

## Cases of Historical Interest In the Southern District of New York

### The Prize Cases

Judge Samuel Rossiter Betts

During his tenure on the bench, Judge Betts, a veteran of the War of 1812, decided hundreds of “prize of war” cases. Ships aiding an enemy in time of war could be seized by a private party who then could sue for a portion of the cargo of the seized ship. One of Judge Betts’ early and important prize decisions in the Civil War era was *The Hiawatha*, where Judge Betts upheld the constitutionality of the Union blockade as a legitimate means of conducting civil war. The Supreme Court agreed.

Blatchf. Prize Cas., 1, 12 F.Cas. 95 (S.D.N.Y. 1861), aff’d, 12 F.Cas. 94 (Cir Ct S.D.N.Y. 1861), aff’d sub nom. *The Amy Warwick*, 67 U.S. 635 (1862).  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1861/07/02/news/united-states-district-court-july-1-before-judge-betts.html>



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