

Peter Thomas ANICH

Peter Thomas ANICH was born around 1881 in Jesla, a town on an island off the Dalmatian coast—today part of Croatia. He arrived in Auckland in April 1899, according to his later application for an alien re-entry certificate.¹ In 1900 his name appears publicly for the first time when he donated one shilling to the Indian Famine Fund, recorded among the list of “Austrian sympathisers.”^{2, 3}



Peter Thomas ANICH in 1921 (1)

He suffered shifting fortunes. In 1904 he appeared in court as the customer in a case where Edward Russell was charged with selling liquor without a licence.⁴ Two years later Peter was adjudged bankrupt in Waipu, after the store he owned was destroyed by fire along with all his account books and personal papers.⁵ These included his letter of naturalisation and he had to apply for a new copy.⁶

By 1907 he had left storekeeping and was working as a gum digger in the Northern Wairoa.⁷ That same year he was accused of theft from his employer, a charge that unfolded through numerous newspaper articles describing the gum trade. In early 1908 he was acquitted, the

¹ [archives.govt.nz - Alien Re-entry Certificates](https://archives.govt.nz/alien-re-entry-certificates). *I have not found him on a shipping list in 1899*

² Auckland Star, 20 June 1900

³ *Place names in this part of the world have shifted over time. I have tried to use place names as they appear in each document.*

⁴ NZ Herald 26 April 1904

⁵ Auckland Star, 2 July 1907

⁶ [archives.govt.nz - Alien Re-entry Certificates](https://archives.govt.nz/alien-re-entry-certificates)

⁷ Auckland Star, 2 July 1907

court accepting his explanation that he had travelled to Auckland to sell gum at a better price and had not attempted to dispose of it secretly.⁸

After this, Peter's life grew quieter. Between 1914 and 1920 he appeared on the Kaipara electoral roll as a farmer, though newspaper notices also show him active as a cash buyer of kauri gum and fungus.⁹ There is no evidence that he married in New Zealand during these years.

In 1921 he applied for a re-entry visa to leave New Zealand, a permit valid for four years.¹⁰ He later said he spent three and a half of those years travelling through Russia & the Balkans.¹¹ This journey seems to have been pivotal: by 1925 he had returned to Auckland with a wife, Perina, (also recorded as Perica, Patricia and permutations of the three) and the couple were running a small shop and lodging house.¹² In 1926 they advertised for a girl to assist with housework in their boarding establishment.¹³

GIRL, young, wanted for housework in boardinghouse, easy place.—P. T. Anich, 61 Victoria St., City.

Auckland Star, 18 Dec 1926

Peter's life once again became lively. In 1927 he reported losing a watch and chain, including a gold sovereign case and a quartz pendant engraved "P.T.A."—a considerable loss valued at £17 12s.¹⁴ The following year Perina appeared in court charged with selling liquor without a licence from their premises in Victoria Street. Described as a tall, stout woman, she pleaded not guilty but was convicted and fined £25.¹⁵

Financial strain returned to the household at the time of the Depression and in 1930 Peter and Perina were declared bankrupt. Peter explained that their boarding house, begun in 1925, had prospered for three years before falling gum prices affected their usual clientele at the same time as competition increased. Seeking new prospects, he had purchased land at Penrose and financed quarrying operations, but demand for stone collapsed. He had since turned to poultry

P. T. ANICH
VICTORIA STREET, DARGAVILLE
Cash Buyer
—OF
Kauri Gum and Fungus
WISHES to notify the FARMING COMMUNITY that he is buying PLOUGHED GUM, just washed, at the FULL MARKET VALUE.
N O W is the time to plough for the Gum, and if brought to P. T. ANICH, Dargaville, the full market value will be secured for it.
Telegraphic Address :
ANICH, Dargaville.
Government Phone : 94.

