling Green was discontinued c. 1970, but Lexington Avenue trains still use the inner loop to turn around.

The design importance of this station derives from its typical IRT Beaux-Arts architectural decoration -- incorporating tiles, mosaics and representational faience plaques -- as well as from its unique configuration. The station was engineered by W.B. Parsons, with Heins & LaFarge as architects. Recent alterations of the station interior have been "contextual," using mosaics, plaques, and tile bands to continue the original maritime theme.

The area around South Ferry has long served Greater New York as a crossroads, public gathering place, and intermodal transfer point. South Ferry Station is one part of an elaborate web of historic transportation lines (ferries, els, subways, roads, tunnels) that over time have gathered around the tip of Lower Manhattan. Today, South Ferry Station -- along with the Staten Island and other ferries, bus routes, highways, and city streets -- represents this historic pattern.

This station is architecturally important because the original 1905 platform and wall decorations, including the large "SOUTH FERRY" plaques, are substantially intact. In addition, the 1918 platform and decorative features are also intact, despite the fact that it has been blocked off from public access. It is one of two early stations whose platforms have not been extended (the other is the 145th Street/Lenox Avenue Station) and it still actively uses moveable platform extenders.

**33. Statement of Significance by Contextual Themes: Urban and Social Change; Technological Developments; Architectural Design Features.**

- Urban & Social Change: Original IRT shaped the pattern of development of the City.

Architectural design: Fine example of Original IRT-era subway interior, featuring mosaic and plaques.

**34. Major Alterations and Dates:**

- 1914-18: new inner platform added for the addition of the Broadway/Seventh Avenue line to the loop. The inner wall was punched with openings for car doors, instead of demolished altogether (at present, the inner platform not in use). The inner track, however, is still used by Lexington Avenue trains which, however, do not stop at the station.

1958: renovation/relocation of entries and token booths

1992: new interior murals & tiles installed at stair landing

**35. Overall Integrity:**

Exterior Integrity		Interior Integrity
•	a. Original conditions substantially intact	•
•	b. Alterations and/or additions beneficial	•
•	c. Minor detrimental alterations/additions not affecting overall integrity	• XX
•	d. Detrimental alterations and/or additions, reversible	•
• XX	e. Detrimental alterations and/or additions, not reversible	•

*SOURCES OF INFORMATION*

**36. Engineering drawings:**

(Reel # / Drawing # / Description)

- TA Microrecords - CD33/F-4/Wall & Hung Ceiling Details; CD33/F-2/Elevations & Sections; CD33/1701/Structural Sections (3pgs.); CD33/F-8 Plans & Elevations of Token Booth; Plans, Elevations of Token Booths; CD33/F-3/Platform Details; CD33/F-1/Street Level Plan of Control Building; CD38/ 1701A/Key Plan & Perspective View; CD33/103/Sections of Station in Battery Park at South Ferry; CD33/C-502/Sections for New Platform; CD33/102/ Sections of Station in Battery Park at South Ferry; CD33/C-501/Plan of New Platform for Station in Battery Park at South Ferry (includes a Key Plan); Reel 86/440/ Platform Plan showing slot vending machines; MS-4930-R Maintenance of Way.

**37. Archival photos:**

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**38. Sources/Archives:**

- Lee Stookey, Subway Ceramics. 1992.

**39. Interviews:**

- Audrey Mosley-Marcus, Station Manager, June 6, 1994.  
Robert Olmsted, P.E., Transit Historian.

**40. Existing Surveys:**

- Phase I: Reconnaissance Level Historical Survey of Transit Authority Properties, June 1991.