

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4099

Ravlich, Manda

(1903 - 1991)

Born 1 January, 1903, Kozica Serbia

Died 31 December, 1991, Broken Hill New South Wales Australia

Occupation Community advocate

Summary

Manda Ravlich emigrated to Broken Hill from the former Yugoslavia, and became a central figure in the town's emerging Yugoslavian community.

Details

Manda was born and grew up in Kozica, former Yugoslavia. At the age of 19 she married Ante Ravlich, who had returned to Yugoslavia after travelling to Australia for work in 1911. Manda gave birth to their eldest child, Nick, on 6 March 1923, and later that year Ante returned to Australia. Ante worked on sugar cane plantations in Queensland in order to pay for his wife's and his sister Mara's fare to Australia.

After spending five weeks journeying by ship, Manda and Mara finally arrived in Australia in December 1924. They were supposed to be disembarking at Sydney and travelling to Cairns to join Ante, however they were met at Port Adelaide by Mr Okmazich, a friend of Ante. He informed Manda that her husband was waiting for her in Broken Hill, where he had found employment working in the mines.

The two women travelled to Broken Hill by train and arrived at the house that Ante had bought in a horse and sulky. The house was a little old log cabin with running water but no electricity and dirt floors in the kitchen. Life in Broken Hill was a shock for Manda. The landscape and climate were vastly different from her home in Yugoslavia, and she had to deal with cultural and linguistic barriers as she spoke little English. Manda also struggled with home sickness and a sense of isolation as there were only five other Yugoslav women in Broken Hill when she arrived. Manda and Ante had two more children: Millie, who was born in October 1925, and Stanislav in 1927.

While her husband worked in the mines, Manda had to supplement their income by taking in Yugoslavian men working in the mines as boarders. On top of her own housework and looking after her children, Manda washed and cooked for these young men, sometimes taking in six at a time, to make an extra 25 shillings a fortnight. Manda and Ante's hospitality extended to other members of the Yugoslavian community in Broken Hill, and their house became a meeting place where one could enjoy a game of cards and a glass of wine. During the Depression in the 1930s, many young Yugoslavian men came to Broken Hill from West Australia looking for jobs, and Manda, compelled to help these men with no wives or families, housed, fed and washed for them free of charge.

Manda and Ante returned to visit Yugoslavia for the first time in 1959. They were both active members of the Broken Hill Napredak Club. Manda died in Broken Hill in 1991, aged 89.

This entry was prepared and written by Georgia Moodie.

Published resources

Book

Sharing the Lode: The Broken Hill Migrant Story, Adams, Christine, 2004

Site Exhibition

Unbroken Spirit: Women in Broken Hill, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/bh/bh-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Broken Hill Social History Project \[sound recording\]](#)

[Manda Ravlich interviewed by Edward Stokes in the Broken Hill social history project \[sound recording\]](#)

Author Details

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