

**C. Allen Parker**  
CRAVATH (NEW YORK)



## C. ALLEN PARKER

**BARACK OBAMA, NO DOUBT**, is aware that his job was held by James Monroe in 1819. And we are of a certainty that John Roberts could tell you that John Marshall was chief justice in 1819. But not many people have jobs with what you'd have to call *lineage*.

As just the 15th presiding partner of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, we'd expect that C. Allen Parker could rattle off the august names of his predecessors since the firm began in 1819 with some measure of pleased alacrity, though we didn't ask. He has as reminders the artwork and photographs hanging from the dark wood walls of the Cravath sanctum at One Worldwide Plaza, New York. There, looming, are Richard and Samuel Blatchford, William and Clarence Seward, names and visages forever associated with the important events in politics and commerce of the 1800s; and then, in tenures that encompassed the first five decades of the 20th century, there are the images of Paul Cravath, Robert Swaine and Hoyt Moore, whose names outlive them.

Presiding partners since have been equally accomplished and successful at burnishing the firm's legacy while reinventing and renewing it, to keep up with the times. The 15th presiding partner took the helm of Cravath in 2012. Responding to the news, a senior executive of JPMorgan Chase told *The New York Times*, simply: "Blue chips don't get any more blue than Allen Parker."

**Lawdragon:** What does the firm of today owe to its founders and partners from the 19th century?

**Allen Parker:** The early partners established the principles that have been the foundation of the firm for nearly 200 years: excellence, integrity and an unwavering focus on client service. Building on these principles, Paul Cravath, whose time as a partner began at the end of the 19th century, continued the firm's dedication to those principles and developed the institutional framework that gave rise to the firm we know today—a firm that strives both to provide the very best legal advice and to work beside our clients to enable them to achieve their business goals.

**LD:** What did you know of Cravath when you joined the firm? Was its reputation attractive to you?

**AP:** In the early 1980s, I was of course attracted, as were a great many other law students, by Cravath's reputation as one of the country's preeminent law firms and an acknowledged leader in complex transactional and litigation matters. But I ultimately chose to practice at the firm because of its dedication to providing outstanding training and because of the people I met during the interview

process and my experience as a summer associate. I was convinced that the Cravath system of associate training—in which each associate is trained as a generalist by going through a series of different practice experiences within his or her chosen department—was the best way for me to reach my full potential as a lawyer. As for the people, I found the lawyers at all levels of Cravath to be not only bright and creative, but also more engaging and enthusiastic than the lawyers I encountered at most other firms.

**LD:** Do you remember the first transaction you handled as an associate? Did you have a particular mentor who taught you how to be a dealmaker and trusted adviser?

**AP:** I remember my first transaction very well—it was representing a fledgling cellular telephone company in its purchase of cell-site and switching equipment. Although this was a straightforward transaction, it was a great learning experience for a young lawyer in his first few months of practice, and it gave me the chance to work with two talented professionals who went on to become my mentors.

Bob Rosenman, the partner on the transaction, taught me the importance of being exhaustively prepared and treating everyone involved in the transaction with respect. Rob Kindler, who was the senior associate on the transaction and went on to become a Cravath partner and, later, the vice chairman of Morgan Stanley, taught me the importance of taking personal responsibility for all aspects of the transaction and never losing sight of those issues in the transaction that are truly important. Even nearly 30 years later, I find that these lessons are still the foundation of everything I do as a legal adviser.

**LD:** You're the 15th presiding partner at Cravath. What does that mean for you, personally and professionally? What do you hope to say you accomplished when you leave this post?

**AP:** I have always been a person for whom the firm itself was paramount. While I am honored to serve as Cravath's presiding partner, my focus is on my responsibility to do what is best for the firm and its nearly 1,400 employees. As you would expect, I have a long list of tasks I would like to complete during my tenure—but all these tasks are mere components of my larger goal to leave the firm a stronger and more enduring institution than it was when my tenure began.

See the full Q&A at <http://www.lawdragon.com/lawyer-limelights/c-allen-parker>.