



A CENTURY OF LEGACY

Celebrating 100 Years of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Zack Shore, Realtors

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As we mark the 100th anniversary of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Zack Shore Realtors this summer of 2025, we celebrate not just a local business, but a cornerstone of Long Beach Island's cultural history—a legacy woven into the very fabric of this vibrant coastal community.

Founded in 1925 by Richard A. Zachariae Jr., a German immigrant with a vision, this company laid the groundwork for what LBI has become today: a cherished residential island defined by its resilience, community spirit, and timeless charm. Mr. and Mrs. Zachariae were among the island's earliest pioneers—visionaries who helped transform the island from a remote summer retreat into a thriving community. The story of "Zack Shore"—as it has been affectionately referred to for generations—is one of two families, the Zachariaes and the Thomases, whose local contributions, steadfast dedication, and innovative spirit have shaped the island for a century.

Richard A. Zachariae Jr. arrived in the United States before World War I, a 17-year-old man from Bad Blankenburg, Germany, with a thirst for opportunity. Zachariae first settled in New York City, where he attended night classes at Columbia University. In August of 1914, he met and married his sweetheart, and the couple relocated to Philadelphia, where he continued his studies at the Wharton School of Finance. Even in these early years, Zachariae demonstrated the drive and determination that would come to define his life. By the 1920s, vacationing in Ship Bottom with his wife and their growing family, he fell in love with the island's raw beauty and made the bold decision to plant roots there by purchasing a \$99 bayside summer cottage—a modest beginning for a man whose ambitions would soon transform LBI. Shortly after, he decided to move to LBI permanently and built his family a home on 7th Street on the ocean in Surf City.

In 1925, Richard founded Zachariae Realty, and just a year later, he opened his first real estate office in Ship Bottom. That original location later became Whalon's Furniture Store, and today, Sugar Kingdom stands on the same site in Ship Bottom. It was a ground-breaking move at a time when LBI was little more than a sandy stretch of possibility. But Zachariae saw more than maritime forests, sandy dunes and marshy wetlands; he saw a community waiting to be built in paradise. His vision extended far beyond selling properties—he became a civic leader, serving as Surf City's mayor for an unprecedented 38 consecutive years into the 1960s. He also presided over the Long Beach Island School Board, the Ocean County Board of Realtors, and co-founded

the LBI Board of Trade, tirelessly fostering the island's growth.

Alongside LBI's foremost real estate mogul and outdoorsman—he loved hunting, fishing, and was often referred to as an old salt—was his wife Tessie, a warm and spirited presence whose island hospitality became legendary. In a collection of the best "War Letters" published by Random House in 1960, Major James W. Snyder Jr., with the Tenth U.S. Air Force in India and China wrote a letter referring to the home of Mayor and Mrs. Zachariae, the comfort of their home with the fire place "...and a famous hot buttered rum out of your cellar... Whatever else you achieve in this world, the magic you hold over that concoction makes you worthy of awe and admiration..." The Zachariaes' daughter, Dorothea "Zack" Zachariae Hanle, carried the family's trailblazing torch, graduating from Barnegat High in 1930 and rising to prominence as a revered author and editor at Harper's Bazaar and Bon Appétit. Dot's eclectic flair—pistol practice on the beach, and authoring more than 65 how-to books including the cult classics "The Surfer's Handbook" (1968) and "Cooking Wild Game" (1974) under her nickname "Zack Hanle"—added a dash of bohemian charm to the Zachariae family. She was even a James Beard Foundation Award inductee in 1994, along with Tim and Nina Zagat.

Meanwhile, the Thomas family entered the story through William P. Thomas, a World War II Purple Heart and Bronze Star veteran whose journey to LBI was born of resilience. Severely wounded in February 1945, Thomas spent years in hospitals, determined to recover



and reclaim his life. By 1947, he settled full-time in Cedar Run, just across the bridge from LBI, and launched William P. Thomas Builders. Specializing in building magnificent oceanfront homes on Long Beach Island, he shared an office with Zachariae Realty, forging a friendship that would unite their families and eventually their businesses. Mr. Zachariae became known to Thomas and his family as “Papa Zack,” even spending holidays and vacations with each other. Together, these two men—Zachariae with his leadership and Thomas with his entrepreneurial drive—laid the template for LBI’s residential identity, turning a summer retreat into a year-round community for generations to come.

William P. Thomas earned his real estate license in the 1950s, joining the family business alongside Frank P. Hanle, Richard Zachariae’s son-in-law. As the company prepared for a new chapter, the leadership baton passed to the next generation. In 1970, following Zachariae’s retirement to Florida, Thomas acquired his shares and entered into partnership with Hanle to help shape the company’s future. After Hanle’s passing in the early years of that decade, Thomas assumed full ownership and went on to guide the firm through a remarkable era of growth and transformation. Though the company ultimately came under the stewardship of the Thomas family, the legacy of Richard “Papa Zack” Zachariae has remained a guiding force. Widely regarded as the founding patriarch, Mr. Zachariae is remembered with deep respect and admiration for his vision, work ethic, and entrepreneurial spirit that laid the foundation for everything “Zack Shore” has become.

In 1994, the company joined Prudential Real Estate Affiliates as an independently owned and operated franchisee, embracing a new era of innovation and brand recognition. Four years later, Thomas’ son, Kevin—who had spent nearly two decades practicing law while supporting the family business behind the scenes—officially stepped into a leadership role as Vice President. The evolution continued in 2012, when Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway acquired Prudential’s real estate division. After thoughtfully observing the organization from the outside, Kevin made the strategic decision to affiliate with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. By December 2015, the company proudly rebranded as Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Zack Shore Realtors—a name that honors its century-long legacy while embracing the strength, reputation, and modern momentum of a world-renowned brand.

