

OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL HALL OF FAME

2012



SILAS STRAWN Class of 1885



Silas Strawn, born in Ottawa and an OTHS graduate in 1885, is the namesake of one of today's largest and most prestigious international law firms, Winston & Strawn LLP. Winston & Strawn employs nearly 1,000 attorneys among 15 offices, 8 of which are located in the United States, and the remainder in: Beijing, Geneva, Hong Kong, London, Moscow, Paris, and Shanghai. Their clients have included some of the largest companies in the world, although they represent both public and private sector clients, large and small, in all types of business-related legal issues. Silas Strawn joined the firm in 1892, became a partner in 1894, and moved into a leadership position in 1901, leading the firm for 40 years. He led the firm to renown with his astute business acumen, his commitment to the public and clients, and his vision that the firm should encompass not only Chicago, but the world. Silas Strawn's accomplishments and areas of service are voluminous, among them, serving as chairman of the Republican National Finance Committee for successful presidential candidate Herbert Hoover, serving as trustee of Chicago's Field Museum, and serving as trustee of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In 1929, responding to the City of Chicago's dire financial situation, he organized a committee that raised \$74 million from Chicago citizens to address the emergency. Silas Strawn was a delegate to International Chamber of Commerce meetings in Vienna, Rome, Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Washington, D.C. He died in 1946, still practicing law. Lowell Thomas, a well-known radio commentator eulogized Silas Strawn as the ideal lawyer and his "favorite American," noting that he was a farmer boy who fought his way to the top and became a world figure – devoting his life to unraveling difficult problems, local, national, and international. The book, *Winston & Strawn: The First 150 Years*, published in 2004, highlights many of his extraordinary accomplishments.