

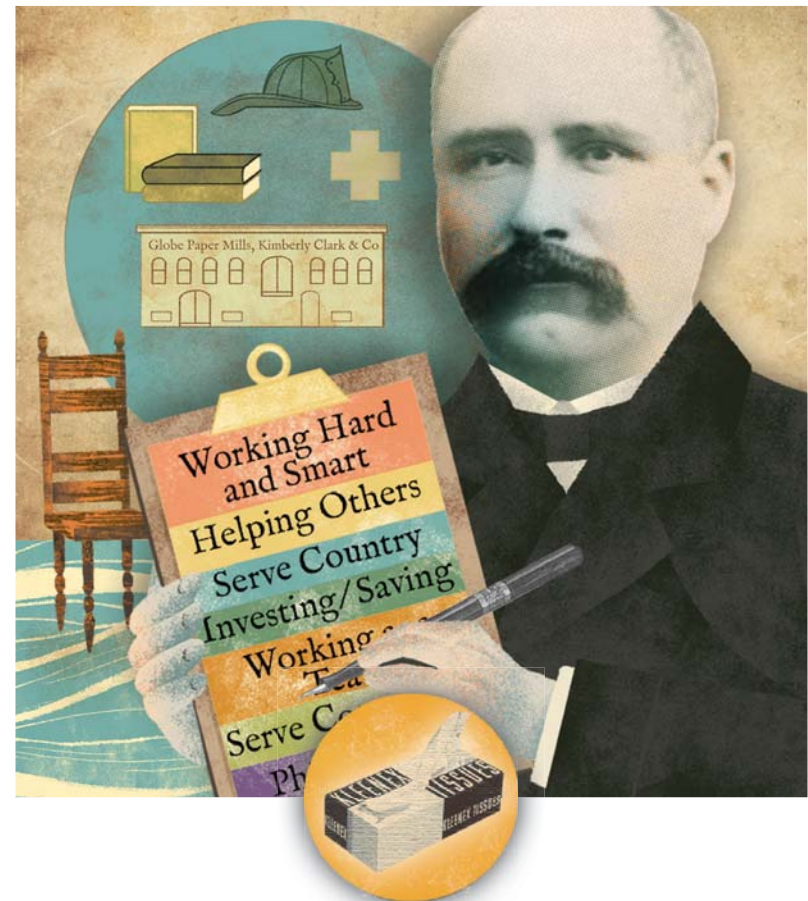
WISCONSIN BIOGRAPHIES

CHARLES CLARK

From Rags to Riches



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Biography written by:

Becky Marburger
Education Specialist
Wisconsin Public Television Education

A special thank you to the following for assisting with this project:

Debra Burmeister, Neenah School District

Amanda Ironside, Menasha School District

Greg Kehring, Menasha School District

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Don Nussbaum, content expert

Suzanne Hart O'Regan, images

Diane Penzenstadler, content expert

GLOSSARY

- Civil War (n): a US war from 1861 to 1865 between the Union, or Northern states, and the Confederacy, or the Southern states
- corporation (n): a type of business with partners
- devote (v): to give attention, effort, and time to a purpose
- land grab (n): the unfair gain of land
- persevere (v): to keep trying and not give up
- philanthropist (n): a person who helps others by giving time or money to causes or charities
- representative (n): a person who is chosen to speak or act for others
- ton (n): 2,000 pounds
- US House of Representatives (n): a government group that helps create and regulate US laws and regulations
- Wisconsin State Legislature (n): a government group that helps create and regulate Wisconsin's laws and regulations

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INTRODUCTION

When you use a Kleenex[®] tissue, do you think of Wisconsin? Do you think of a mayor or a state **representative**? Do you think of a giant paper company? You should. Charles Clark served his family, his city, and his country. He helped create the Kimberly-Clark **Corporation**. This large paper company that was founded in Northeast Wisconsin makes products including Kleenex[®] tissues, Huggies[®] diapers, and Cottonelle[®] toilet paper.

The home Charles built for his family at 561 East Wisconsin Avenue in Neenah, Wisconsin.

Courtesy of the Neenah Historical Society.



Charles Benjamin Clark

O'Regan, Suzanne Hart. 1983. "Family Letters."



