

The Malta Foremast and Anchor from an Unknown Vessel

Ocean and 8th Avenues, Belmar

Sailing from Antwerp to New York on November 24, 1885, the schooner *Malta*, formerly named *The Queen of the South*, ran aground near the foot of 9th Avenue and Ocean Beach due to high winds and rough ocean conditions. (Belmar was known as Ocean Beach in the late 1800s.) The ship pounded on the sandbar as the waves pounded upon the stranded vessel, and eventually its mizzenmast tumbled into the sea. One sailor, who jumped overboard in a panic, lost his life when the sea carried him away.

Parts of the ship were salvaged, and remains of the hull are still visible today. "It's well out to sea," said Pat McCormick, vice president of the Belmar Historical Society, "but part of the stern can be seen off 9th Avenue on days with very low tides."

Standing tall on the corner of 8th and Ocean Avenues on the southwest side of the intersection appears



The foremast of the *Malta* at 8th and Ocean Avenues in Belmar.

to be a flagpole—but it is actually the foremast (or front mast) of the *Malta*, which was salvaged by local authorities and originally mounted to the land as a standpipe for the sewer system. "It's an early 19th century effort to recycle," McCormick said, "and there's an identifying marker at its base."

Guide rails, which guide the sail up the mast, are still visible along the

foremast, and the cap (which secured the upper mast) is still attached at the top. Historic photos of the *Malta* show the same foremast on the vessel.

Facing the foremast, on the ocean side of Ocean Avenue, lies an anchor from an unknown vessel that was donated by the landmark business, Klein's Fish Market and Waterside Café, according to McCormick.



Anchor from an unknown vessel, also at 8th and Ocean Avenues.



Ocean Avenue in Belmar, circa 1920. The *Malta* ran aground off 9th Avenue on November 24, 1885. Parts of the ship were salvaged. In this photo, a piece of the stern can be seen off the coast. Says local historian Pat McCormick, "It's well out to sea, but part of the stern can [still] be seen [today] off 9th Avenue on days with very low tides."