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# Standard Bank Kokstad

East Griqualand  
Kwazulu Natal

1878 - 2003



68 Main Street



Standard  
Bank

Adam Kok 3rd, Son of Adam 'Dam' Kok, trekked with 2000 souls, 20,000 head of livestock and 300 wagons from Phillipolis, in the Free State, across Basutoland, before settling at the foot of Mt Currie in 1863.

It took them two years to get here, and they suffered great losses but were nevertheless the first Settlers to settle. They stayed for 10 years at the foot of Mt Currie before they moved to Kokstad.

The area was known as "No Man's Land" after the Pondo tribe ceded it to the British Government in 1844, and became known as Griqualand East in 1861, named after the Griqua Leader.

Before them the area was frequented by Pondos, Basutos, Zulus and Traders.

They had their own flag, with their own coins, but was never issued their own paper money by the Cape Colony.

The Strachan coins were used.

During the 1870's and 1880's, Kokstad saw several businesses opening as well as farms changing hands. 343 Titles of land had already been issued and 55 farms had been occupied by white farmers.

Sir Bartle Frere asked Standard Bank to consider opening branches or agencies at Kokstad and St Johns River without delay. The bank viewed the matter premature, but send William Henry Doidge, branch visiting officer, and Thomas Jones David, acting accountant at Colesbeg to visit the "newly acquired territory" and arrived in Kokstad before 11 October 1878.

The bank was not pleased with the findings report of Doidge, but decided to open a branch on temporary premises leased from Mess Bydell & Uys, and situated next to the town Square.

Kokstad branch opened on 25 October 1878 under control of T.J.David.

The bank did not expect much business to be done here for some time with the exception of the Government accounts which had been kept at Pietermaritzburg branch up to this stage.

Thomas Henry Taylor was appointed manager of the branch.

The bank moved to new premises on Erf 114 Commission Street, leased from Ms. Magdalene Read.

Rumors that Kokstad's name will change, the bank decided to wait with the ordering of stationary, cheques and stamps until the issue was settled. Kokstad however retained its name.

By December 1878 the bank showed a profit which increased more than double ending June 1879! With a staff of two and white farmers rapidly moving into the area, the Branch did well.

In August 1880 the bank leased other premises from Bydell & Uys for five years, Erf 3 Church Street.

There was also a stable and servants quarters, a manager's house comprising six rooms, a clerk's bedroom, a strong room, and managers office And bank office.

By December 1880 the bank's profit had again increased by more than 4 times.

By August 1881 the Basuto War was over, a good



1878



1902



1929



1960



1984



2003



Strachan Coins

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Author:  
 Lia Kruger  
 Manager  
 2001-2003

road was being constructed between St Johns and Kokstad and the Branch was the center for an important district.

The year 1881 saw the start of a prolonged depression, trade was dull,

Farmers lost part of their stock, storekeepers also complained of dull

Trade while the proposed removal of the head quarters of the Cape Military Rifles to Umtata would make matters worse.

Rumours were doing the rounds of some inhabitants of Kokstad who petitioned the Bank of Africa to open a branch, but nothing came of it.

December 1881 Frederick Watt Standen was appointed manager of the branch.

The branch did well and kept showing a profit, in spite of the depression. White farmers kept a steady influx into the districts of Mount Currie, Matatiele and Umzimkulu.

1882 Saw the birth of Kokstad's first weekly newspaper.

Although no record of severe droughts in the area is known, 1885 saw the district suffering from severe drought conditions.

October 1886 saw Robert Tottenham Smith appointed as manager.

The first break-in attempt, recorded was on the night of 16 December 1887. The attempt was unsuccessful and the culprits were never found.

Early in 1888 Kokstad became a major supplier of meat to Pietermaritzburg and Durban, and whilst the area was also admirably adapted for sheep farming, the wool produced was of a very high quality.

1889 Saw indications of the presence of gold and copper in the area.

The Government's custom station at Umzimkulu on the Natal border caused much hampering and goods were brought up from King Williams Town and East London.

George May Harding was now manager and helped increase the bank's profits and deposits.

With good rains during 1893-4 300 000 head of cattle and 600 000 sheep were recorded.

1892-93 Saw a railway line from Port St John's to the East Griqualand border proposed, while Kokstad became a municipality in 1892, with 1500 souls. 6 Fair sized stores, 2 hotels, 2 canteens, 2 wagon makers and blacksmiths, 1 saddler, 2 baker's shops and 2 butchers, 3 firms of attorneys and notaries.

In 1893 the branch had 300 current accounts, with a few overdrafts.

Local storekeepers were not enterprising and by standing out for too large profits on their goods, and refusing to buy produce, they allowed much of the trade to go to Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

1895 Saw rinderpest throughout the country.

In 1896 Mr Watson, of Bank of Africa, visited Kokstad but failed to obtain much support.