Theda Clark

Theda Clark was born February 13, 1871, and was very close to her father, Charles. He taught her the importance of being a **philanthropist** and caring for others.

On December 23, 1899, Theda invited children from Neenah to her home for a Christmas tree party. She decorated her home and provided food and gifts.

The party was a success, but Theda became upset when a newspaper reporter only told how Theda invited poor and needy children who wore ragged clothing. In reality, Theda invited children rich and poor. Her goal was for all children to enjoy themselves. "I particularly asked him not to mention poor people, and there was not a ragged child among them!" Theda wrote in a letter.

Theda died at age 32, three days after the birth of her daughter. In her will, Theda left a large sum of money to be used for a community project. Her family honored her wishes and built Theda Clark Hospital, which is now known as ThedaCare Regional Medical Center.

Courtesy of the Neenah Historical Society.



Theda Clark attended school in Neenah before going to Wells College, an all-women's school in New York. Seven women were in her graduating class.

Photo Credit: Debra Burmeister. (2017).



The home Theda's father built was moved to 583 E Wisconsin Avenue. In its spot, her mother built this home, which is where Theda lived. The house still stands.

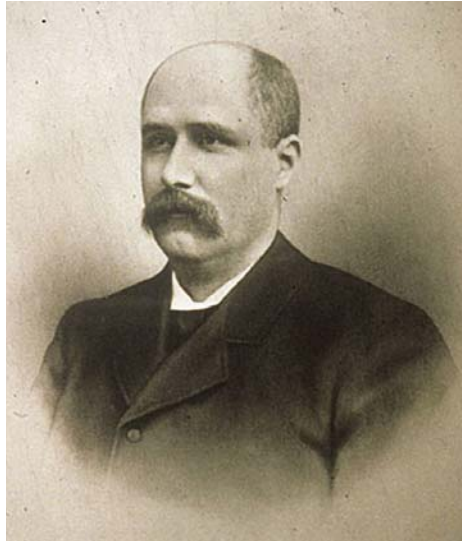
CONCLUSION

In September 1891 while visiting his hometown, Charles died approximately 55 feet from the spot he was born. Charles was about 49 years old. It is thought he died from Bright's Disease, which affects the kidneys.

Charles worked hard for his family. He served as a soldier. He went on to serve as mayor of Neenah and in the Wisconsin State Legislature and the US House of Representatives. He also founded a business that still exists today.

The next time you pick up a tissue, think of how Charles Clark gave to his family, city, business, country, and you.

Photograph courtesy of the Neenah Public Library.



Charles Clark saw serving others, the community, and his country as a way to be successful in life. *What do you want to do in your life to be successful?*

EARLY YEARS

Charles Benjamin Clark was born in Theresa, New York, around 1842.* To some, he is known as C.B. Clark. His parents were Luther and Theda Clark. Charles cut wood as a child to earn money for his family.

Charles's father died in 1853. Charles and his mother then moved to Neenah, Wisconsin, to live with Charles's older brother, Luther. Luther died shortly after his family came.

Photograph courtesy of the Neenah Public Library.



Neenah was once known as "Winnebago Rapids." The name Neenah is said to have come from the Winnebago word *nina*, which means water. This illustration shows what downtown Neenah looked like in 1856, the year it became a village.

*Charles let reporters use whatever year they wished when writing a story about him. That is why we do not know when he was born, but historians believe it was around 1842.

On the day he arrived, Charles looked for work at a furniture factory. The owner did not have any work for him. Charles stood firm. There must be something he could do. Impressed by Charles, the owner told him to begin the next day. But the black-haired, gray-eyed youth **persevered**. He wanted to start that day. And he did.

Charles earned \$7 per month there. This money helped buy food and other supplies for his mother and him. The money also paid for Charles's school, which cost \$1.50 per year.

Theda and her son saved more money than they spent. The pair found both fiscal and inner strength in each other.

Work and School

Children did not always have to attend school in Wisconsin. Some children worked to earn money for their families. They would work in factories or shops. Others sold items like newspapers or gum.

The first Wisconsin law requiring children to go to school passed in 1879. Those ages seven to 15 were supposed to go to school at least 12 weeks per year. Laws like this were to help increase the number of children who went to school. A law in 1889 stated those younger than 13 years had to have a permit to work.

