FIELD RESEARCH for this book started on a winter morning in February 1996 when Thomas Heinrich, kindly instructed by Nurse Beth, tried to put a diaper (newborn size) on his son Fritz at George Washington University Hospital in Washington, DC. Meanwhile, by happenstance, Bob Batchelor was busy at The History Factory in Chantilly, Virginia, researching and writing the history of Kimberly-Clark, one of the world’s largest makers of disposable diapers and other hygiene products.

Bob’s earlier research had taken him to the original K-C archives in Neenah, Wisconsin, and a dingy warehouse outside Philadelphia, after the discovery of the presumably “lost” Scott Paper archives. Holding one of the first Kleenex boxes and seeing early prototypes of various products that have now become everyday household items, Bob realized how such items had launched consumer culture’s tight hold over the nation. Sometimes the products were stumbled upon accidentally—like Kleenex and Scott Towels—but an individual or group always seized upon the development, marketing, and advertising efforts that made them successful. In this respect, Kimberly-Clark has been a pioneer and created the path other companies would follow.

Several years later, Thomas and Bob approached Kimberly-Clark, which had commissioned Bob’s above-referenced study and writing of their history, with a proposal to write an independent scholarly study of K-C’s corporate structure, research and development initiatives, and marketing strategy. Continuing the company’s longstanding
commitment to learning more about its own history, senior vice president Tina Barry kindly agreed to grant Thomas and Bob access to Kimberly-Clark’s magnificent corporate archives. The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to her, Dave Dixon, and many other Kimberly-Clark managers and employees.

The Kimberly-Clark Archives, ably catalogued and maintained by The History Factory’s archival team, is one of the world’s largest and most complete collections of a major consumer company’s manuscripts, photographs, and material artifacts. Archivists Alexandra Briseno, Cheryl Chouiniere, Suzanne Gould, and Jacqueline Reid provided invaluable research support, patiently processing many requests for material and bringing to attention unique nuggets of information that the authors would have otherwise missed. Bruce Weindruch, the founder and CEO of The History Factory, provided critical guidance and support. His work toward preserving America’s corporate heritage has been visionary.

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Any mistakes or omissions are, of course, the authors.

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Thomas Heinrich

New York City, 2004

Working with Thomas on this book has been a great experience. He is a superb collaborator and, over the years, has been a true friend and inspiration. Our shared passion for business and labor history runs through this study of Kimberly-Clark.

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Bob Batchelor
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