The town of Kokstad showed rapid progress in 1897, new Government buildings were erected. A new public school was nearing completion and it appeared that a town hall would be erected soon.

In the 1890s many Black inhabitants were recruited to work on the mines on the Witwatersrand, which brought a large amount of money in circulation.

In October 1899 the Anglo-Boer War however broke

out and affected trade in Kokstad to some extent.

By 1900 the Standard Bank was still the only bank in Kokstad, local storekeepers also appeared to be in fairly easy circumstances while everyone waited eagerly for the construction of the railway line.

The Farmers position improved substantially.

The bank purchased a suitable erf on Erf no 11 on Main Street during August 1901.

June 1902 saw Mr Koevort arriving in Kokstad of African Banking Corporation to decide on opening a branch because it appeared the Bank of Africa had already send a manager from East London to start a Branch here! The Bank of Africa, however established that Standard Bank was too firmly established to warrant a second bank.

During the winter of 1902-03 severe climatic conditions were experienced in Kokstad and snow covered most of the roads. Losses in farm stock were high. In the meantime the new premises of the Kokstad branch were completed and occupied in September 1903. Post war depression set in and money was scarce. The cost of living was high as the town was far away from the Railway line.

In 1905 the town had become quite progressive. A public library, a

Convent and Public School, a Club, Hospital, and Hotel, 5 Churches, 2

Banks and a weekly newspaper. 100 Men and officers from the Cape Mounted Rifles were still in attendance.

By April 1905 the branch held 345 current accounts and 13 depositors.

In 1905 and 1906 copper was found in the district with a rich strike in the Insinzwa range of mountains, and by the end of 1906 two syndicates were involved with mining. December 1906 saw the first acetylene gas lighting system installed.

By 1907 the bank's leading customer, Mr A.F. Payn, owned many properties in the town, the Royal Hotel, Butchery, to name two profitable businesses.

By 1909 Nickel, Copper and Platinum were discovered, the Railway line stopped 49 miles north from Kokstad at Riverside, and the bank had 379 current accounts and a staff of four, while the depression started to ease.

The staff compliment went up to nine with increase in business, in spite of the discovering of East Coast Fever under live stock in the Umzimkulu district. Current accounts were 412 in mid-1910, 184 of which were those of farmers.

The ABC bank had 105 customers with a staff of four.

According to the census of May 1911 the population numbered 849 Whites and 2439 Blacks, the district numbered 1116 Whites and 10761 Blacks.

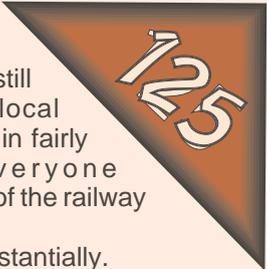
In 1912 the railway line was opened for traffic as far as Franklin, 20 miles north of Kokstad.

Horse breeding, wool, dairy farming, maize, millet, mealies, oats, forage and wheat were the main farming activities. In 1913 stock in the district numbered 266464 sheep, 82226 cattle, 39264 goats, 13038 horses, 1546 donkeys and 664 mules.

The First War broke out in Europe in August 1914.

Many accounts were transferred to Cedarville branch, which was upgraded from an agency to branch status on 14 February 1913, and Mount Frere branch, which opened on 30 May 1913.

1914 Saw severe climatic conditions from heavy rains early in the year to drought. A 15% average loss were



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experienced and affected the bank and businesses as well.

The branch did well during the war years, sheep were superceded by cattle, due to the demand for cheese.

1919 Saw the peace restored, and an influx of British settlers from the Free State, in spite of the severe drought. In August 1919, the town contains 9 important stores, 2 banks, 5 churches, 2 hotels, hospital, secondary school with 150 and the convent school with 150 children.

With 454 current accounts, Kokstad continued to improve, year by year, in its resources.

On 12 December 1919, the National Bank opened a branch.

During the depression of 1920-21, the ABC bank was absorbed by the Standard Bank. Kokstad branch amalgamated with the ABC branch on 31 December 1920.

Overseas settlers purchased several farms during 1922-24 during the economic slump. Kokstad now had 10 important stores and a number of small general dealers and with electric lights installation in 1924, the railway lines now extended from Franklin to Kokstad during November, things were looking up.

The current accounts numbered 648, with a staff of 12.

During 1925 trade had improved enormously and Kokstad became a visitors destinations when visitors from the coastal areas come to the beneficial change from the enervating coastal climate.

The Catholic church and edifice, a new masonic hall, extensions to the two hotels, all contributed to the improved situation of the bank.

Barclays Bank took over from National Bank in 1926, and by 1929 they employed seven staff. They actively tried to divert business to their institution, but Standard continued to have the best and largest portion as well as 80% of the farming community.

The Kokstad branch now had 763 current accounts, with 16 staff members.

