

## Edward Thompson

### *Northport Oysterman, Entrepreneur, & Lawbook Publisher*

Edward Thompson may be reasonably viewed as the man who, through his enterprise and initiative, managed to transition the village of Northport from its economic reliance on shipbuilding to an industry that would prove even more important in giving the community economic strength, and also a residential population which provided the human resources to make the small community a powerhouse for politics, government and professional services in the twentieth century.

That enterprise was the Edward Thompson Lawbook Publishing Company. And the human resource? Dozens and dozens of young lawyers and other professionals imported into the community to make the company a success.



Thompson, it seems, had been a local oysterman with some cash on hand to start up a new enterprise. When James Cockcroft came to town in the mid 1880s, Edward saw his opportunity - Cockcroft had rented a couple of rooms, hired an assistant for copying documents, and began publishing legal volumes on his own.

Before long Thompson, Cockcroft and a third partner were working out of the old Presbyterian Church on Woodbine Avenue, and in 1887 they founded the American and English Encyclopedia of Law, a publication that was so important and successful that by 1889 they had built

the large brick building at the corner of Woodbine and Scudder which was to house their influential business.

Within a very short span of time, Edward Thompson was importing many young lawyers fresh from law school to work for the company producing what would become for many years the preeminent legal publications in the nation.

During its heyday the publication house became instrumental in building the infrastructure of the little village it inhabited – from steamboats and waterworks to trolleys, electrical service and the very incorporation of Northport itself. And while the lawbook publishing company's products were superseded by the early part of the twentieth century, by then the population of Northport had within it a professional cadre fed by the power of Edward Thompson's ability to draw people into town that was out of proportion to its actual size.

For much of the first half of the century, leaders in real estate, banking, insurance and in particular politics and government rose from the ranks of Northport's residents. This influence on the politics and economy of the region is directly attributable to the work of the entrepreneurship of an enterprising oysterman by the name of Edward Thompson.