

supplied by the British Army, and on 4 June 1866 set out for Windsor in response to warnings of possible incursions from the Detroit area. Wyatt had arranged the charter of the vessel and sailed as the “quartermaster.”⁷¹

The Toronto men were bitterly disappointed when Royal Navy personnel arrived at Windsor and, by 7 June, took over *Rescue*, and a second, larger steamer, *Michigan*, just chartered from its American owners in Detroit.⁷² A few experienced Canadian mariners remained on the vessels to operate the steam engines and navigate them safely in the inland waters. Among those who stayed aboard *Rescue* was Wyatt, who now became the “sailing master.”⁷³

The Royal Navy had been able to respond quickly because of plans made earlier in the spring following warnings by the Canadian government and the British Army command in Canada, at Montreal, about the Fenian threat. The corvette HMS *Pylades* reached Quebec City on 10 May, soon after navigation opened, and carried on to Montreal. The sloop HMS *Rosario*, and the frigate HMS *Aurora*, the largest of the three warships, arrived at Quebec City on 16 and 13 May.⁷⁴ These ships were prepared to provide crews and armament for civilian steamers chartered by the Canadian government should that prove necessary. Captain A.F.R. de Horsey of *Aurora*, senior officer of the force, focused his attention on the Great Lakes. He delegated arrangements in the St. Lawrence to Captain A.W.A. Hood of *Pylades*. As soon as word of the attack on Fort Erie arrived on 2 June, Hood worked with the British Army command to take up and arm steamers to patrol the waters between Montreal and Kingston, while de Horsey rushed the crews and guns for *Rescue* and *Michigan* by rail to Toronto and then Windsor.⁷⁵

Although the Canadian government chartered steamers for conversion to gun boats, it did so reluctantly. Since the early 1850s, Britain had pressed

⁷¹ John A. Macdonald, *Troublous Times in Canada: A History of the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870* (Toronto: W.S. Johnston and Coy, 1910), 100-3; A.M. Smith to Attorney General, 30 June 1866, Record Group (RG) 9 IC8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC.

⁷² *Michigan* was, however, a Canadian vessel. It had been built at Sarnia in 1859 for the Grand Trunk Railway, and sold to John Pridgeon, a Detroit based shipowner, in 1863, but had never been registered either in Canada or in the United States (whose shipping laws, in any case, forbade the registration of vessels built outside of the United States). Wyatt to McDougall, 30 July 1866, enclosing bill of sale from the Grand Trunk Railway to Pridgeon, 5 January 1863, RG 9 IC8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC; ‘Bowling Green State University... Historical Collections of the Great Lakes/ Vessels/ Michigan,’ <https://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/item/437992>.

⁷³ Wyatt to McDougall, 6 July 1866, RG 9 IC8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC. Wyatt signed as “Sailing Master S[teamer] ‘Rescue.’”

⁷⁴ *Morning Chronicle, Commercial and Shipping Gazette* (Quebec City), 10 May 1866, 2, 14 May 1866, 2, and 17 May 1866, 2.

⁷⁵ De Horsey to Hope, “Letter[s] of Proceedings,” and other reports, 2-7 June 1866, ADM 128/24, ff. 351-376, TNA, copy on reel C-2538, LAC.