

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

### **The Titanic Cases**

Judges Charles M. Hough, Learned Hand and George C. Holt

Oceanic Steam Navigation Company (a British company) petitioned to limit its liability under the U.S. Limited Liability Act. One claimant, Anna Sofia Slojblom, sought recovery of \$6,200 for her injuries and lost baggage. In her affidavit, she states "affiant at the time of the collision was asleep in her berth, but was eventually awakened and went on deck, when she learned the vessel was in a sinking condition, she became very much frightened and very nervous, and was shoved about in the crowd and over prostrate people for a considerable length of time, and finally picked up by some one and thrown into one of the last lifeboats to leave the Titanic . . . ." Judge Holt held that an American statute governing liability should not apply to a British ship and dismissed the Oceanic Steamship Company's petition for limitation of liability. The Supreme Court held that the statute permits a foreign vessel to limit its liability when sued in the United States. Cases settled on July 28, 1916 for \$664,000.

204 F. 295 (S.D.N.Y. 1912), modified sub nom., *In re Oceanic Steam Navigation Co.*,  
204 F. 260 (2d Cir. 1913).

206 F. 500 (S.D.N.Y. 1913).

209 F. 501 (S.D.N.Y. 1913), certification of questions, 209 F. 513 (2d Cir. 1913),  
certified questions answered, *Oceanic Steam Nav. Co. v. Mellor*, 233 U.S. 718 (1914)

R. Peltz, *The Titanic's Legacy: The History and Legal Developments Following the World's Most Famous Maritime Disaster*, 12 U.S.F. Mar. L.J. 45 (1999-2000).

M. Zekala, *Liability and Salvage: Titanic Jurisprudence in United States Federal Court*, 16 Lewis & Clark L. Rev. 1075 (2012).

J. Eaton & C. Haas, *Titanic: Triumph and Tragedy* 13 (2d ed. 1995).



**225<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary  
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