

The Cape of Good Hope Savings Bank Society: At a Glance

The Cape of Good Hope Savings Bank Society was founded on the 8th of June 1831 as the first private bank, and the second Southern African bank following the Lombard Bank (1792 – 1883) (Mbuya 2008, Nunah 2016, Sita 2019, Ekama & Ross 2021, George 1980). This was a controversial move, as the British colonial government disapproved highly of private banks which would act as competition to the Imperial banking system. The passing of the legislation which allowed it to exist is seen as one of the earliest revolutionary documents in South Africa. The bank was famous for its avoidance of having shareholders and held its focus on storing all profits as reserves which from 1838 it distributed 10% of annual net profits to 150 charitable and educational institutions. Over 39 years, it donated a total R300 475.00 to these causes, which in those days was an incredible and almost unfathomable amount of money (Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/3; Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/5). The bank officially opened its doors on the 25th of June 1831 in a double-storeyed structure on St. George's Street, Cape Town. Within the first five days, a total of R5,000.00 was deposited by new clients. In July of the same year the bank was able to grant its first loan of 15,000.00 rijksdaalders, which the client used to build their first house (Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/3; Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/5).

The bank was founded before the abolition of slavery, and before the Groot Trek making it one of the earliest metaphorical landmarks in South Africa's history. By 1890 the bank had 27 branches throughout the Cape Province – one of the largest institutional footprints at the time. Due to the bank having been one of the earliest institutions in the Western Cape, it is intimately entrenched in the history of the area and was often referred to affectionately as 'The Grand Old Lady of St George's Street' (Rosenthal, 1953; (Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/3; Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/5). The available records then bring us to 1980, where the now Cape of Good Hope Bank Ltd became a

wholly owned subsidiary of Finansbank. Six years later, following a merger with Finansbank and Nedbank which created Nedbank Investment Bank it meant that The Cape of Good Hope Bank entity was officially part of the Nedbank Group. During the time that followed The Cape of Good Hope Bank made a momentous expansion out of the Western Cape and into Gauteng. In 2002, Nedcor tabled an offer to purchase all remaining stakes in Nedbank Investment Bank and by 2003 all the associated entities had been dissolved and were rebranded as part of the Nedcor Group (Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/3; Nedbank. Documents. COGHB/5).

The South African Association for the Administration and Settlement of Estates: Two Centuries of Trust

On 22 April 1834, twenty-two Cape Town business-makers met to form the South African Association for the Administration and Settlement of Estates. The organisation based its business on the already present Orphan Chambers which functioned to oversee the legal administration of monies and assets belonging to orphans, widows, and persons under tutelage. This continued until the Chamber's abolishment by Sir Lowry Cole, the Cape Governor at the time, in 1833. This abolishment was in the process of English rule to phase out the Dutch laws and regulations that were in place at the time. This meant that there was no longer the concept of heir as successor, and all estates needed to be administered by an executor of the Master of the Supreme Court. To aid in the populace's distrust of the British, the South African Association came in to facilitate the relationship with the Supreme Court. As guarantee that the Association would be one of integrity and trust, each client had to pay £375.

On the 18th of March 1836, the Association was written into effect as an Act of Parliament and published in the Government Gazette. The Ordinance was initially for a period of 21 years, which was extended for an additional 21 years in 1855 until 1875 where it was written into perpetuity provided that there was a minimum of 30 members. Currently, the South African Association is the oldest still functioning Trust Company in the world. The success of the Association as the world's first Trust Company spread across the Commonwealth and started a movement of similar institutions being established in Canada, Australia, and North America. In South Africa, The Board of Executors followed on as the next Trust Company to cater to the populace, which opened its doors in 1838 in Cape Town. During the First World War, the Trust continued to function with a solid foundation as many of its contemporaries had to close their doors for good. By 1915 as

the War began, the South African Association administered a total of £300 000, which increased to an incredible £ 4 250 000 by 1935. By 1965, the Association administered £26 500 000. In 1970, The South African Association for the Administration and Settlement of Estates ceded its autonomy and merged into Syfrets where it continued to function and administer as it still does today under Nedbank (Savage 1994). The business unit *Nedbank Private Wealth* who sports the great tagline of “Since 1834” (Nedbank Private Wealth 2023), are the current iteration of pedigree of the South African Association (Andreou 2021d; Andreou & Kruger 2022; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30; Nedbank AHC 2021a; Nedbank AHC 2021b; Nedbank AHC 2021c; Nedbank AHC 2022).

