

Cora B. Clark, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

CORA BELL CLARK WAS BORN IN UTICA, OHIO, ON August 18, 1866. Her parents ran a hotel in Utica, which is in central Ohio, about 35 miles east of Columbus. It had a population of 826 in 1900.

Miss Clark in 1911, the year she became president of the bank.

Cora's older sister, Mary, married Abel J. Wilson, a local banker. When still a teenager, Cora began to work in Wilson's Bank, and by the time she was in her twenties was the cashier of the bank.

Early in 1905 the bank became a national bank, the First National Bank of Utica (charter #7596). Abel was the president and Cora, his sister-in-law, the cashier. With Abel's death in December 1910, Cora became the bank's president early the next year. The local paper noted "Miss Clark has the distinction of being the only woman president of a national bank in Ohio, and she bears the honors gracefully."

This is probably the only instance where a woman cashier of a national bank during the national bank note-issuing period (1863-1935) acceded to the presidency.

She was an active bank president, at the bank every workday making business decisions and guiding its operation. To this day she is fondly recalled in Utica. A tall woman, she dressed in dark clothes. In public it is said that she always wore a hat. Although she first lived with her parents, and then with her sister, she owned a little cottage, with some land to grow fruits and vegetables, where she would spend free days. She had a group of friends with whom she entertained and played cards.

She drove Franklin automobiles. Franklins, which were air-cooled, were made in Syracuse, NY, from 1902 to 1934. The purchase of her first Franklin made the news in the *Syracuse Journal* of April 17, 1911, when it noted "Miss Cora B. Clark president of the First National Bank of Utica, Ohio within a few weeks ... will be driving a new 1911 Franklin five-passenger

WOMAN BANKER ASKS AID FOR WORKING MEN



Miss Cora B. Clark, "The Bankers' Daughter," who is in this city en route to the Bankers' Convention, to which she is the only woman delegate.

WHY MIDDLE CLASS MEN ARE BACKBONE OF NATION

By MISS CORA B. CLARK

The great middle-class business man of the United States is to the financial well-being of this nation as the heart is to the human body.



A Series 1929 note with C. B. Clark's distinctive facsimile signature as bank president. (Courtesy Heritage Auctions)

touring car." The article went on to say that she had previously driven three other water-cooled makes of cars.

She continued as president of the bank, through the Roaring Twenties and the Depression years of the thirties, until her death in Utica on July 13, 1939. Her banking career had spanned 56 years.

Her nephew, Wilbur J. Wilson, then became president of the bank and continued so until his retirement in 1969. With his retirement, the bank was merged into The First National Bank of Newark, Ohio. Several later mergers have occurred; today, the resulting bank in Utica is the Park National Bank, headquartered in Newark.

As she was the founding cashier of the bank, and then its president until past the national bank note period, it is possible that every national bank note issued by the bank during its history contained her signature.

Albeit, as the bank only issued \$50 and \$100 notes, its total number of notes was relatively small. It consisted of 1088 Series 1902 fifties and 676 Series 1902 one hundreds. It then issued 756 Series 1929 fifties and 216 Series 1929 one hundreds. Of this total of \$181,400 (representing a mere 2,736 notes), \$50,000 (including \$1,700 large notes) was out in 1935.

Sources and acknowledgements

An article on her election as president of the bank is found in *The Utica Herald* of February 9, 1911, and a series of articles on her appeared in same paper in October and November 1976. An obituary is in *The Newark Advocate and American Tribune* for July 14, 1939. A page long entry for her is found in the book, *Profiles of Ohio Women, 1803-2003* (2003). I am grateful to Wanda Higgins of the Utica Historical Society for her assistance with this article. ♦

The Utica newspaper's account of her election as president of the bank.

Miss Clark Bank President

At a recent meeting of the directors of the First National Bank, officers were chosen as follows:

President—C. B. Clark.

Vice Presidents—E. C. Wright and M. E. Wilson.

Cashier—E. L. Mantonya

Assistant Cashier—C. W. French.

A. K. Alsdorf was chosen as individual bookkeeper.

The late president, A. J. Wilson, left by will his entire property, real and personal, to Mrs. Wilson, and as representative of those interests she was chosen a vice president.

The bank was changed from a private to a National one in order that there might be no disarrangement of its affairs in the event of a death, and the management now is practically the same as for several years.

The capital stock was increased from \$40,000 to \$50,000 about two months ago, and with the double liability and the surplus, there stands \$130,000 that would have to be sacrificed before there could be any loss to a depositor. This guarantee of stability is a matter of satisfaction to the people of the vicinity.

Miss Clark has the distinction of being the only woman president of a National bank in Ohio, and she bears the honors gracefully.