

ROW HOUSES

14-18a Claxton Street

Claxton Street is situated on part Town Acre 464 and on part Town Acre 397. Town Acre 464 was first subdivided into 14 land parcels by the land agent and auctioneer, William Denton Claxton in 1867. The land parcels created had frontages of approximately 30 feet with depths of 86 feet. The size of the parcels attracted buyers interested in building either a moderate house or two attached small houses. The land owner usually lived in one half, enabling an income to be gained from the rent of the adjoining property. Town Acre 397 subdivided and developed in 1875.



(CD Ref 1606/59)

The four single story row houses on this site were built by William Jones Lapidge, a wagoner and clerk, from 1876-77. Lapidge lived in number 14 and rented the other three to tenants.

Lapidge continued to live in one of the four houses for some years and rented the remainder until he died in December 1932. His daughter, Millicent Lily, inherited the cottages. In 1960 Arnold Patrick Fimeri, a woodyard owner and bookmaker, acquired the houses. Fimeri, known as “Treacle” Fimeri, stands out as a colourful West End figure. In the late 1920s he was the owner of an Adelaide Cup winner. It is not known how he acquired his sweet and slippery nickname but he was well known in the West End for his sometimes unlawful activities.

Claxton Street is significant because it illustrates the character of the south western corner of the City during the 1870s. This part of the City has been associated with Adelaide’s working class citizens from the earliest days of settlement and was primarily residential until the twentieth century. The area contained the densest population in the City from the 1840’s to c.1900, evidence of this fact existing in the allotment sizes and types of housing that remain.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

There were once many such streets as Claxton Street in the City. Historically, the housing in these streets was owned by landlords who offered for lease houses in poor condition and did minimal repair and maintenance. Consequently they were occupied by low income earners or recent migrants. Many such houses did not survive redevelopment during the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, a major proportion of the City's run-down and neglected housing stock, usually located in the narrowest streets and alleyways was demolished and replaced with industrial complexes. While much of the former character has been lost due to slum clearance and subdivision patterns obfuscated due to redevelopment for service industry, the remaining enclaves are of great importance to the social history of Adelaide and to the West End in particular, in revealing the housing conditions in the area. In the twentieth century, the survival of most of the houses in Claxton Street is most likely due to the increasing dominance of owner/occupiers. In the 1980s, living in the city in an old house has become desirable, and aided by rezoning, many such houses have undergone a rejuvenation. As such, Claxton Street represents the common phenomenon of the 'gentrification' of inner city areas.

This row of houses is one component of an important streetscape in the City of Adelaide that has survived largely intact from the 1870s to the present day. Claxton Street in the south western corner of the City is a narrow street linking Wright and Gouger Streets. The street contains humble attached and detached houses, most dating from the 1870s and as such, forms an intact precinct, providing physical evidence of the housing in the City in the 1870s.

The eastern side of Claxton Street is particularly intact, the only interruptions occurring at the northern end where a brake repair workshop and new two storey slate faced house have been constructed. The western side of the street has been largely replaced with more recent two storeyed development. The ensemble of the eastern group of dwellings remains however particularly striking and evocative of the former character of this area, once so densely populated.

The houses are located on the eastern side of the street, abutting the footpath. Number 14 Claxton Street is the largest of the row and was finished in 1876. It was constructed for William Lapidge and is built of brick and bluestone with a raked roof. The other three houses were completed in the following year. Number 18 and 18A are small, their width being no more than 11 feet. The houses usually had three rooms with a lean-to at the rear.

The house is an example of a common form of housing in South Australia. It is a good example of the style and period of architecture in Adelaide.

Smith Survey 1880; Land Title Office, Certificate of Title 1661.140, 2835/192, 189/97, 1661/97, 2835/189, 190, 191; Statton, J. *Biographical index of South Australians*, entry for W.J. Lapidge, vol. 3, p. 984; Verbal information from R.E. Fimeri, 29 June 1989; South Australian Directories, 1870, 1878, 1882, 1920, 1935; *Sunday Mail*, 3 October 1964

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **City of Adelaide Heritage Study**, October 1990, Volume One, part of a review of the City of Adelaide Plan 1986-1991. The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

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The property described in this Information Sheet is a place of Local Heritage (City Significance). A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.

Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.