

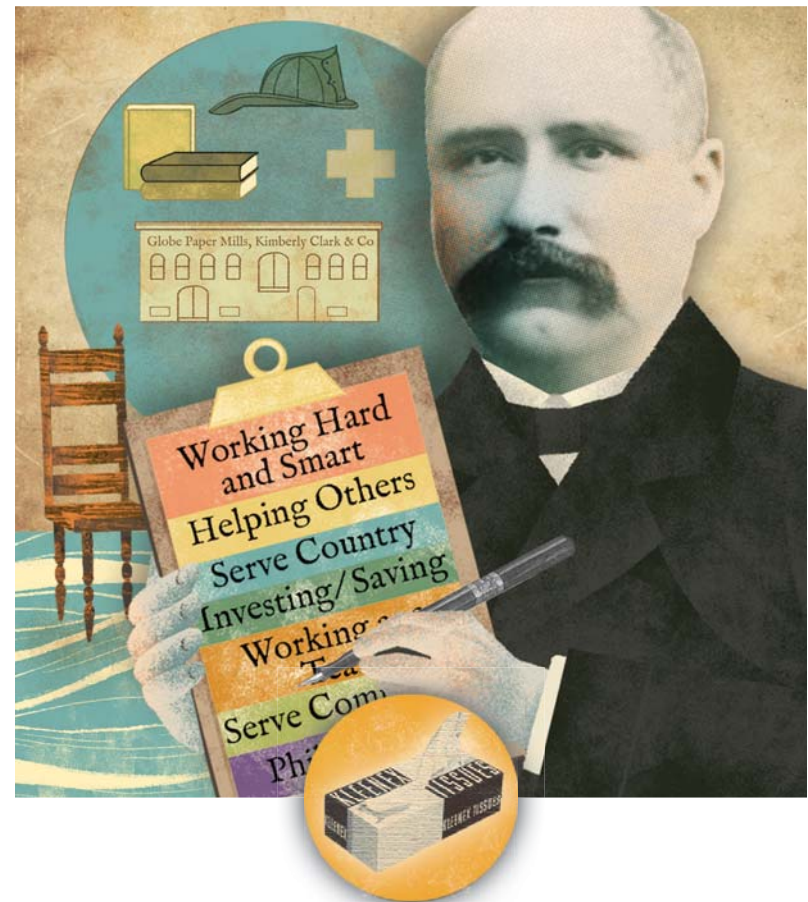
WISCONSIN BIOGRAPHIES

CHARLES CLARK

From Rags to Riches

PBS Wisconsin Education

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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

Do you think of Wisconsin when you use a Kleenex[®] tissue? Do you think of a mayor or a state **representative**? Do you think of a paper company that's more than 100 years old?

You should.

Charles Clark served his family, his community, and his country. He helped create the Kimberly-Clark **Corporation**. This large paper company started in northeast Wisconsin and makes Kleenex[®] tissues.

Courtesy of the Neenah Historical Society.



Charles Benjamin Clark

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



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

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

Charles died while visiting his birthplace in September 1891. He was about 49 years old.

Charles worked hard for his family. He served his country as a soldier. He went on to serve his city and state as mayor of Neenah and even in the US House of Representatives. He also founded a company that still exists today.

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

Photograph courtesy of the Neenah Public Library.



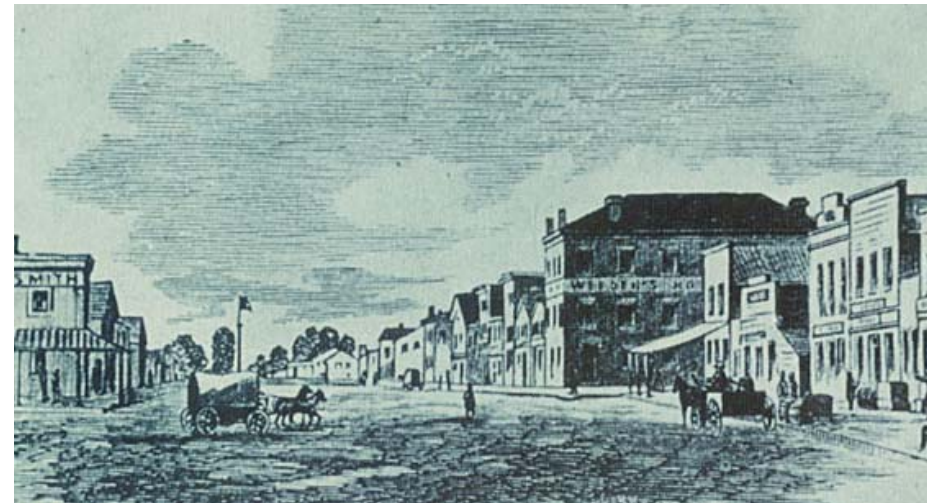
Charles Clark saw serving others, the community, and his country as a way to be successful in life. *What do you want to do in your life to be successful?*

EARLY YEARS

Charles Benjamin Clark was born in Theresa, New York, around 1842.* He was sometimes called C.B. Clark. His parents were Luther and Theda Clark. He had black hair and gray eyes. Charles cut wood when he was a boy to earn money for his family.

His father died in 1853. He and his mother moved to Neenah, Wisconsin, to live with Charles's older brother, Luther. Luther died soon 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.

Charles looked for work at a furniture factory the day he arrived in Wisconsin. The owner had no jobs. Charles **persevered**. There must be something for him to do. Impressed by Charles, the owner told him to begin the next day. Charles wanted to start that day. The owner agreed.

Charles earned \$7 per month there. This money helped buy food and supplies for his mother and him. The money also paid for Charles's school. That cost \$1.50 per year. Theda and her son saved more money than they spent. The two were very close.

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 also served his city. He was a Neenah City Council member and the city's mayor. He was elected to the **Wisconsin State Legislature** in 1884. Charles was then elected to the **US House of Representatives** in 1886 and 1888.

While in office, Charles fought 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 Representatives.

The Big Four did not pay themselves much to run their company. Why not? They used the money to grow the business. Soon there were more mills in neighboring cities. The area where the mills were located become known as the Paper Valley.

Making one **ton** of paper required 30,000 to 50,000 gallons of water. The Fox River area had the needed water and the river 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. Charles signed up when President Abraham Lincoln asked for more soldiers. He earned \$14 per month as a soldier. Charles was to use this money for food and clothing. But he often went without much food and sent the money home to his mother.

Charles went home in June 1865. He found out his mother had saved all that money. Charles used it to become a hardware store owner.

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 in 1867. The couple had three children. They were named Theda, Caroline, and Charles.

Charles **devoted** himself to his family and city. He became a Neenah firefighter in 1869. Charles helped Neenah's first attempt at forming a public library. He supported building a hospital in Appleton called Prescott 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

When he was about 30 years old, Charles sold his part of the hardware store. He and three other men formed a paper business called Kimberly, Clark and Company.

The partners became known as "The Big Four." The Big Four bought a Neenah flour mill along the Fox River in 1872. They tore it down to build a paper mill. They named it the Globe Mill.

The Big Four were equal members of the company. Charles handled 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