Insights into the History of BoE: The Board of Executors

The Board of Executors was founded through an Act of Parliament as a Trust Company on 22 August 1838. The fifty-founding shareholders were for the most part lawyers and winemakers who came together to fund the establishment of the Board with a pledge of £200 pounds each, a total of £10,000. This made the BoE the first Trust Company in the world (Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30). In 1856, the Board purchased a two-storey structure on the corner of Wale and Adderley Streets. This structure had been built over the site where one of the earlier Dutch East India Company hospitals had once stood. The Board began construction of a building on the same site in 1893, and by 1896 it was a revolutionary structure having both gas-powered lighting and the first electrically operated elevators in Cape Town. It is uncertain whether the earlier building was demolished in order to construct a new building, or if they merely conducted major upgrades to the original. The Board was also during this time the proud owner of one of the early copying machines – which they bought for the then extravagant sum of £8 (a measure of paper for the machine was an extra cost of £7). In 1905, The Board was able to acquire their first typewriter, and five years later, with the purchase of a second typewriter, the first female employee was hired (Baïkoff 1988; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30). In 1928, the Board purchased two lots on Wale Street where they began construction on the iconic Wale Street Building that living memory might associate with the Board. The building, known as Temple Chambers, was seven-stories tall and was possibly most famous for the sculpture known as Widow Twankey, who was the Board's logo, which stood on the building's corner balcony. This ubiquitously famous sculpture could not be moved to the new Clock Tower building due to its unfortunate degradation over the years, so a replica of the original was made and still stands outside the entrance to the current Nedbank building (Baïkoff 1988; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30).

The Board was a household name in the Cape Province before its gradual spread across the country by making the move from a Trust Company to a National Investment House which saw the Board's expansion to Johannesburg and Natal by 1978. This came about after nearly 140 years of operating solely out of Cape Town. This same year, the Board decided to also branch into the money market, which expanded their books and status exponentially (Baïkoff 1988; Robertson 1983). In 1987, the Board of Executors changed its name to BoE, and listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange for the first time. This was followed by the next headline event of 1998 where BoE amalgamated its banking interests into the entity known as BoE Bank Ltd. This included NBS Bank, BoE Bank, BoE Investment Bank and BoE Private Bank. This led to the sale of the famous Wale Street building in favour of the construction of what would be the new head office building at the V & A Waterfront, which we still occupy today as the Clock Tower Campus (Baïkoff, 1988). This new construction led to the uncovering of an incredibly important heritage resource; the Chavonnes Battery, which had been lost to the world deep underground for nearly 150 years – which no doubt would have remained uncovered should BoE have not built there (Halket, et al., 1999; Hart, 2001; Hart, 2000). In 2002, Nedcor's proposal to merge with BoE had been accepted (to the value of R7,5 billion) and the conversion of BoE infrastructure began. By 2003 the new Nedcor Group was created through the combining of Nedcor, NIB, BoE, and The Cape of Good Hope Bank.

Syfrets Trust Company / Syfrets SA: Setting the Scene

The Syfrets Trust Company Limited was established by Edward Syfret on Adderley Street, Cape Town on 27 April 1851. The first estate to be entrusted to the fledgling company and its 29-year-old founder was for the sum of £400. Its success was explosive and between 1851 and 1876, there were a series of premises expansions and moves before settling down in St. George's Street. By 1887 the Syfrets Trust Company had centred itself around being a business of investing capital in mortgaged property, raising loans, handling executorships and trusteeships, and in managing private business affairs (Savage 1994; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30; STC 1983). Financial markets the world-over were shaken during the early 1900s, with the onset of World War I, its subsequent depression on both international and national levels.

