

## The Fortuna Anchor

### Ship Bottom Municipal Building, 1621 Long Beach Boulevard, Ship Bottom

On January 18, 1910 during a vicious winter storm, the *Fortuna*, a 193-foot-long, iron hulled, three-masted Italian bark, ran aground near what is today 16th Street in Ship Bottom. Lifesaving responders quickly arrived on the scene and rescued the seventeen people on board, which included the captain, crew, and four passengers. The wrecked ship capsized in the beach's sand and lay on its side for much of 1910, before most of its remains were cut up for salvage.

Fast-forward sixty years to the summer of 1970 when Carole Bradshaw noticed a red tile while walking the tideline on Long Beach Island. "It was not particularly pretty, but there was something about it that screamed 'pick me up and take me home,'" she wrote in her book, *Fortuna*.

That first piece from a giant puzzle sparked a journey that changed the course of Bradshaw's life. Over the next few years, Bradshaw found more tiles, each one further piquing her curiosity. Through her research, which included conversations with family members and locals, she learned the tiles were carried as ballast aboard the ill-fated *Fortuna*.

A storm in 1983 exposed the *Fortuna's* steel ribs, and while Bradshaw was photographing the remains, she noticed something protruding from the sand: the tip of the *Fortuna's* massive 6,000-pound anchor, which salvagers had left behind because of its size.

Bradshaw then embarked upon a mission to preserve the anchor as a historical artifact, and with the help of Ship Bottom's mayor at the time, Robert Nissen, the *Fortuna's* anchor was retrieved in the fall of 1983 by several volunteers. It now stands in front of the Ship Bottom Borough Hall to honor Long Beach Island's maritime history.

Bradshaw's story, however, did not end with the anchor's retrieval. In her book, *Fortuna*, she chronicles her passion to learn about and find



courtesy of the Mill C. and James E. Birdsall Collection

Photographer Lewis D. Crowell captured this image of the *Fortuna* wreck on Long Beach Island. The ship laid there for much of 1910, before most of its remains were cut up for salvage.

Saveria Adragna who was born on the *Fortuna* just before its 1910 mishap. Saveria's father was Captain Giovan Adragna, part owner of the *Fortuna* along with brother-in-law Captain Baldassare Savona and Captain Savona's father-in-law Aloisio Salvatore. Together, the three men chose the name *Fortuna* because it means "good fortune" in Italian.

Captain Adragna's pregnant wife, Maria, and their children, Antonina (b. 1903) and Anna (b. 1907) were also onboard. Saveria was born on the ship near Barbados and was about a month and a half old when the *Fortuna* wrecked. After being rescued, the family left Ship Bottom a week later on January 25, 1910—but what had happened to baby Saveria? Could she still be alive all these years later?

After finding the anchor, Bradshaw's seemingly impossible quest for answers led her to the United Nations, the Smithsonian Institute, the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and ultimately to Sicily, Italy where she found Saveria in 1985 in Trapani. Bradshaw also met her younger brother, Giuseppe, who was born in 1912.

The siblings traveled to Long Beach Island in September 1985 to attend the dedication ceremony of the *Fortuna's* anchor, the anchor from their father's ship, at Ship Bottom Borough Hall.

Bradshaw wrote of her discovery and quest, "It's part history, part adventure, and totally true."



The *Fortuna* anchor in Ship Bottom.

Jill Ocone