

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 City Hall Subway Station (IRT)  
other name/site number City Hall Loop Station

2. Location

street & number Park Row and City Hall Park [ ] not for publication  
city or town New York [ ] vicinity  
state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10007

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.)

M. Carter, Supt  
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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City Hall Subway Station (IRT)  
Name of Property

New York County, New York  
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			Structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure			Objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object			TOTAL
		1	0	
		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/  
Arts & Crafts

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
Foundation Concrete  
Walls Brick, concrete  
Roof Steel, concrete, Guastavino tile (terra  
cotta), glass tile  
Other Decorative finishes: ceramic tile,  
leaded glass, faience, bronze, 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 City Hall Subway Station is located in civic center of Lower Manhattan. Construction began on the station 1898 and it was completed in 1904 as part of the original Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Contract 1 system. The City Hall Subway Station IRT (Lexington Avenue) was the original southern terminus of the IRT and was the showpiece of the system. It forms a loop oriented in an east/southeast direction beneath Park Row and Broadway and directly below City Hall Park. All components of City Hall Station are encompassed by this nomination, and the boundaries are the same as those for the local landmark designation.

### General Characteristics and Construction Methods

The City Hall Station is a curving, single, 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 minimal thickness of four inches. Unique to this station are the structural vaults that spring from the side walls and help to support the ceiling and the surface above. Twelve of these thin-shelled Guastavino vaults form the station ceiling. They frame into arches faced in green tiles. Three leaded skylights are set regularly (one at the base of the mezzanine) along the line of the arches. Above each of the skylights there are vault lighting slabs that were fitted with circular glass block discs. These discs allowed natural light to penetrate through to the leaded arches below. The central and southernmost of these remains in place – the other has been covered over in concrete.

The side walls of the station are of four-inch brick, separated by a one-inch air space from the outer structural walls. The vaults have remained in remarkably good condition throughout, although they are in need of a thorough cleaning to restore their original color. The Roman brick, faience plaques and ceramic tile, where it is used all remain in fair to good condition throughout the station. Floors throughout are of three-inch thick graded concrete sectioned into three-foot squares. Tracks are constructed of timber cross ties placed in concrete and 100-pound rails. All ties are fitted with tie plates ([www.nysubways.org](http://www.nysubways.org)).

### Mezzanine Level and Stairwells

Two arched stairways once led from the street level at Park Row down to the mezzanine level. The stairwells have been slabbed over and the interior walls have been covered in a skim coat of plain concrete, due to a number of repairs and water damage (Photo 1). The

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ribs of the vaulted ceiling in the mezzanine (and the rest of the station) are constructed using an alternating "quoin" pattern of green and white tiles with brown trim. The raised joints of the vaults are carried down to the brown and green trim tile throughout the station. A leaded glass oculus is located at the center of the mezzanine ceiling (Photo 2). The oculus ring is constructed of brick and layers of the vaulting are visible along the bottom edge. Single-bulb light fixtures are set around the opening of the oculus and along the top half of the ribs.

Large glass tiles are used to fill the arched spaces of the walls. A significant repair to the glass tiles of the east wall between the stairways is visible - they have been replaced with a more opaque ceramic tile (Photo 3). The bottom half of the walls are covered in iron spot Roman brick topped by a marble belt course and fitted with a marble cove base. Original IRT railings are located at the bottom of the southern stairs and the outline of the ticket booth is still visible on the mezzanine floor. Pipe lines and conduit have also been run though this wall in an unsympathetic fashion.

A wide set of stairs leads down to the platform level (Photo 4). The arch of the stairway roof is also constructed using the Guastavino method. The stairs leading down to the platform level are concrete fitted with metal safety treads.

#### Platform Level

Above the arched opening leading up to the mezzanine, there is a large, white faience tile sign that reads "City Hall" in blue letters. Three single-bulb light fixtures illuminate this sign at either side (Photo 5).

The twelve ceiling vaults are constructed throughout the station using the same pattern described above for the mezzanine (Photo 6). The arched wall spaces are filled with Roman brick throughout the length of the curving platform. The arches at each of the end walls are filled with the same large glass tile seen at the mezzanine level. The bottom half of the walls feature a marble cove base topped by a wainscot of Roman brick that is again topped by a course of marble.

