

the North American colonies to assume responsibility for their own defence. The financial burden on British taxpayers was onerous and, given that Britain granted the colonies the self-government they demanded in the late 1840s, an anachronism. People determined to govern themselves should look after their own defences. Canada had expanded its volunteer land militia as border tensions increased in the last year of the Civil War, but insisted that naval defence should still fall wholly to Britain. This was why the provincial government so quickly turned *Rescue* and then *Michigan* over to the Royal Navy crews, and immediately demobilized the Toronto Naval Brigade. Canada strictly limited its commitment, as a matter of policy, to providing the steamers.

Wyatt won the confidence of Captain de Horsey and Major General G.T.C. Napier, the British Army commander in Canada West at Toronto, in making arrangements to sustain the gunboat service. A key issue was economy and the three agreed that it would be less costly in the longer term to purchase rather than continue to charter steamers.⁷⁶ Wyatt made contact with the owners of *Rescue* and *Michigan*, and concluded that the latter could likely be purchased for \$12,000 and the former for \$22,000, sums that would be exceeded during a single season at the existing charter rates of \$150 and \$130 a day.⁷⁷

Wyatt travelled to Ottawa to offer to organize the purchase. He brought two letters of endorsement. The first, from his business partner W.H. Smith of the Royal Canadian Bank, observed that Wyatt's mission was "by instruction of the General here [General Napier]," and attested to Wyatt's deep knowledge of "the Lakes and ship building in all its details...."⁷⁸ The second was from Captain McMaster of the Toronto Naval Brigade who commended Wyatt's performance during *Rescue's* brief cruise under McMaster's command: "I fully appreciated your knowledge of Vessels, Ports and everything in fact connected with the Lake Navigation...."⁷⁹ Immediately on reaching Ottawa, Wyatt visited George Brown, the Reform leader in the coalition government, and Angus Morrison, the Reform MP for Niagara, and they gave him their support. "No one in our part of the country," Brown wrote, "has shown such shrewdness or energy in the management of Lake Craft...."⁸⁰

On 6 July 1866 the government's Executive Council (the forerunner of

⁷⁶ Wyatt to Napier, 28 June 1866, and de Horsey to Monck, 30 June 1866, RG9 IC8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC.

⁷⁷ As reported by McDougall in Executive Council Minutes, 6 July 1866, RG1E1, vol. 91, pp. 592-3, LAC.

⁷⁸ A.M. Smith, Royal Canadian Bank to Attorney General, 30 June 1866, RG9 1C8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC.

⁷⁹ McMaster to Wyatt, 28 June 1866, RG9 1C8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC.

⁸⁰ Brown to Wyatt, 6 July 1866 (quoted) and Morrison to McDougall, 6 July 1866, RG9 1C8, vol. 8, file numbers 1-20, LAC.