Despite these times of difficulty, Syfrets Trust Company remained firm and continued to grow. This was spurred on by the moving away from the Gold Standard in 1932 which resulted in an influx of interest and investment in the country which all sectors began to benefit greatly from, with Syfrets alone reporting an annual profit of £37 831 for the year. The success was short-lived, as by 1937 the infamous Black Friday occurred, and the international slump returned. This was followed shortly thereafter by the onset of World War II (Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30; Savage 1994; STC 1983). After the war, Syfrets sought to expand once more and immediately bought 393 of the 400 shares of the General Estate and Orphan Chamber in 1952 (Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30.; Rosenthal 1956).

Not long after this, a separation of entities was announced and the Syfrets Trust Company separated into E R Syfrets and Company, and Syfrets Trust. Syfrets Trust, being part of our historical collective, soon announced their first point of presence in Johannesburg would be opened in 1959 (STC 1983; Savage 1994; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30).

In the years that followed, 1968 saw Syfrets merge with the South African Association for the Administration and Settlement of Estates (the world's oldest still-operating Trust) to form Syfrets SA. The following year, Syfrets was awarded a listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in August 1969 with a total company capital of R 15 million. This listing sparked further ongoing success for Syfrets, and the entity was soon joined by Union Acceptances Limited in 1973 (Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30; STC 1983; Savage 1994). In 1985 Syfrets launched their Syfrets Managed Assets division, which dealt with large-scale institutional investments. This was followed by the Syfrets Participation Mortgage Bond Scheme reached the R1 billion mark and was the first company in South Africa to do so in 1986. In 1989 Syfrets SA became a fully owned subsidiary of Nedbank Limited and changed its name to Syfrets Group Limited. By 1997 Syfrets, Union Acceptances Limited and Nedbank Investment Bank merged their stockbroking interests to become Nedcor Investment Bank. In 1999 Nedbank Private Bank and Syfrets Private Bank merged to create the largest private bank in South Africa (Savage 1994; STC 1983; Nedbank. Documents. NEDC/30).

Getting to Know the General Estate and Orphan Chamber

On 7 February 1856 the 30 founding members of the General Estate and Orphan Chambers met on 28 Adderley Street, Cape Town, and the trust company was born. The Chambers were a formalisation and extension of the old Dutch Weeshere [Orphan Masters] who saw to the custody and administration of funds and estates belonging to orphans, widows, and persons under tutelage. The General Estate and Orphan Chambers were signed into existence as an Act of Parliament, which is still in effect today (Rosenthal 1956; Ehlers 2003). Less than a month later on the 4th of March 1856, the deposits made to the institution were an incredible £280 and soon took up a business residence in Adderley Street, as well as opened their official business banking accounts opened with both the Union Bank and the Cape Commercial Bank (so as to avoid allegations of favouritism it seems). By the 27th of March, the Master of the Supreme Court handed the Trust its first insolvent estate to administer and so began the official business of the Orphan Chambers. By the following year, the Orphan Chambers moved to a larger premises on Adderley, and in not needing as much space as they had, opened some of the rooms for rent by other businesses; namely the offices of Scott Tucker, an engineer for the state; F. York, who was one of South Africa's first photographers; the legal offices of Advocate Barry, as well as Sir Thomas Maclear, an astronomer who was conducting South Africa's first trigonometrical survey.

By 1860, the host of institutions active at the time in the Western Cape (many of these are entities that have merged into the Nedbank Historical collective) had regular dealings amongst themselves; the General Estate and Orphan Chamber, Syfrets and Board of Executors serving as worthy contemporaries. By 1870, the Chamber had expanded its business out of the Cape Province to the then Orange Free State, by conducting business to the sum of a few thousand pounds with local farmers and miners in the area. Its

presence in the area was at perfect timing, with the discovery of the goldfields in the Rand soon thereafter in 1889. The following year saw an unforeseen ripple in the South African economy with the mysterious closure of The (original) Cape of Good Hope Bank {not to be confused with The Cape of Good Hope Bank that merged with Nedbank, which evolved out of a different and separate entity, The Cape of Good Hope Bank Savings Society, (Graham 2021b: *email*), and the loss of nearly £1,000,000, the Orphan Chambers were of course able to step in and provide assistance to those who had suffered any losses during the collapse of the once proud entity.