The leaded skylights are a remarkable feature of the station and are constructed in a stylized floral pattern (Photo 7). They were blacked over during World War II, and a number of the glass panels are broken. Work is currently underway to restore the skylights. Twelve chandeliers provide additional light to the platform (Photo 8). For an unknown reason, the fixtures nearest the skylights have five arms while all others have four. They are functional with a subtle stylized floral motif and appear to have been finished in nickel.

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At the base of the stairs there are markings left by the platform extenders once utilized at this station. On the track wall across from the platform, and above the Roman brick wainscoting are three enormous bronze plaques commissioned to commemorate the commencement of the IRT's construction and the subway's opening in 1904 (Photo 9). Listed on these plaques are the names of the people who worked to bring the City's first subway line to fruition. These included the mayors, controllers, and commissioners in office from 1900-1904, the contractor John B., McDonald, the chief architect William Barclay Parsons, the financier August Belmont, Officers of the Rapid Transit Subway Construction Company, and the engineering staff. These plaques were designed by Gutzon Borglum, whose most well known work is the Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

Two additional faience station signs line the platform wall at each end. The signs are blue letters that spell "City Hall" on a white ground set off by a bold geometric pattern at either end (Photo 10). The white field is rimmed by a thin band of green-blue tile and is set in a field of brown tiles that are again trimmed in a thin line of green-blue molding. The style of these signs is unique in the IRT system.

City Hall Subway Station (IRT)

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Name of Property

**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/Builder**

Parsons, William Barclay (engineer)  
 Heins, George L. LaFarge, Christopher G. (architects)  
 Guastavino, Rafael (engineer - vaults)

**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 City Hall Subway Station (IRT) 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 City Hall Subway Station was constructed in 1904 as the flagship station of the IRT system. Decommissioned since 1945, the City Hall Station retains a relatively high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The early IRT stations, including City Hall, 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.

Catalan immigrant Rafael Gustavino (1842-1908) was responsible for the creation of the vaulted ceilings. By 1900, Guastavino had perfected the thin-shelled timber vaulting system to a high art. He devised special tiles and mortars as well as a system for vault construction which consisted of a series of timber vaults composed of broad terra-cotta tiles laid with the curve of the vault in two or more layers and held together with mortar. Such vaults were very quick to construct for they did not require centering, falsework, or scaffolding. Heins & LaFarge has previously utilized the Guastavino vaulting system for the main crossing of their most famous work - Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

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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 City Hall the plaques feature the words "City Hall" in bold blue letters on a white field. The only addition ornamentations on the sign are the geometric shapes that flank the words and the colored banding that surrounds them.

In the City Hall Station the high quality of the materials and the architectural detail are magnificent. Faience name tablets, Roman brick wainscoting, Guastavino vaulting and magnificent leaded skylights are still visible throughout the station. Intricately detailed chandeliers remain throughout the station. There is no other station like it in the system. The City Hall Station, as part of the original IRT subway system, displays a high quality craftsmanship and architectural detail in addition to superior materials.

City Hall Station was designed as the flagship station of New York City's first subway (IRT) line and the beginning point of the original Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) route that ran north to Grand Central Terminal, across 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to Times Square on the West side and then north on Broadway to 145<sup>th</sup> Street. It also was meant to reflect the importance of the stop – the seat of government in the City of New York. The station suffered from poor ridership numbers for a number of years as commuters preferred the convenience of the much larger Brooklyn Bridge station located a mere 600 feet away. The Board of Transportation decided to decommission the station on December 31, 1945.

For the past 50 years this monument to the IRT has been closed from public view, seen only by the Motormen on the #6 line and occasional tours conducted by the Transit Museum. The station is currently undergoing rehabilitation in honor of the Centennial of the Subway.



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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.
- New York City Transit Authority: *Historical Properties Survey: Phase II – City Hall Station*. New York: NYCTA, 1997.
- 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.