By 1927 the first hot water geyser was installed in the branch.

The 1929 Wall Street Stock Market crash in America led to a world-wide depression during the early 1930s. The effects were also felt in Kokstad. A depression in the wool and livestock markets restricted the spending power of the farmers and effected the town, and traders and merchants trading came to standstill in 1932.

1932 A new Post Office and Police Station were Build.

1933 Saw several small stores closed down due to the town being overtraded. The only increase in the bank were the savings accounts, which numbered 185. June 1936 saw sheep and studstock, Frieslands, and oxen dominating.

Kokstad owed its existence to the Griqua tribe and by the late 1930s

Many of the tribe's descendants still lived in the town. Kokstad saw most of the motor traffic between Natal and the Cape Province.

The Second World War broke out in 1939, and in spite of the severe drought of 1941, favorable

Conditions were created for farmers with live stock.

1940 Saw the breeding of race horses undertaken on a number of farms.

The War had little impact on Kokstad.

1943 Saw the Johannesburg Building Society take over the local building society.

During the war-years 4 male staff members were away on military service and was replaced by the lady clerks. The staff was later reduced to 10 members.

In August 1962 the bank purchased the first managers house, which was a modern building build fifteen years previously.

In 1964 the staff numbered 11 men and 8 women. 1967-68 Was the worst season in over sixty years. A severe drought because of a lack of rain.

1969 Saw 11 men and 11 women staff members

Compared to Barclays staff of 6 men and 6 women. The current accounts numbered 1178, savings 3491

With fixed deposits and other deposits 232.

1972-1975 Kokstad was declared a border industry area, but no factories as such were build. The only big costing development was the Sawmill at Singesi and about 30 houses for staff.

By 1974 two more women were employed, while a substantial share of the branch's saving accounts was transferred to the Lusikisiki branch, but Kokstad believed that it could maintain its position by improving the level of its service. 8 Men and 17 women, renovations to enlarge the office commenced in 1975.

The departure of White traders from Transkei resulted in Kokstad increasing in Black trade with about 75% business with Transkei citizens.

With the possible incorporation of Kokstad into Transkei on 1 April 1978 (100 years after it was found), and a result of severed diplomatic relations between South Africa and Transkei, a certain degree of uncertainty about the future of East Griqualand took over.

The Trust Bank agency, lost popularity when its life assurance consultant moved to the Standard's associate company, while their hire purchase officer moved to Barclays Bank. Standard now had the largest share of the hire purchase and leasing business in Kokstad.

The branch's business continued to expand, while the strongest competition for resources came from the seven building societies in town. But by 1978 the branch had 43% of the total resources, 75% of total advances, compared to Barclays 20 and 25% respectively.

By 1979 there were about 242 farms in the magisterial district, with 80 000 cattle and 260 000 sheep.

The wholesale / retail sector of Kokstad were important.

Kokstad was a railhead town, as well as a border town to the Transkei. It was therefore an ideal point for wholesale operations.

Kokstad branch's importance stretched from Swartberg to the north, Cedarville to the west and Harding to the east.

By 1979 the staff numbered 27 and serious extensions were planned for the building. Messrs Harris and Sons Construction, clients of the branch, started work in 1980 to demolish the house next door and extend the assisting space to eventually have enough space for 40 staff members.

A crippling drought in 1982-83 effected Kokstad severly. 1984 Saw 20 000 souls and still no incorporation into Transkei.

Standard Bank still had 60% of business while only 56 building plots were left in town.



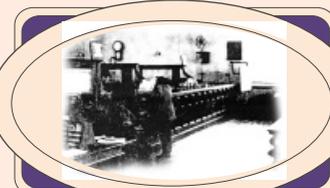
Staff 1935



Staff 1979  
100s Celebration



Staff 2003  
125s Celebration



The Banking Hall 1902



The Banking Hall 1990



The Banking Hall 2003



E-Bank 2003

The bank purchased another residence at Erf 839 in November 1984, which was two years old. By October 1989 an assistant manager was been appointed. Erf 973, Hawthorne Street has become available. It was 1 year old.

In 1990-91 the Kokstad Borough was particularly active and the most developments ever seen in the history of the town were planned. New street lights, new water pipeline and more. The mid-1991-97s saw the building of a new shopping centre and a new industrial township. Another shopping complex was build In 1997. Upgrades at the Bhongweni township. New tenants for the new complex and a Maximum Prison to be build. No records are available from 1998->

Extractions from a bulky compilation by **Letitia Myburgh, Archive & Historical Services, Standard Bank Head Office.**

**Compiled by Lia Kruger (Mrs) (CAIB)(SA)  
Branch Manager 2001-2003**

2003 Dawned on Kokstad Branch with great challenges in store. The Branch performance was poor in 2002, to the extend that it ranked in last position in the Port Shepstone area.