Courtesy of the
Neenah Historical Society.



The Jacobson children helped in their family's meat market called Nelson and Jacobson in Neenah, Wisconsin.

SERVING OTHERS

Charles served his community and state, as well as his family and business. He joined the Neenah City Council and served as mayor from 1880 through 1882. Charles was elected as a representative to the **Wisconsin State Legislature** in 1884 and to the **US House of Representatives** in 1886 and 1888.

While in office, Charles fought to get aid for Wisconsin flood victims and to protect Oneida Indian land from the **land grabs** happening across the country. He also voted in favor of women's rights.

Library of Congress. Digital ID: cph 3c18607.



Charles (lower left) traveled between Washington, DC, and Neenah to keep up with his duties to Kimberly, Clark and Company when he was a member of the US House of Representative.

The Big Four did not pay themselves much to run the mill. They put the money back into the business instead. This helped Kimberly, Clark and Company to quickly expand.

Soon Neenah, Appleton, De Pere, and Kimberly all had paper mills. The company's success created a nickname for the area: the Paper Valley.

It took 30,000 to 50,000 gallons of water to make one ton of paper. The Fox River area supplied the water. The river also powered the mills.

Photograph courtesy of the Neenah Public Library.



Kimberly, Clark and Company partnered with Minnesota investors to own the Atlas Mill in Appleton.

Courtesy of the Neenah Historical Society.

RAGS!
3¼c. RAGS!
—WE WILL PAY—
**Three and One-Quarter
Cents per Pound**
For Country Mixed Paper-Rags, delivered at our mill.
Rag Dealers may ship direct.
Remittance promptly on receipt of stock.
KIMBERLY, CLARK & CO.,
NEENAH, WIS.

At first, Kimberly, Clark and Company used rags to make paper. Women separated the rags and cut off any hard objects like buttons. The rags were then shredded, boiled, and made into a pulp. The pulp was then put into a mold and pressed until paper was formed.

CIVIL WAR

The **Civil War** broke out in the United States in 1861. President Abraham Lincoln asked for more soldiers and Charles answered the call. In August 1862, Charles signed up for Wisconsin's Volunteer Infantry. He earned \$14 per month. Soldiers had to buy their own food and clothing. But Charles often went without food and sent the money home to his mother.

In June 1865, Charles went home. He discovered his mother had not spent any of his money but had saved it. Charles used it to become a partner in H.P. Leavens Hardware Store.

Courtesy of the Neenah Historical Society.



Charles was a soldier until the war ended in 1865. This photograph of Charles in his Civil War uniform is one of the earliest photographs of him.

FAMILY LIFE

Charles married Caroline Hubbard two years after he came home from the Civil War. His mother lived with the young couple.

The Clark family grew. The couple had three children: Theda, Caroline, and Charles. Charles's mother died shortly after little Theda's birth in 1871.

Charles **devoted** himself to his family and his community. He became a Neenah firefighter in 1869. He also helped with Neenah's first efforts to form a public library. Charles supported building Appleton's Prescott Hospital. It was the area's first hospital.

O'Regan, Suzanne Hart. 1983.
"Family Letters."



Caroline Hubbard Clark
(around 1889).

O'Regan, Suzanne Hart. 1983.
"Family Letters."



Theda (center) was nine years older than her sister, Caroline, and 12 years older than her brother, Charles.

KIMBERLY, CLARK AND COMPANY

At around age 30, Charles sold his share of the hardware store. He and three other men formed a paper business called Kimberly, Clark and Company. The other men were John Kimberly, Havilah Babcock, and Frank Shattuck.

The four partners were known as "The Big Four." They purchased a Neenah flour mill along the Fox River in 1872. They tore the mill down to build a two-story paper mill they named the Globe Mill. None of the Big Four knew how to make paper, so they hired an expert named Myron Haynes. He became the company's foreman.

The Big Four were equal partners in the company. Each taught the others his own special skill so the mills could succeed. Charles served as manager of operations. He ran the mills' daily works.

Photograph courtesy of the Neenah Public Library.



The Big Four (clockwise, beginning in lower left): Havilah Babcock, Frank Shattuck, Charles Clark, and John Kimberly