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Come and visit our exhibition *Reign of the Redbirds* on display at our Downtown Brooklyn location!

Thursday - Sunday
10am to 4pm
99 Schermerhorn St.
Brooklyn, NY



Scan the QR code
to learn more
about the Redbirds
and Bluebirds:



nytransitmuseum.org/thebirds

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NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM

Redbirds and Bluebirds Take Flight

Saturday, November 4, 2023



About Old South Ferry Station



Old South Ferry Station is actually a complex of three separate stations. The first was opened in 1905 as part of the second phase of subway construction, extending the subway south from City Hall into Brooklyn. Like Old City Hall Station, South Ferry

was structured as a balloon loop intended to serve the IRT's Lexington Avenue line. It also featured early IRT design elements including terracotta artwork and ornate mosaics. In 1918, the IRT opened a second loop inside the existing loop to service the Broadway-Seventh Avenue lines. Nearby, the BMT opened Whitehall station, but without interconnected service between the stations.

The loops' design proved to be the station's undoing. The tight curves were built for five cars, making it impossible to extend the station when trains later doubled in length to accommodate increased ridership. Ultimately the station was closed in 2009 to make way for a more modern Whitehall St-South Ferry station. Old South Ferry was brought back into service in 2012 after Hurricane Sandy flooded the new station, but returned to its decommissioned status in March of 2017 after the rehabilitation process - the only original station to have been decommissioned and recommissioned.

Flight of the Redbirds and Bluebirds

MANUFACTURERS	American Car and Foundry, St. Louis Car Company
YEARS IN SERVICE	1959-2003
ROUTES	The IRT cars provided service on the 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 lines. The B Division cars provided service on various BMT and IND lines.



Arguably the most recognizable of New York's subway cars, the Redbirds are as iconic as the subway token. The moniker refers to a series of nine types of subway cars that dominated the rails between 1959 and 2003. These cars were introduced as part of a car replacement program launched in the decades after the subway system unified in 1940.

The R-26, the first of the new car designs that would later become known as the Redbirds (R-26-R-36 trains), entered into service in 1959. These cars included several innovations that would accommodate increased ridership with a more comfortable ride. They were lighter and featured redesigned interiors with molded fiberglass seats.

The crimson hue that gave the Redbirds their name was not part of the original car design. In 1963, the R-33S (or R-33WF) entered service on the IRT Flushing line (the 7 train) sporting a blue and white livery to encourage a visit to the World's Fair in Queens, inspiring the Bluebird nickname. Red wouldn't become standard until the 1980s proving effective at hiding metal dust stains as well as graffiti. The Redbirds were phased out of revenue service by 2003 but are still hard at work in rail yards and as work trains. Some even serve as artificial reefs that house marine life.