

## *Silas Bradford's Boy, A Book Report* By Bob Heppe

Joseph C. Lincoln was known during his life as the Interpreter of Cape Cod and was credited with creating Cape Cod tourism. The son of a sailing ship Captain and a Cape Cod Crosby, Joe Lincoln was destined to spin yarns, as he called them, of Old Cape Cod.

In his 1928 novel *Silas Bradford's Boy*, Mr. Lincoln spins the yarn of Silas "Banks" Bradford, a newly minted Massachusetts lawyer who comes home to start a law practice in tiny Denboro. As in all of Lincoln's novels, the plot twists and turns. It involves working out one dilemma after another, nurturing a budding romance between conflicted lovers, and solving a mystery.

To set the story, Banks Bradford's father, Captain Silas Bradford, had passed away at sea when Banks was only five. Now twenty-five, Banks' memories of his dad are misty and faint, but are enhanced by his father's relatives and acquaintances. They remember Captain Bradford as handsome, square, and smart. Banks is raised by his mother, Margaret, who is mysteriously restrained in discussing her late husband, and his uncle, Captain Abijah Bradford, who is not. Captain Abijah looked up to his older brother.

Banks' practice starts out slowly in the upstairs room of a local used furniture store, operated by Ebenezer Tadgett. Tadgett becomes a good friend in the slow times. When Banks takes Tadgett's collection case against Mrs. Maybelle Truman, the rich widow of his father's late partner, the town gossips are abuzz that the young lawyer will be trounced by the widow's experienced counsel. "A green hand has to learn by experience," growled his uncle Abijah, and advised him against taking the case. When Banks unexpectedly wins, including "damages, cost and interest," the town gossips are quick to point out "they told you so."

As a result of Banks' unexpected triumph, Abijah's vest is too tight for his pride-filled chest. More importantly to his practice, Banks is hired by Christopher Trent, CEO of Ostable National Bank, to represent the bank in a possible merger with Denboro Bank. Trent is the grandson of Benjiman Trent, the late senior partner in the now defunct firm of Trent, Truman, and Bradford. To add a potential conflict, Abijah is one of the directors of Denboro Bank, but Abijah thinks Banks new position is a feather in his cap and will help facilitate the merger.

Banks is under no illusion as to why he was hired. In the slow times he had successfully worked on a small matter for Hezekiah Bartlett, a wealthy and cranky curmudgeon, and a major Denboro Bank stockholder. Bartlett was the only substantial stockholder against the merger. Because Bartlett had been extolling the virtues of the new lawyer throughout Ostable County, it was thought by Trent that Banks could bring Bartlett around.

Before meeting with Bartlett, Banks learned all he could about the proposed merger. He noted that Ostable National Bank held notes from three companies out West, companies founded by Trent and Truman after Bradford's death. The notes were substantial and were paying "interest only," and had been endorsed by Maybelle Truman and Christopher Trent. Bartlett

listened carefully to Banks at first, and then flatly refused. He stated he was an old man and was content with the dividends he was receiving on his stock. However, because Bartlett liked Banks, he agreed to the merger, but only on the condition that Banks investigate those notes and report back to him confidentially, and that he found Banks' report satisfactory.

Banks fretted about seeking that report without telling Trent about it, but decided that Bartlett was also his client, and Trent had told him to do all things necessary to convince Bartlett of the merger. Without the report, the merger was going nowhere.

To add romance and conflict to the picture, Banks had fallen in love with Mrs. Truman's granddaughter, Elizabeth.

When the report comes into Banks that the companies in question were not in good shape, a bruhaha resulted with Trent accusing Banks of having betrayed the bank and Mrs. Truman. Before he could be fired, Banks submitted his resignation which was a relief to him. However, Mrs. Truman tries to turn Elizabeth against him and for awhile it seems the young couple is doomed.

Without spoiling the book for the reader, in the end it all turns out the as the reader hoped it would.

Joseph C. Lincoln was born in Brewster in 1870 and grew up there until the age of 13. He moved to Chelsea and attended Williams Grammar School, graduating at age 15. He returned to the Cape in the summers and in 1916 built his cottage "Crosstrees" on Shore Road, Chatham. Before he ever wrote a book, he had several poems and short stories published in national magazines including Harper's Bazaar and The Saturday Evening Post. His first novel, *Cap'n Eri*, was published in 1904. Over the next 40 years he published at least one book a year. The 2008 movie "The Golden Boys," starring Bruce Dern, Muriel Hemmingway, David Carradine, Charles Durning and Julie Harris was based on *Cap'n Eri*.

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