



225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1789-2014



## Samuel M. Blatchford

### **Born:**

March 9, 1820  
New York, NY

### **Received Commission:**

July 16, 1867

Service terminated March 4, 1878 due to appointment to United States Circuit Court for the Second Circuit.

Commissioned March 22, 1882 as the 48th Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

### **Died:**

July 7, 1893  
Newport, RI

Samuel Blatchford, born in New York City, was the son of a prominent Whig attorney and his wife. After education at a Pittsfield, MA, boarding school and in New York City schools, Samuel entered Columbia College at age 13 and graduated first in his class at age 17. After reading law for a year, he became private secretary to William H. Seward, governor of New York, remaining with him until his second term ended in 1842. After completing law studies in his father's office, Blatchford was admitted to the bar in 1843. He moved to Auburn, NY, and became a partner in the Seward & Morgan law office.

In 1854, Blatchford returned to New York City and formed a law partnership with Seward's son and another attorney. In their successful commercial practice, Blatchford specialized in maritime law. He also became a noted law reporter, publishing a volume of SDNY admiralty decisions, a volume of SDNY Civil War prize case decisions, and volumes of Second Circuit decisions (both before he took the bench and during his judicial career.)

In 1867, Secretary of State Seward persuaded President Johnson to appoint Blatchford to the SDNY. Elevated to the Second Circuit in 1878, Blatchford was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Arthur in 1882 after two others declined the appointment. On the Waite and then Fuller Courts, Justice Blatchford was a workhorse, producing much more than his share of Court opinions and demonstrating expertise in admiralty, patent and national banking law cases.

### Sources:

Arnold Paul, Samuel Blatchford, in *THE JUSTICES OF THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT, 1789-1969: THEIR LIVES AND MAJOR OPINIONS* (Leon Friedman & Fred L. Israel, eds.).

Charles W. McCurdy, Blatchford, Samuel, in *AMERICAN NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY*.