Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive!
It sounds as if it should be Shakespeare,
but these lines are in fact taken from
Marmion, an epic Scottish poem by
Walter Scott about the Battle of Flodden
Field (1513), published in 1808. And it
was written at around the same time as
some episodes I wish to relate.
I actually borrow the line from the title
of a book by Owen Pryce Lewis,
When First We Practice: The Life of Jan
Michiel Endres, Surgeon
(1989; Simonstown: Simonstown
Historical Society). The
rather bland biography of the 18th
century-born Endres, as recorded in the
Dictionary of South African Biography,
does not reflect the racy account of
a somewhat dubious character as
interpreted by Durban-born and Cape
Town-based architect and lecturer
Pryce Lewis, who was responsible for
documenting Endres’s Simonstown
premises. His is the story of a surgeon,
ours of his contemporary 19th-century
architects.
In the same decade of Endres’s death
occurs the arrival of the 1820 British
Settlers and the planning of facilities
in the Albany District of the Eastern
Cape Frontier, as Bathurst was meant
to be the administrative centre of this
district. The design of a new Drostdy of
the time is attributed to the provisional
magistrate, Major Charles Tappes, in
1820. The foundation stone was laid on 9
November 1820. The contractor was one
John Mandy. The costs of the project
soared, probably due to Tappes’s
extravagant plan for his residence.
However, it was Mandy who was to bear
the brunt of this and he was dismissed.
Thomas Mahoney (1785–1834) was
appointed in his place. Work continued
at a leisurely pace, in Mahoney’s words
‘getting on nicely’, but by the time Lord
Charles Somerset summarily suspended
Bathurst as seat of the magistracy
were exhausted. Colonel T rappes half-completed, the allocated funds the conception that, much as with the William Oliver Jones. So grand was This is the major surviving work of its resemblances between these designs. had in Bathurst because of the strong attention. This was intended for one subsequent project and focus of our excavation. Mahoney, as implementing this for free and imposed a tax on its no good reason why they should have Grahamstown, the traditional source (1834–1835) on his farm Clay Pits near the 1820 Settlers to be murdered on and engineer’. He was of the first of from London in the Cape in 1820 as come to a sticky end. He had arrived of in imported Welsh slate, the first such use of this material in South Africa. Now only a wing survives, incorporated into a private residence. Mahoney was to come to a sticky end. He had arrived from London in the Cape in 1820 as leader of a party of 16 English colonists as ‘sole proprietor ... architect, surveyor and engineer’. He was of the first of the 1820 Settlers to be murdered on Christmas Eve in the Sixth Frontier War (1834–1835) on his farm Clay Pits near Grahamstown, the traditional source for white clay used ceremonially by the Xhosa. The British authorities saw no good reason why they should have this for free and imposed a tax on its excavation. Mahoney, as implementing agent for the Crown, paid the price! The Drostdy of Worcester is the subsequent project and focus of our attention. This was intended for one and the same Landdrost Trappes, now promoted to Colonel. Lewcock (1963: 257) presumes him to have had as much of a hand in its design as he had had in Bathurst because of the strong resemblances between these designs. This is the major surviving work of its designer, the government architect William Oliver Jones. So grand was the conception that, much as with the Bathurst episode, by the time it was half-completed, the allocated funds were exhausted. Colonel Trappes obtained permission to appoint a man of his own nomination, Samuel Flemming, to further supervise its erection. Completed and occupied in 1824, it is considered the finest Regency building in the Cape. Its extravagance gave rise to rumours that Lord Charles Somerset had meant to use it as his shooting box and built it at the expense of the Crown. Of palatial size, dominating the town down the length of the main street, the Drostdy is the epitome of authoritarian town planning. The design architect, William Oliver Jones, is thought to be the historically notorious figure named Oliver the Spy; operating in England in 1817. The Leeds Mercury disclosed that an instigator and informer of this name had been employed by the British government in order to discover the Luddite leaders of insurrections and riots in industrial districts of England that occurred after a temporary suspension of civil rights in Yorkshire from 1812 to 1817. In his article in the Leeds Mercury exposing William Oliver, the journalist Baines described him as a ‘prototype of Lucifer, whose distinguishing characteristic is first to tempt and then to destroy’. Thirty-five of the men arrested after Oliver’s debriefing were charged with high treason. Brandreth, the ring leader, and two others were originally sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered, but the quartering was remitted – small comfort when dead. Another 11 men were transported for life. Jones (if indeed alias Oliver, alias Richards) was among several well-known informers, many of whom were enabled to leave the country under state protection. It was thought that Oliver the Spy had been given employment in South Africa, and when Jones arrived at Cape Town in 1820, it was generally believed that he was the notorious agent. He came to South Africa in 1820, recommended to Lord Charles Somerset by Goulburn of the Colonial Office in London as ‘a builder, but no architect’. In his new-found homeland he operated as a builder and contractor in the Cape from 1820 to about 1825. His friendship with John Melvill, government inspector of buildings and well connected with the London Missionary Society, in the light of his possible origins as noted by Lewcock (1963: 260-1), is ominous since Somerset later claimed in correspondence, when the authorities found themselves at

REFERENCES:
I am indebted to the masterful research of Ronald Lewcock of this period in South Africa’s architectural history, as well as information provided by Wikipedia and www.artefacts.co.za. In addition, the following are sources for facts or quotes:


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