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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the City Hall Subway Station – Lexington Avenue Line is shown as the bold line on the accompanying site plan entitled, "The City Hall Station – Lexington Avenue Line – Borough of Manhattan, Location Plan." The designation for City Hall Station includes the following: portions of City Hall Station consisting of the walls, platform, ceiling vaults, skylights, and staircases.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries for the City Hall Subway Station represent the entire original station completed in 1904. The boundaries are indicative of this station's period of significance.

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County and State  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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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**Additional Documentation**

List of Black and White Photos

City Hall Station (IRT)  
New York County, New York

Photographer: Stacey Vairo

Date: March 2003

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

1. North stairwell at the mezzanine level. View north.
2. Vaulting and oculus in mezzanine ceiling. View northwest.
3. Repair to the glass tile on northwest wall of the mezzanine. View northwest.
4. Stairway leading from the mezzanine level to the platform level. View southeast.
5. City Hall name tablet above entry to the mezzanine stairway. View north.
6. City Hall station including the Guastavino vaulted ceiling. View northeast.
7. Centrally located leaded skylight (one of three). View n/a.
8. View of chandeliers on northeastern portion of the platform. View northeast.
9. One of two brass commemorative plaques by Gutzon Bolum. View southwest.
10. Faience City Hall name tablet located along western wall at the northern side of the station. View northwest.

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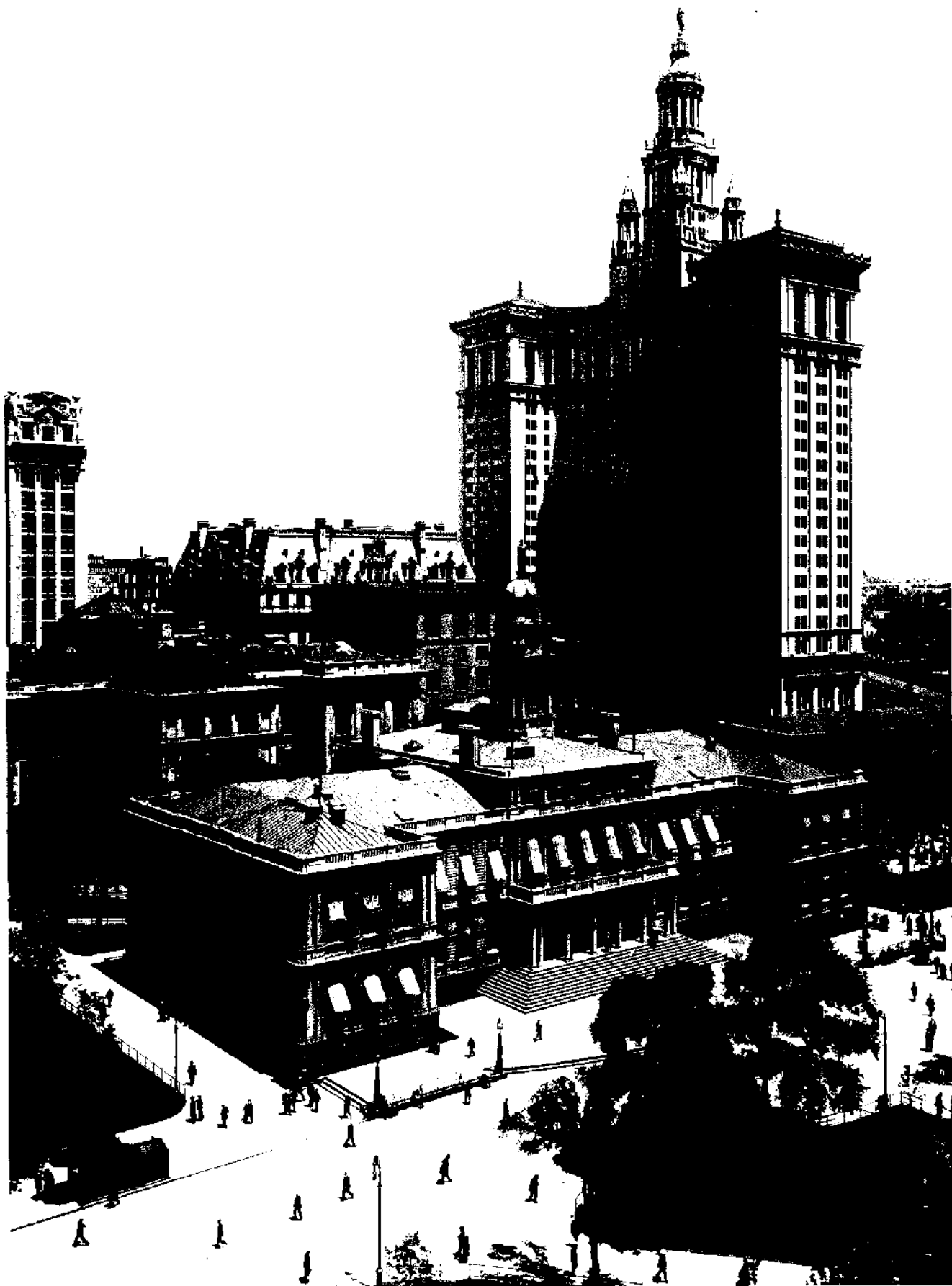
Name of Property  
New York County, NY  
County and State