⁸ NZ Herald, 8 February 1908

⁹ Wairoa Bell, 3 November 1916

¹⁰ archives.govt.nz - Alien Re-entry Certificates

¹¹ Matamata Record 15 March 1937

¹² Assumed marriage while overseas, as there is no record of a marriage in NZ

¹³ Auckland Star, 18 Dec 1926

¹⁴ NZ Police Gazette. 14 December 1927, page 865

¹⁵ Auckland Star, 16 February 1928

DALMATIAN FAILS BOARDING-HOUSE BUSINESS FALLS OFF

£30,000 TO YUGOSLAVIA

Increased competition and the hard times faced by his patrons were the reasons given by Thomas Anich for his failure as a boardinghouse-keeper.

At a meeting of creditors held yesterday, it was disclosed that Anich, late of Yugoslavia, was in debt to unsecured creditors to the amount of £664. He owed secured creditors £410, his securities were estimated at £690, and his book debts at £250. His deficit was £134.

Bankrupt, who was represented by Mr. C. Webb, said he began as a boardinghouse-keeper in 1925, with a capital of £454. For three years business was good, but in 1928 falling gum prices affected his patrons and competition increased.

At the end of 1928 he purchased land at Penrose, and financed quarrying operations, but the demand for stone fell off. He tried poultry farming on land at Glen Eden, but lost from £250 to £300.

In reply to a question he admitted that in the past three years he had sent £30,000 to Yugoslavia. "But this was on behalf of my countrymen," he explained. He had taken £3,000 and £76 in gold to Yugoslavia in 1920 but lost most of it through the inflation of the currency.

The meeting was adjourned pending further investigation.

By 1931 the Anich family had moved to Matamata, where Peter ran a restaurant in Arawa Street. That year he again came under scrutiny for selling liquor without a licence.¹⁶ A 1932 police raid on his premises—by officers from Morrinsville and Hamilton—drew a crowd of onlookers, and the newspaper noted that "the visit was not popular." with a large crowd collecting at the front and rear of the premises. Despite these troubles he continued operating in Arawa Street, and in 1934 he was again charged with unlicensed liquor sales.

farming. During questioning he admitted sending £30,000 to Yugoslavia in recent years "on behalf of his countrymen." He also recalled that when he travelled home in 1920 he had taken £3,000 with him as well as some gold, most of which was lost due to rampant inflation.¹⁶

ELECTION NIGHT SURPRISE. RAID IN MATAMATA.

Quantity of Liquor Seized.

A posse of police, consisting of Constables Heaps (Morrinsville), Saunders, Hay, Rolland, McGrath and Gibbison (Hamilton), visited Matamata on election night and at about 8.30 carried out a series of raids on premises in Arawa street and Broadway.

The premises visited were those of P. Anich, used as a restaurant, in Arawa street, a dwelling house in Broadway, occupied by W. Shepherd, and a two-roomed shanty in Broadway, rented by S. Leavers. A quantity of liquor was found on each of the premises visited.

Charges of sly-grog selling will probably be heard at the next sitting of the Matamata Magistrate's Court.

¹⁶ 13 May 1930, The Sun, Auckland

¹⁷ Matamata Record 3 December 1931

In 1936 a son, Thomas James Peter ("Tommy"), was born. His parents were both in their 40s by this time. The Anichs hosted more than fifty people at the christening celebration at the restaurant, including the Mayor.¹⁸ A similarly large gathering, at which there were many toasts, marked his first birthday the following year.¹⁹ He was very proud of that son, sending a photograph of him to the Duke of Windsor.²⁰

Brief Mention

Mr. V. B. Forbes is recuperating after several weeks' illness.

Mr. Peter Anich, of Matamata, has received an unsigned acknowledgment of a photo of his baby which he had sent, from the secretary to the Duke of Windsor.

Later in 1937, police again seized liquor from Peter's business, now renamed the Broadway Restaurant and situated on Broadway.²¹ The court hearing is reported at length, but the charge was eventually dismissed.

