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Madame C. J. Walker was born into poverty in Delta, Louisiana, in 1867. By the time she died in 1919, she had become the first African American woman to become a millionaire by establishing a line of beauty and hair care products sold nationwide. She was also a leader in the black community, known...
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Madam C. J. Walker was born into poverty in Delta, Louisiana, in 1867. By the time she died in 1910, she had become the first African American woman to become a millioniare, establishing a line of beauty and hair care products sold nationwide. She was also a leader in the black community, known for her philanthropy and dedication to antilynching campaigns and peace, and providing business opportunities for black women.

Walker was born Sarah Breedlove, the daughter of former slaves who died when she was a child. Like many blacks in the late 19th century she moved north where she worked as a laundress and housekeeper to support her daughter, Leila (Peiss 1998, 69). Breedlove’s life changed when she began to lose her hair. She developed a formula to treat the problem that contained sulfur and capsicum, a hair tonic that put less strain on the scalp than earlier treatments, and used hot longs.

Breedlove moved to Denver in 1905, but drugstores run by white pharmacists would not sell her crinoline. She then married newspaperman Charles Walker, who assisted her in developing a formula for comb treatment that put less strain on the scalp than earlier treatments, and used hot longs.

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Summary Article: Walker, Madame C. J. (1867–1919) from Oiling and Fashion: American Fashion from Head to Toe

Madame C. J. Walker was born into poverty in Delta, Louisiana, in 1867. By the time she had become the first African American woman to become a millionaire by selling beauty and hair care products sold nationwide. She was also a leader in the early civil rights movement known for her philanthropy and dedication to antilynching campaigns, world peace, and providing business opportunities for black women.

Walker was born Sarah Breedlove, the daughter of former slaves who died when she was a child. Like many blacks in the late 19th century she moved north to St. Louis, where she worked as a laundress and housekeeper to support her daughter, Lelia (Peiss 1998, 69).

Breedlove’s life changed when she began to lose her hair. She developed a formula to treat the problem that contained sulfur and capsaicin, combined this with a hot comb treatment that put less strain on the scalp than earlier treatments, and used hot tongs.

Breedlove moved to Denver in 1905, but drugstores run by white pharmacists would not carry her product, Wonderful Hair Grower, so she began selling it door-to-door in black neighborhoods. She then married newspaperman Charles Walker, who assisted her in developing a mail-order business and an advertising strategy. At this time she also changed her name to “Madame C.J. Walker,” which added to her charisma and appeal. She toured the country relentlessly to promote her products, taking advantage of African American social contacts established through the church.

She moved to Pittsburgh, where she established a school to train black women, called “hair culturists,” to use her products and open their own businesses. By 1911 when she incorporated her company, she had expanded her business to the South and the Midwest and had moved to Indianapolis. Here she built a factory to manufacture her products. By this time her marriage to Charles Walker had ended, but the name with her new persona remained. Madame C. J. Walker developed a system that empowered black women to be entrepreneurs at a time of increasing racial tension, which enabled her empire to grow in a market virtually ignored by white businesses.
Summary Article: Walker, C.J. (1867-1919) from Clothing and Fashion American Fashion from the 18th to the 20th Century.

Madame C.J. Walker was born into poverty in Dibble, Louisiana, in 1867. By the time she died in 1919, she had become the first African American woman to become a millionaire by establishing a line of beauty and hair care products sold nationwide. She was also a leader in the black community, known for her philanthropy and dedication to supporting her community, women's rights, and providing business opportunities for black women.

Walker was born Sarah Breedlove, the daughter of former slaves who died when she was a child. Like many blacks in the late 19th century, she moved north to St. Louis, where she worked as a housemaid to support her daughter, Lula. (Price, 1999, 69).

Walker's life changed when she began to lose her hair. She developed a formula to treat the condition, containing a hot comb treatment that put less stress on her hair and added sheen. Women who bought her product continued to come to her shop and buy more of her products, leading to the formation of her own business.

By 1905, she had expanded her business to the South and Midwest and had moved to Indianapolis. Here she built a factory to manufacture her products. By this time, her marriage to Charles Walker had ended, but the name with her new partners remained. Madame C.J. Walker developed a system that empowered black women to be entrepreneurs at a time when such enterprises were not common. Her business grew, and she expanded her business to the South and Midwest.

Walker moved to Harlem, where she became active in political causes. She was a leader in the NAACP's campaign against lynching. Walker also campaigned for the right of black soldiers to vote in the 1912 presidential election.

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