

# A Life Detoured

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We genealogists are constantly amazed at our ancestors and how they moved about at a time when moving was not an easy thing to do. I have chased my English grandfather's family across England to Wales and back to England, again. I have learned that these moves were for better job prospects and opportunities for the family. But what if one was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, and circumstances forced the change?

Such was the case of my fourth great-grandfather, Timothy Lacey, when, on 29 October 1813, he was captured at sea and his life was forever changed. I doubt that he planned to become a resident of Quebec, Canada, but that is exactly what happened. He would never see his English family again.

On that fateful day he was working as a seaman on the British merchant ship *Argo*. He was in a convoy of three ships, one of which was the *HMS Galatea* which was protecting two merchant ships likely carrying whale oil. But the situation changed quickly when the *USS Congress* and the *USS President* came upon them. The *USS President* commenced a chase of the *HMS Galatea* which ended in failure for the *Galatea* was able to make it successfully to Halifax, Nova Scotia. However, the fate of the *Argo* and its crew was not so fortunate.

The *Argo* was captured by the *USS Congress*. The crew and cargo were claimed by the United States and transferred to the *USS Congress*. It is believed the *Argo* was sunk either by cannon or by fire. The *USS Congress* and the *USS President* set sail for Boston. It had been a good year for them because the two U. S. "frigates captured nine prizes." (Wikipedia:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ USS\\_Congress\\_\(1799\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ USS_Congress_(1799)))

Once in the Boston Harbor, the captured crew was transferred from the frigate *USS Congress* to a prisoner exchange ship and then taken to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

This is how I suppose my ancestor Timothy Lacey of Gosberton, Lincolnshire, came to live in Canada for the remainder of his life. I believe his heart was still in his native land in Gosberton for his headstone reads "Native of Gosberton, Lincolnshire, England."

The sourcing of this story is found in documents held by both Ancestry.com and FindMyPast.com. These two entities have images of the original entries for these

prisoners of war and other information can be found online. When released in Canada, the occupations of the men were listed for the record. One of the occupations listed was "harpooner." From these records I have established that the Argo, with a small crew of about fourteen men, was a whaling ship.