

**OLD AGE IN A YOUNG COLONY:
IMAGE AND EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH
AUSTRALIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGSA	Art Gallery of South Australia
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
SRSA	State Records of South Australia

ABSTRACT

Ambivalence emerges as an enduring feature in attitudes to the ageing in most western societies. Attitudes toward and treatment of the ageing evident in nineteenth-century England and Europe are discernible in South Australia also, tempered by the unusual nature and process of systematic colonisation, a central feature of which was assisted migration. The careful planning associated with the establishment of the young colony, whose purpose was in part to relieve over-population in Great Britain, was characterised by hope for a better future and in particular for a better old age for ordinary working class people. Fear of dependence among colonists, which could jeopardise the prosperity of the colony and therefore of the dream of a „land of promise“ and plenty, further influenced attitudes to the ageing, perceived as posing a threat to an independent and prosperous future for the colony. Thus, the nature of colonisation in South Australia tilted the widely recognised phenomenon of ambivalence in attitudes towards the ageing to a negative view. Fear of the potential dependence of the ageing generated reaction and concern at government, official and private levels, and left a trace in representations of old people in popular culture. The social, economic and physical environment of the developing colony further tempered and shaped images of the ageing, the rhetoric relating to them, and their experience as old people in a young colony. The diversity of the physical, social, mental and financial resources of the ageing also influenced the nature and extent to which individuals were active in shaping their own experience. As the colony became established and the population grew, assuming different demographic features, the effects of the hope and fear that had driven colonisation remain discernible in public and private documents relating to old people. However, veneration and acceptance of the old are also apparent, reflecting maturation of the colony, echoing themes evident in other nineteenth-century societies and highlighting once again the ambivalence associated with the ageing. The study of ageing in nineteenth-century South Australia reveals both continuity with and differentiation from rhetoric, image and realities associated with the ageing in Britain.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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