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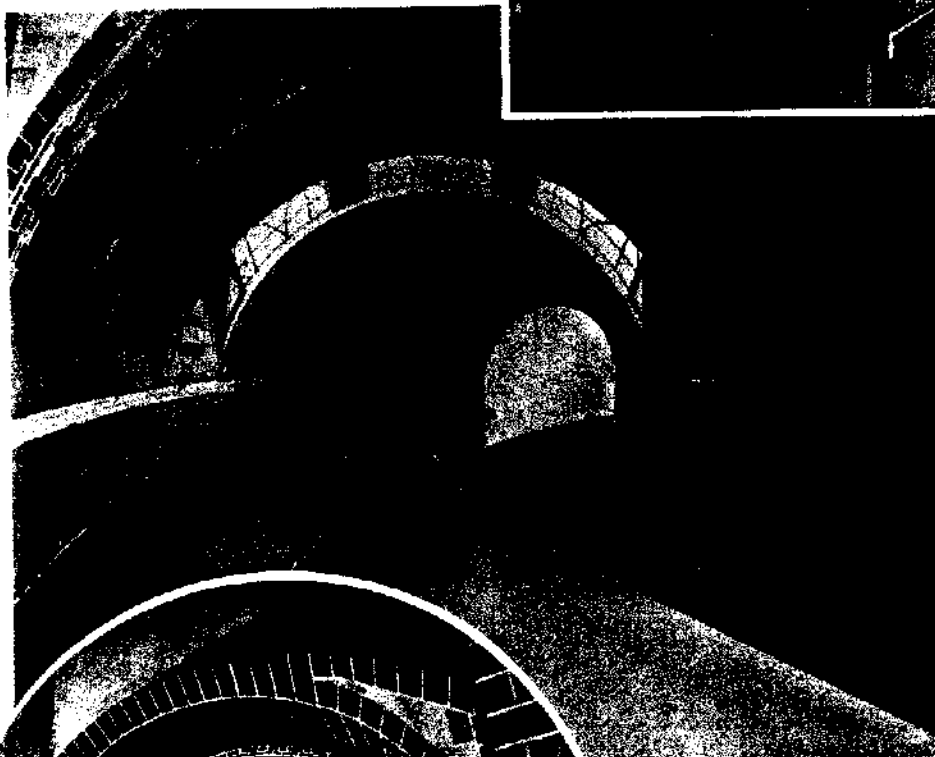
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Supporting Documentation

- A. Aerial view above City Hall Park. Photo shows wrought iron kiosk at station entrance. White areas in walkway are actual vault lights which provided natural lighting to skylights in station below.
- B. Historic photos of mezzanine control area and platform level of station, 1904.
- C. Platform level of station as it appeared in 1904. Photo shows one of the three skylights and several chandeliers.
- D. Photo taken of original drawing for the metal framework for the platform level skylights.

