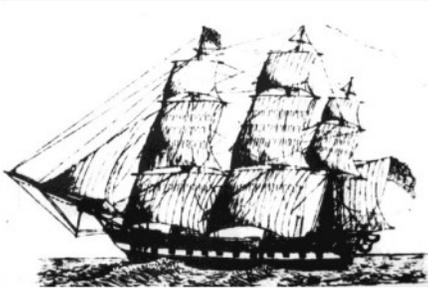


Lysander Curtis American *Patriotes* or British Convict?

By George Curtis



In researching my maternal French-Canadian ancestors, I happened across an item on the British ship *HMS Buffalo*. It seems the *HMS Buffalo* served as a convict ship in 1839 to transport 82 American patriots and 58 French Canadian political prisoners from Canada to Australia.

The Lower Canada Patriots' War was a conflict between the rebels of Lower Canada (Quebec) and the British colonial power in that province. In 1838, two major armed conflicts occurred when groups of Lower Canadian *Patriotes* led by Robert Nelson crossed the border from the U.S.

with the plan to invade Lower Canada, then continue into Upper Canada, drive out the British army and establish independent republics.

The American intervention into Canada was a disaster with many *Patriotes* being taken prisoner by British forces. The Americans were tried and convicted at Fort Henry in Toronto for rebellion against the British crown. Lysander Curtis, age 33, born in Vermont was on the list of prisoners aboard the *HMS Buffalo* which departed Quebec on September 28, 1839, arriving in Tasmania on February 11, 1840. The Americans disembarked and the French prisoners were taken onward to Sydney, Australia.

When the Americans from the *Buffalo* arrived in Hobart, they found others who had been transported via England, making a total of 92 "Patriot exiles" in Tasmania. Of these 92, fourteen died as a direct result of transportation and the rigors of penal servitude. By the end of 1844, half had been granted pardons. Nearly all were pardoned by 1848, but five remained in penal servitude until at least 1850. None of those pardoned chose to stay in Tasmania.

The fate of Lysander Curtis is unknown unless someone has a story to share about him. It is possible that he was the same Lysander Curtis, born May 26, 1805 in Monkton, Addison County, Vermont to Martin and Rebecca Curtis of the Deodatus Curtis of Braintree, MA 1640 line.

For more information, see —The Patriot War of 1837–1838, by Andrew Bonthius.