

The Confectioner of Nicholson Street S.T. Nunquam



Image source: CCHG

Former Confectionery Factory of S.T. Nunquam 413-415 Nicholson Street North Carlton

For many decades, residents of North Carlton woke to the fragrance of peppermint emanating from a confectionery factory in Nicholson Street. The two-storey, red brick building on the corner of Newry Street was built by T.E. Mathews for Stanislav Techitch Nunquam, manufacturing confectioner, 100 years ago in 1916.¹

What do we know of the man who adopted the name "Nunquam", the Latin word for "never"? According to his naturalisation file, Stanislav (Stanislaus or Stanislaw) Techitch (Techitich or Techich) was born in Loznitza, Serbia, on 1 January 1882. Stanislav arrived in Australia from Bremen on the ship *Frederick der Grosse*, disembarking at Sydney in 1903 or 1904. He spent a year in Brisbane and two years in Sydney before settling in Melbourne. Stanislav married Nellie Adela (Adele) Rose in 1913 and their marriage was registered under the surname "Techitch". They had seven children, whose births were registered under the surname "Nunquam" or "Techitch Nunquam". Stanislav (Stanley) was born in 1914, followed by Zora (1916 or 1917), Nada (1918), Stana (1921 or 1922), Donald (1923 or 1924), Sonia (1926) and Bruce (1931).^{2 3}

Stanislav's naturalisation file gives no indication of when or why he adopted the name "Nunquam", simply stating that he was "known as Stanislav Techitich Nunquam." The name "Stanislaus T. Nunquam" first appeared in *Sands & McDougall* in 1912 in Bourke Street, Melbourne and Sydney Road, Brunswick. In 1913, there was a business listing for confectionery works in Bedford Street, Collingwood and over the next few years addresses in Smith Street, Collingwood and Chapel Street, Prahran (Windsor) were added. Stanislav was expanding his empire and the time was ripe for moving to new premises. The factory building in Collingwood, built in 1886 and shared with a bootmaker, would not have been the best environment for confectionery manufacturing.^{4 5}

Nunquam's new factory in North Carlton was not the first manufacturing facility to operate at the corner site. Russell & Sons, manufacturing confectioners, were there from 1909, and Johnston Brothers, furniture manufacturers, prior to that date. The earlier building was described as "brick factory and stabling" in Council rate books. There were two cottages (nos. 417 and 419) on the northern boundary and these were later separately acquired for expansion of the business. In August 1920, a building application was lodged for a multitubular boiler and chimney stack, designed by C.S. Mears, a furnace builder of Tilson Street, Ascot Vale. The work was completed within two months, in the backyard of the cottage at 417 Nicholson Street.^{6 7}

1920 was an eventful year for the Nunquam family, in more ways than one. In January 1920, Stanislav was charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm of Edith Ruby Osborne, a nurse employed by Nellie to care for her three children. Nurse Osborne had been with the Nunquam family for about six months when she was dismissed by Nellie for smacking young Zora, aged 3½ years. Nurse Osborne left the family home in Queens Road, South Melbourne, but returned later that day to collect her personal belongings. The situation escalated when Stanislav arrived home. He accused Nurse Osborne of theft and physically removed her from the premises, while she claimed he had punched and kicked her, causing severe bruising. When the case was heard in the Court of General Sessions in February 1920, there was a point-of-law issue on whether the lesser charge of "common assault" should be applied. After some consideration, Judge Moule directed the jury to return a verdict on the original charge only. This direction may have worked in Stanislav's favour, for he was found not guilty of assault occasioning actual bodily harm.^{8 9}

Nurse Osborne was herself charged with assault of a child (Zora), in an action brought about by Nellie Nunquam. From the evidence presented in the District Court on 19 January 1920, the two women appeared to differ in opinion on what action was considered reasonable to discipline a child. Nurse Osborne claimed she had merely smacked Zora with her hand and that the marks on the child's body were caused by her climbing on a pear tree. The presiding magistrate, Mr Cohen, concluded that "although the child had been perhaps too severely chastised by [the] defendant, he did not think the case should have been brought to court, and it probably would not have been but for the previous charge laid by defendant against [the] complainant's husband." The case was dismissed, without costs.¹⁰

But that was not the end of the matter. While Stanislav Nunquam had been found not guilty of assault in the Court of General Sessions, this did not preclude civil action in the County Court. In April 1920, Edith Ruby Osborne sued Stanislav Nunquam, claiming damages of £500 for injuries sustained as a result of the assault on 5 January 1920. She repeated her allegations that Mr Nunquam had "violently punched and kicked her, throwing her down and considerably affecting her health", while he stated that he had "put her out, using no more force than was necessary in so doing." In this case, the jury decided in favour of the plaintiff and she was awarded £175 in damages - less than half the amount she sought. Press coverage of the case reflected post-World War 1 antagonism towards people of non-British origin, with the headline "Brutal Attack by Alien" appearing in one newspaper.¹¹

The *War Precautions (Alien Registration) Regulations* were still in force in 1920 and both Stanislav and his wife Nellie were required to register as alien residents. Nellie was born in Australia and of British nationality by birth, but she was considered of Serbian nationality by her marriage to Stanislav. They submitted their

applications to the St Kilda Road Police Station in July 1920 and Nellie's processed application bore the annotation "reputable citizen", while Stanislav's did not. Was this because of his recent assault charge, or perhaps a subtle form of discrimination against an "alien" who was not born in Australia? The regulations were suspended in 1926 and repealed in 1932 but, with the outbreak of World War 2, were re-instated under provisions of the *Aliens Registration Act 1939*. Once again, Stanislav and Nellie had to report to their local police station (Malvern) and this time they were fingerprinted as well as photographed.^{12 13 14 15}