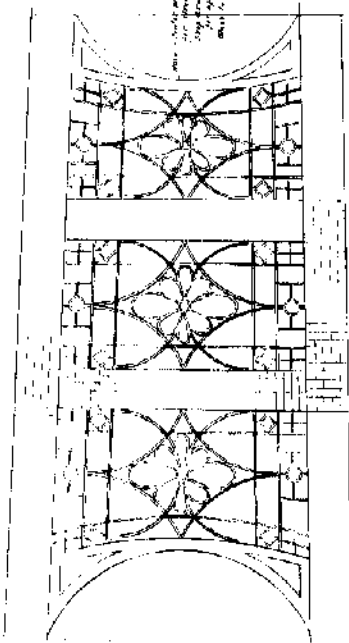


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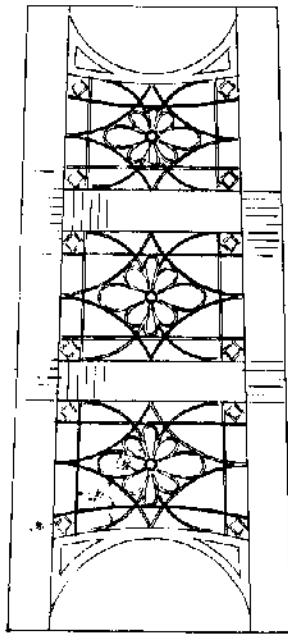




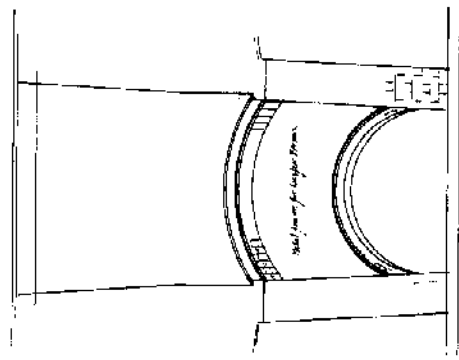
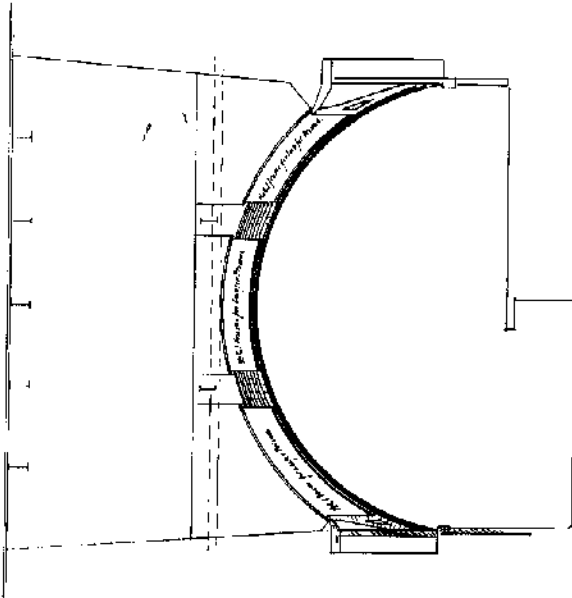




DEVELOPED PLAN OF VAULT LIGHT ARCHES AT  
ENTRANCE SHOWING METAL FRAMES FOR LOWER PRISONS.  
(SEE MEASUREMENTS)



DEVELOPED PLAN OF VAULT LIGHT ARCHES  
SHOWING METAL FRAMES FOR LOWER PRISONS.  
(SEE MEASUREMENTS)




RAPID TRANSIT COMMISSION  
CITY HALL STATION  
DRAWING SHOWING METAL FRAMES FOR  
LOWER PRISONS.  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

