

Historical happenings

with
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feature



Greek presence in Junction Street

WHEN Stavros “Steve” Castrisos opened a refreshment room in Junction Street, Nowra in 1914, he started a tradition for a Greek presence in Nowra’s CBD that lasted for several generations.

Castrisos would have been barely out of his teens for he had been born at Kastrisianika in September 1895 and set out for Australia shortly after his 15th birthday.

Arriving from Port Said in December 1910, he first went to Kingaroy (Queensland), where he worked for a fruiterer, and after a year he moved to Sydney to work for Aroney Brothers in George Street.

In his three years there he learned the English language and also gained knowledge about running a business, which he put to good use at Nowra.

During World War I Castrisos was required

to register as an alien, and these papers reveal he was 5-ft. 7-in. tall with black hair and brown eyes.

He made an impression here for when he applied to be naturalised in 1920, the signatories were Nowra Mayor William Holloway and Presbyterian minister Rev Thomas Jamieson-Williams.

It is highly likely that Castrisos had a partner in his venture from the outset, for the 1916 Greek Census lists both him and Nick Aroney as Junction Street shopkeepers.

Four years older than Castrisos, Aroney had left his native country at 19 for Chicago in the US but returned to fight in the Greek-Bulgarian war of 1913.

At the urging of his father, Nick again left Greece and he finished up at Nowra.

The business carried the Castrisos name, and advertisements



GREECE IS THE WORD: From left, Steve Castrisos, Jack Aroney and Nicholas Theodore Aroney. The three men were part of the Greek presence in Junction Street. The photograph is dated between 1916 and 1919.

stated fruiterer, confectioner and refreshment tooms.

In 1919 Aroney sold his share of the business to Castrisos with the intention of returning to Greece, but this did not eventuate.

Instead, Castrisos went to Sydney, and Aroney returned to Nowra with the shop being listed as an oyster saloon.

He found the going tough to manage on his own, so he wrote to his cousin in Warren, inviting him to come to Nowra as a partner.

The cousin also went by the name of Nick Aroney so they became distinguished

as “Big Nick” who was the original partner, and “Little Nick”.

Nine years younger than his cousin, Little Nick’s arrival in Australia coincided with the start of World War I, and he had worked at Wingham and Kempsey before Warren.

The business prospered for the pair (then operating as Aroney Bros.) moved into new double-storeyed premises in 1922, possibly leased from the Muller family.

While Little Nick had a family home built at 14 Kinghorne Street in 1924, he also paid the fares of most of his siblings to migrate

from Greece.

Most of them became involved in the businesses (refreshment and billiard rooms) in one way or another.

Another Greek name involved in this era was that of Kepreotis, the name of Stamatoula who had married Big Nick.

These families were intertwined, and there was often the additional link of the Greek island of Kythera.

* Thanks to Robyn Florance for assistance with this column, the subject being covered in detail in her new book, *A Touch of Greece in Junction Street*.