In addition to traditional real estate services and home sales, the company was also the first on the island to formally broker vacation rentals. That side of the business boomed in the latter part of the 20th century, when Zack

Shore became the go-to destination for summer vacation rentals on LBI—a tradition that proudly continues today. In fact, Zack Shore’s legacy isn’t just rooted in development and sales, but in the cherished summer-time memories it helped create. For many, the name Zack Shore is synonymous with childhood—long beach days, backyard barbecues, and salty ocean breezes. Ask nearly anyone who spent their summers on LBI over the past few generations, and chances are they’ll recall the excitement of renting a beach house through Zack Shore. These rentals weren’t just transactions; they were the backdrop to family traditions, lifelong friendships, and unforgettable seasons. That emotional connection has become a hallmark of the brand—blending deep community ties with trusted expertise in both sales and rentals.

Today, the company thrives under the leadership of Kevin Thomas, and his daughter, Seton McKeon, the third and fourth generation to carry the torch. Kevin often reflects on its enduring success with a mix of pride and pragmatism. “We’ve been through every market you could imagine,” he says, referencing the stories passed down from earlier generations about the Roaring ’20s, the Great Depression and World War II, as well as recalling more recent events such as the gas crisis, recessions, Hurricane Sandy, and COVID-19 pandemic. “The key ingredient has been that we compete hard, but we don’t cut corners. When markets are good, we squirrel it away, because we know something else is coming.”

Over the years, Seton and Kevin have made thoughtful, strategic decisions that not only sustained the company through economic challenges, but positioned it to thrive in a changing market—something many agencies could not achieve. Thanks to their leadership, Zack Shore remains the top real estate company on the island, backed by a legacy of trust, adaptability, and deep community roots.

Seton, who is the Vice President and serves as Broker of Record, echoes this ethos of resilience and family. Starting in college, she weathered the 2008 housing crisis by closing Monmouth County offices to keep the company afloat. “We all wore as many hats as we could to keep things running,” she says. “It’s not just family—it’s everyone here. We’re selective with who we employ because this is a family business, and everyone here is part of that culture; everyone here is family.”

Her father, Kevin, also reflects on how much the real estate landscape has evolved over the generations. “It used to be that someone bought one house in their lifetime, then retired and downsized—or moved to Florida,” he shares. “Now, it’s common for people to



buy and sell several times throughout their lives, especially with younger generations embracing more fluid lifestyles.” Recognizing this shift, the company has evolved its customer service approach to meet the needs of today’s buyers and sellers. That adaptability has played a major role in their continued success—not only do they serve clients from every generation, but they often work with multiple generations within the same family. Many families return to Zack Shore time and time again, trusting them exclusively with their real estate needs.



Few stories capture the spirit of Zack Shore’s generational legacy quite like that of David Cowles, a veteran realtor whose career with the company spans over four decades. He fondly recalls making his very first sale with Zack Shore in November of 1981—for \$40,000. Since then, he has spent the majority of his life helping to contribute to the firm’s success. Today, his son Michael Cowles works alongside him, continuing the family tradition. Michael speaks warmly of the mentorship he’s received—not only from his father, but also from the seasoned agents at Zack Shore, who welcomed him with the same generosity and guidance that defined their own careers. That spirit of continuity also lives in the story of Aileen Kidd, sister of William P. Thomas, who worked with the company for an extraordinary 48 years. Overseeing the LBI offices and eventually serving as Broker of Record, Aileen retired just last year—at the remarkable age of 90. It’s a legacy that echoes the early partnership between Richard Zachariae and William P. Thomas—mentorship transformed into kinship, where colleagues become family, and a business becomes a shared way of life.



What sets Zack Shore’s team of agents apart is their unparalleled connection to the community. With deep roots on Long Beach Island—many born and raised right on the island—their local insight goes far beyond what a map or listing can offer. As longtime employee Sarah Cataffo shares, “This has been a family-oriented business for as long as I can remember—passed down from generation to generation. That speaks volumes. We’re your mom-and-pop operation, yet



we offer all the tools and advantages of a global brand. It's the best of both worlds." That local expertise is more than a point of pride—it's a powerful resource for clients. For instance, only someone with true insider knowledge would know that two homes on the same beach block in Barnegat Light, just streets apart, could offer dramatically different experiences due to dune formations and walking distance to the beach. This subtle, yet significant, insider knowledge is an example of what makes Zack Shore's guidance so trusted—and so uniquely valuable.

Now, as Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Zack Shore, Realtors celebrates its centennial, its impact reaches far beyond real estate. Kevin and Seton uphold the founders' community spirit through deep involvement in the fabric of Long Beach Island—giving back to the place that shaped the company's legacy. Whether supporting local nonprofits like David's Dream and Believe Foundation or showing up for causes like Waves of Strength, they offer not just resources, but

presence—reinforcing the island's enduring sense of connection and care. "Family-owned, family-run for 100 years," Kevin says—a guiding philosophy that lives on through a loyal team. Many of the employees who support Zack Shore's agents behind the scenes have been with the company for an average of 20 years, a testament to the shared values, trust, and heart that continue to define the firm, generation after generation.

The company's journey mirrors LBI's own—from \$99 cottages to multimillion-dollar homes, from Zachariae's first office to a modern Causeway headquarters. It's a story of perseverance; of two families whose vision and values turned a sandy shore into a thriving community. As Richard A. Zachariae Jr. once guided Surf City's growth, and William P. Thomas built its homes, Kevin Thomas and Seton McKeon ensure that legacy endures—not just in brick and mortar, but in the heart of LBI itself. Here's to 100 years, and to the next century of building dreams on this beloved island.