*James C. McHugh, Inc.*  
CONSULTING ARCHITECTS.  
20 EAST 34th ST.  
NEW YORK

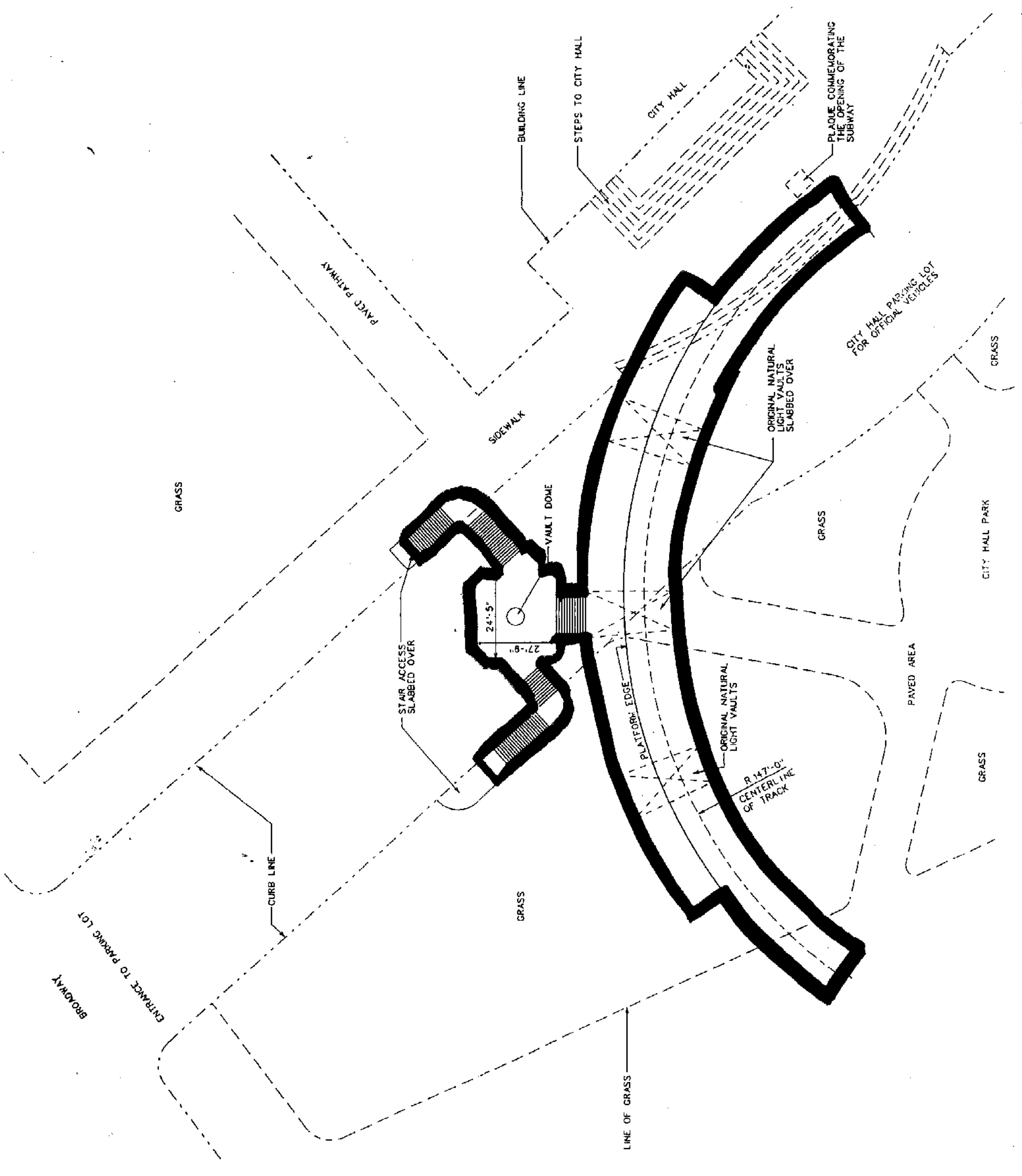
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WORKING DRAWING  
DATE: 1914  
BY: J.C.M.  
CHECKED BY: J.C.M.