POLICE RAID LIQUOR SEIZED

Matamata Restaurant

Acting under a search warrant the police raided a restaurant and house occupied by P. Anich, in Broadway, Matamata, on Friday afternoon.

The raid was carried out by Sergt. T. Kelly, of Hamilton, who was assisted by Constable J. McMullan, of Morrinsville, and Constable H. G. Hodge, relieving at Matamata.

The liquor was confiscated, and it is understood that a charge will be laid by the police.



¹⁸ Matamata Record 20 April 1936

¹⁹ Matamata Record 15 March 1937

²⁰ Matamata Record 19 July 1937. *This was not quite as random a thing to do as it seems. He recalled in the speech he gave at his son's birthday party that during the last tour of NZ by the then Prince of Wales he (P.T.A.) was playing rugby in Northland. He broke his jaw and was unconscious. When he came to, he was in the dressing room with the Prince of Wales' hand on his head asking how he felt!*

²¹ Matamata Record. 5 April 1937

In 1938 Peter, Perica, and two year old Tommy returned to Dalmatia ²². In a letter to J. Buchanan (his solicitor) in Matamata, he wrote that he had purchased shares in a butchery on the island of Hvar. ²³ Over the next few years he became involved in supplying provisions to forces resisting German occupation. Eventually the fighting forced the family to flee to Italy ²⁴, from where they were rescued and repatriated to New Zealand in 1945 aboard the 'Mooltan'.²⁵

Mr. J. Buchanan, of Matamata, recently received a letter from Mr. Peter Anich, who was in business in Matamata for a number of years, and who is now living at Hvar, an island off the Dalmatian coast. Mr. Anich advised that he had purchased a butchery business and was doing well. He said that he expected trouble in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, but his reference to the war situation was necessarily short owing to the censorship. Mrs. Anich and Tommy were doing well, and all sent best wishes to Matamata friends.

RESCUED FROM GERMANS

MR. PETER ANICH

Former Matamata Resident

Among people rescued by the Allies from the Germans is a New Zealander, Peter Anich, who had returned to his native land with his wife and son, aged two years, in 1938, states a N.Z.E.F. official news service dispatch from Cairo. Anich had emigrated from Dalmatia at the turn of last century when 15 years old. He became a naturalised New Zealander and finally settled at Matamata, where he conducted a business.

When the Nazis spread over Europe he decided to return to the country of his birth and play his part in the struggle. He settled on an island off the Yugoslav coast, buying a share in a butchery business, and in the next few years he built up a supply centre for the forces in revolt against the Germans.

When the Nazis threatened the island Anich and his family departed, with the approval of the local Partisan commander, and now they are in Italy, from where he hopes to proceed to New Zealand.

²² NZ Archives passenger lists 1839-1974 (they describe themselves as Dalmatian, and the letter to J. Buchanan refers to the Dalmatian Coast.)

²³ Matamata Record 20 February 1941

²⁴ Matamata Record 22 June 1944

²⁵ NZ Archives passenger lists 1839-1974 <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KLBQ-MPH?lang=en>

They settled again in Auckland, but Perina/Percia/Perica ²⁶ died in 1949, and Peter in 1954 ^{27,28}. Their son Tommy was thus only nineteen when orphaned. He died in Auckland in 2024. ²⁹

Addendum:

The Broadway Restaurant was taken over by Roy NOBILO. It is known from an article in 1946, that this was at the 'railway end of Broadway' and it is believed this was at about the site of the Merchant (2025). ³⁰ The milk jug labelled 'Broadway Restaurant, Matamata' could be from either man's tenure.



²⁶ Letters of Administration for Perica ANICH

²⁷ www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz. (Percia ANICH & Peter Thomas ANICH)

²⁸ Will of Peter Thomas ANICH

²⁹ <https://notices.nzherald.co.nz/nz/obituaries/nzherald-nz/name/thomas-anich-obituary?id=55451848>

³⁰ Matamata Record 18 March 1946