Stanislav first applied for naturalisation in 1920 and again in 1939. His later (successful) application referred to his assault charge in 1920, but omitted the 1919 speeding offence and a 1933 charge of driving under the influence of liquor and failing to report an accident. The report on his application concluded: "He was acquitted and has not come under adverse notice since". William Walter Stranks, chemist, and Hamilton John Trainor, grocer, both of whom had known Stanislav for 23 years, certified him as "a person of good repute" in support of his application. Stanislav renounced his birth nationality and swore the oath of allegiance to "His Majesty King George the Sixth" on 4 December 1939. His certificate of naturalisation was issued on 29 December 1939. With her husband naturalised, Nellie had to make a "Declaration of Acquisition of British Nationality" in order to restore her birth nationality. She made the declaration on 20 April 1940, but the application form had contained an incorrect date and was returned to her for amendment. Her declaration was finally registered on 11 July 1940 and Nellie was, once again, a British subject.^{16 17}

Nellie Nunquam had a traumatic experience in February 1952, when she was the victim of a serious assault in her home in Toorak. She was knocked unconscious and suffered facial and scalp injuries, inflicted by a man wearing a soldier's uniform. In the Criminal Court in June 1952, the Crown alleged that former soldier Peter Collins had forced entry into Mrs Nunquam's home, attacked her and stolen goods and money. He denied the charges, claiming that the blood found on his uniform was a result of his being involved a hotel fight. Collins, aged 32, was found guilty on all charges and sentenced to 10 years gaol. He admitted eight previous convictions and had been discharged from the army because of his criminal record. He had not previously been convicted of violent offences against persons, but this would have been of little consolation to Nellie.¹⁸

In 1955, when Stanislav was 73 years old, ownership of the factory building and adjacent cottage (no. 417) was transferred from S.T. Nunquam Pty Ltd to Nunquam Pty Ltd. The change of business name can be seen in later photographs, with the lettering "S.T." painted out on the Nicholson Street façade. Stanislav died in 1966, aged 84 years, and his remains were cremated at Springvale Cemetery on 25 November 1966. His widow Nellie survived him by four years and died in Queensland in 1970.^{19 20 21}

The confectionery business that bore Nunquam's name continued for another three decades. The second cottage (no. 419) was acquired by Nunquam Pty Ltd in 1978 and the company owned all the land between Newry Street and the laneway to the north. With the downturn in manufacturing in the 1990s, conversion of inner city factory buildings to residential apartments proved to be a lucrative business. The land was sold in 1999 and a planning application for construction of six warehouse dwellings was lodged with City of Yarra in September 1999. The cottages were demolished in 2000 and replaced with modern structures, but the external appearance of the brick factory building remained largely unchanged. The old copper pots have ceased boiling and the fine dusting of powdered sugar that was often seen on the upstairs window ledge has long since gone. But the tall chimney, built in 1920, remains as a visual memory of North Carlton's industrial history.²²

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Notes and References:

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- 1 Australian Architectural Index
 - 2 Naturalisation file of Stanislav Techitich Nunquam (NAA: A659, 1939/1/14568)
 - 3 Some of the birth dates cited in Stanislav's naturalisation file differ from birth registrations and other records. For example, Donald's date of birth is stated as 24 December 1923 in his military record. (NAA: B883, VX142978)
 - 4 Building occupancy information sourced from Sands & McDougall directory listings and Melbourne City Council rate books
 - 5 Northern suburbs factory study, 1992, citations volume p. 114
 - 6 *ibid* p. 372. The study states that the firm was established in 1905, which would have been before Stanislav Techitich arrived in Melbourne.
 - 7 Melbourne City Council building application plans and files, BA 2890, 1920 (VPRS 11200 and VPRS 11201)
 - 8 Criminal presentations (VPRS 17020/P1/44). Stanislav Nunquam had a prior conviction for driving a motorcar at a dangerous speed. He was fined £3 in the Petty Sessions Court at Melbourne on 10 November 1919.
 - 9 *The Argus*, 18 February 1920, p. 13
 - 10 *The Age*, 13 January 1930, p. 4
 - 11 *The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, 24 April 1920, p. 3
 - 12 Application for Alien Registration (NAA: MT269/1, VIC/SERBIA/NUNQUAM STANISLAW)
 - 13 Application for Alien Registration (NAA: MT269/1, VIC/SERBIA/NUNQUAM NELLIE)
 - 14 Application for Alien Registration (NAA: B6531, NATURALISED/1939-1945/NUNQUAM STANISLAV)
 - 15 Application for Alien Registration (NAA: B78, 1948/NUNQUAM N A)
 - 16 Naturalisation file of Stanislav Techitich Nunquam, *op cit*
 - 17 *The Argus*, 26 August 1933, p. 21
 - 18 *The Age*, 18 June 1952, p. 7
 - 19 Building ownership information sourced from land title records
 - 20 Carlton, North Carlton & Princes Hill Conservation Study, 1984
 - 21 Biographical information sourced from birth, death and marriage records
 - 22 City of Yarra, Planning application no. 991221, 1999