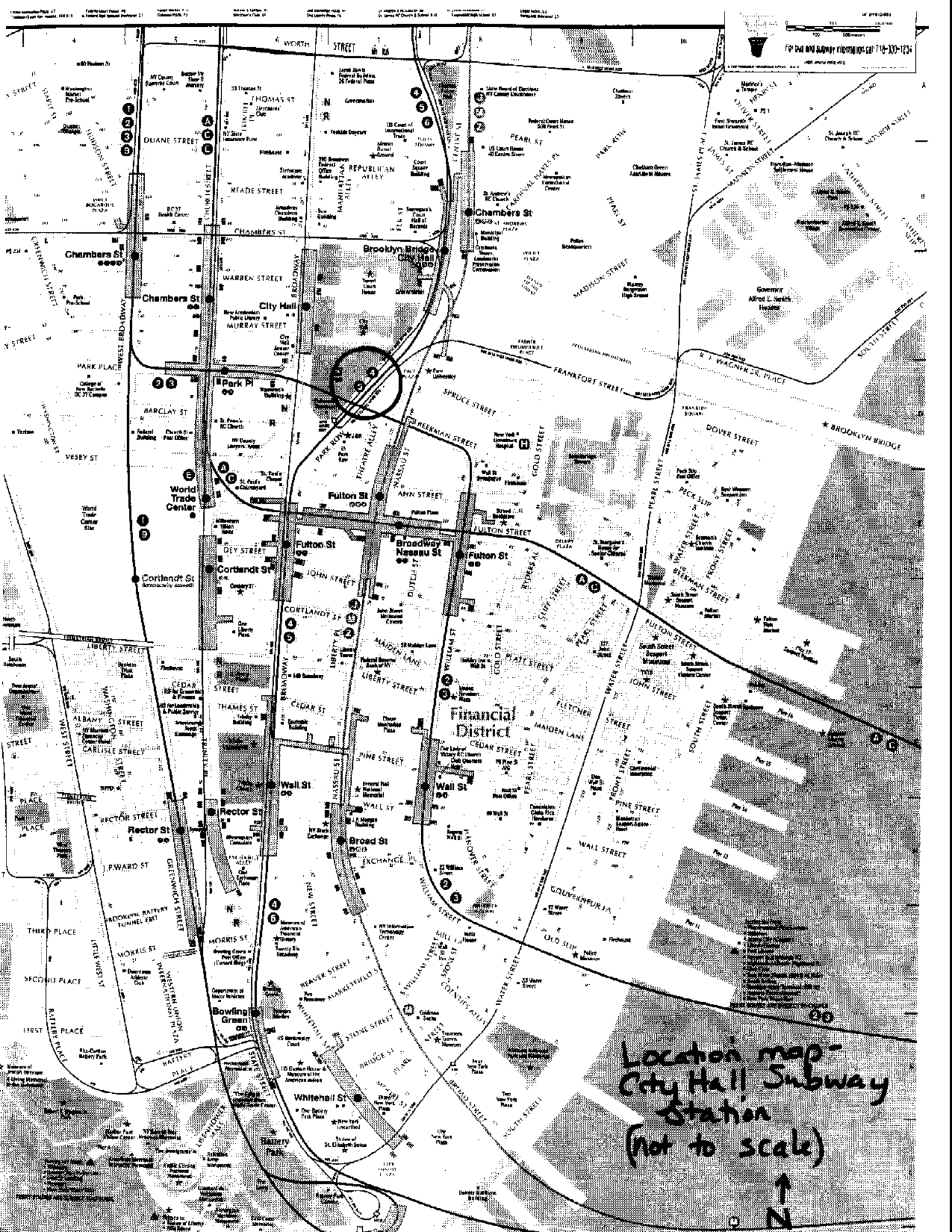
11/14/14  
6  
14



 NEW YORK CITY TRANSIT AUTHORITY	DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION <b>DIVISION OF STATION DESIGN</b>	THE CITY HALL STATION LEXINGTON AVE LINE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN	<b>LOCATION PLAN</b>
	DRAWN BY A. DUBS	CHECKED BY L. ROSENTHAL	DATE AUG. 27, 1953

SCALE: 1" = 30'-0" (0, 10, 20, 30, 40)





Location map -  
 City Hall Subway  
 Station  
 (not to scale)



JERSEY CITY QUADRANGLE  
 NEW JERSEY - NEW YORK  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

8265 IV SW  
 (CENTRAL PARK)

81 582 2 180 000 FEET (N. J.) 583 584 74°00' 40°45'



690 000 FEET  
 (N. J.)

City Hall  
 Subway  
 Station (IRT)  
 New York Co, NY  
 Zone 18  
 Easting: 583860  
 Northing: 4507020

42'30"  
 Jersey City Quad  
 USGS  
 1:24000

MANHATTAN BRIDGE 0.3 MI.  
 UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS 4 MI

Ellis Island