By 1906 the Chambers had grown in all strengths and was the spear-heading figure of a novel moment in South African history whereby all active trust companies at the time joined forces to build the Cape Supreme Court on Victoria Street, Cape Town. In 1910, South Africa saw the dawn of the Union, which was the perfect launching moment for the Chambers to announce their diversification into the insurance business. The Chambers continued to grow further and create much needed betterment to the Union and especially to the Western Cape Province until 1952, where they merged into the core Syfrets Group.

Stellenbossche Distriksbank: Through the Grapevine

The year 1882 saw the opening of the Stellenbossche Distriksbank by means of a gazetted act of Parliament. The bank was established with the aim to preserve Stellenbosch culture and operate as a family bank within the community. The bank was founded with an initial shareholding of 1 000 shares, at £15 each (Booyens 1982; Giliomee 1987). The act declared that the bank would have five directors, the criteria for their appointment being ownership of more than 10 shares each. By 1883 the first set of payment promissory notes were printed for circulation, with a total of 800 notes of varying values (Booyens 1982). Tragedy struck in 1886 when a phylloxera plague fell on Stellenbosch, which caused many of the wine farms (the bank's primary clientele) to close production and their farms for good. This led to a drastic decrease in flow to the bank, as farmers were withdrawing all their savings (Booyens, 1982). One of the only instances of this recorded in the archive, but in 1911 the bank was broken into and emptied of all notes, gold and silver which amounted to a total of £3 246,15 (Booyens, 1982). The year 1920 saw the bank's first step towards 'automation' with the purchase of its first typewriter, to the tune of £35. In 1947 the bank's proposal to the Reserve Bank to be registered as a commercial bank was accepted (Booyens, 1982). The last 30 years of the Stellenbossche Distriksbank was a time of progressive changes; in 1970 there was a merger with Boland Bank and the Vogdy Bank. Nearly a decade later in 1979 the Stellenbossche Distriksbank had become a fully owned subsidiary of Boland Bank. By 1981 the Stellenbossche Distriksbank was renamed to the Distriksbank and not long after in 2003 the entity merged into the Nedcor Group (Booyens, 1982).

Remembering the Perm: Kimberley Permanent Mutual Building and Investment Society

The Kimberley Permanent Mutual Building and Investment Society was founded on the evening of 16 November 1883. While it was not South Africa's first building society (the Natal Building Society and The Cape of Good Hope Land Building and Investment Society both hold that status), it was Kimberley's first Permanent Building Society, with two Terminating societies having operated before it. By the end of its second month the company had 668 shares in issue and 77 borrowers (Robertson 1983). Seven years later in 1889, the Kimberley Permanent Mutual Building and Investment Society had already expanded its footprint wide and opened its first branch in Johannesburg. By 1892, they underwent a name change and became known as the South African Permanent Building Society, which later became known as Perm by popular usage (Robertson, 1983). Never ceasing in their expansion and innovation, the Perm was the very first building society in South Africa to hire a female teller in 1920. This was the same year they reported its first R1 million in asset value. By 1976, the Perm had left Kimberley and had taken up headquarters in Johannesburg at 64 Eloff Street. 1988 saw Nedbank Ltd merge with the Perm to form the NedPerm Bank Ltd, which catered for high tier personal banking. This was followed swiftly by the amalgamation of Nedbank, Perm and Nedfin into Nedcor in 1992. Three years later, the Perm announced a split of its operations into two separate entities – Permanent Bank and People's Bank (Robertson, 1983). In 2001, Permanent Bank and Old Mutual Bank announced a merger which planned to focus on wealth management and financial planning. This culminated at the end of 2002 with it being a joint venture in place of a full merger. By 2005, all Perm entities were part of Nedbank Group.