Several staff changes resulted in the Branch being able to employ new blood, which was representative of the Bank's overall Equity program. With the Team members came an improved Team spirit as well as renewed commitment from existing Team members.

Through hard-work and team commitment, the Branch showed tremendous improvement, in Sales and Service and is presently a strong contender, not only in the Port Shepstone area, but also in the Province of Kwazulu Natal.

Kokstad Branch together with Matatiele Branch form a Reporting Centre. The two Branches together have been in the TOP Spot in the Province in respect of Sales and Service performance for a number of months.

Change is not only evident in Kokstad Branch but in the entire Standard Bank Group. We are lead by a dynamic Team of Top Executives who are intend in making Standard Bank a very viable business.

Gone are the days of the Bank being viewed only as a deposit taking institution. Performance and profitability is now the name of the game.

In 2003 our Executive Team presented staff with challenges and pleasant

surprises such as:

1. A challenge to decorate branch restrooms. No guidelines or restrictions were imposed. The end result has been absolutely surprising. No more dull white, unimaginative little rooms. In their place bright coloured, well decorated rooms you can truly rest in.

2. To celebrate the Bank's financial results of 2003, we were given money to host a party for the staff. What great fun we had in this regard.

Change in the Bank, up to the mid 1990s was slow and carefully planned, planned again and again before it was eventually implemented.

Change nowadays is happening almost on a daily basis. Gone are the days of doing surveys on paper - electronics is now the name of the game.

Kokstad Branch was one of the first 50 offices that opened in Southern Africa from 1863 to 1897.

On the 25th October Kokstad became 125 years old and we look forward to the next 25 years. Some of us will not be around and we can only wonder what will happen during this period. Will the old Branch premises still exist? And if so, what will it look like? Probably like something from a sci-fi era.

That the years will be filled with excitement is not in doubt!

Enjoy being part of the next 25 years of history!

The staff of Kokstad has truly enjoyed themselves during our week-long celebrations. From Multi-Cultural dress, Hats galore, performing a cabaret for the VIPs, and much more. And there is more to come . . . !

**Lia Kruger  
Branch Manager**

**Acknowledgments:**

**Staff of Kokstad Museum;** although no records were found, and the local newspaper only started operating in 1882, the staff were enthusiastic to help where-ever they could.

The first Cheque issued by Kokstad branch is on display.

**Mr F. Rogers, Kokstad;** trying to find information of businesses dating back 125 years. No records.

**Mr D. Kimber, Empangeni;** forwarding a book called; "The Confidence of the Whole Country, Standard Bank Reports on Economic Conditions in Southern Africa 1865-1902." By Standard Bank Investment Corporation.

**Mr G. Sieberhagen,** Retired Provincial Director Natal Region, Umhlanga; same.

**Mr Scott Balson,** Australia, previously from Barclays Umzimkulu; who gave his permission to use photo's from his website of Strachan coins in his possession.

**2003 Staff of Kokstad branch;** for participating enthusiastically with the celebrations in October.

**Letitia Myburgh,** Archives and Historical Services Group Communications Standard Bank Head Office, Johannesburg; without her help no records were available. She compiled a bulky 93 page report with so much detail that we had a hard time compressing all the info into 3 pages!

And lastly, my husband, **Frans,** for putting everything together.

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Documents



Accountant



Inspector



Type Writer

**Branch managers**

1878 Nov	Taylor, T. H.	1939 Jul	Wiggett, E. A.
1881 Dec	Standen, F. W.	1945 Jun	Brown, W. T.
1886 Jan	Pickering, W.	1953 Jul	Lee, P. G.
1886 Oct	Smith, R. T.	1961 Nov	Harvey, C. B.
1889 Jun	Harding, G. M.	1973 Sep	Van Schoor, J.L.
1890 Jul	Barton, A. S.	1976 Mar	Lotz, W.E.
1891 Jun	Barton, A. S.	1980 Feb	Hunphries, M.H.
1892 Aug	Culpeper, J. C.	1984 Jan	Hewat, R.F.D.
1892 Dec	Brown, J. E.	1986 Nov	Du Preez, J.W.L.
1893 Feb	Culpeper, J. C.	1989 Sep	Coetzee, R.A.
1893 Sep	Brown, J. E.	1993 Jan	Kimber, D.J.
1894 Jan	Roberts, C. E.	1995 Aug	Mitchell, I.L.
1915 Apr	Smith, A. E.	1996 Jun	Stocker, I.P.S.
1919 Jan	Norman, B. R.	1998 Jan	Dettmer, H.G.
1923 Sep	Biggs, L. B.	1999 Nov	Pyoos, A. M. Mrs.
1929 Mar	Milne, J. M.		(Service Head)
1931 Dec	Kinross, J.	2001 Jun	Kruger, C.M. Mrs



East Griqualand