

Madam C. J. Walker



Madam C.J. Walker : December 23, 1867- May 25, 1919

The first female self-made multi-millionaire and inventor of African-American Hair and Skin Care Products.

Madam C.J. Walker was born in Delta, Louisiana as Sarah Breedlove, child of former slaves Owen and Minerva Walker. She was one of the first of her siblings to have been born free, however, her early years of life were full of hardships, first her mother died of Cholera, and, a year later her father died leaving her and her siblings orphaned at aged seven. At age ten, Walker and her sister followed their older brother to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and found work. By age 14, she married her first husband and had her daughter A'Lelia Walker, who later become the head of the Madam C.J. Walker Company in 1919.

However, when A'Lelia was two, Madam C.J. 's husband passed away. In 1894, she remarried but the marriage was short-lived and ended in divorce in 1903. In 1906, Madam married Charles Joseph Walker, a newspaper salesman. They moved to St. Louis and Madam C.J. kept his last name for the rest of her life. When she was young, Madam C.J. worked as a laundress and suffered from skin and hair ailments due to poor living and working conditions.

There were no skin and hair care products specifically for African-American's, and using chemicals and that damaged the hair and skin did not help. While working for Annie Malone, the founder of the Poro Company African-American Hair and Skin products, Madame C.J. began to invent cosmetics. She was a commission agent during the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and later moved to Denver, Colorado. While working for Malone she started to make hair and cosmetics under her name in 1906.

Resources:

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