

Madame Walker

MADAME WALKER

Cosmetics Manufacturer

BIOGRAPHY: Sarah Breedlove Walker (1867-1919) was one of the first American women to become a millionaire through her own efforts. Orphaned in her native Louisiana at age six, married to C.J. Walker at fourteen, and widowed at twenty, Madame C.J. Walker started her business with only two dollars and her original formula for straightening hair. In 1905, Madame Walker invented a hair softener and a special straightening comb. For millions of black women, these inventions were long overdue. Overnight the former laundress found herself in business with assistants, agents, schools, and eventually, her own manufacturing company. She became such an impressive businesswoman that by the time of her death in 1919, Madame Walker had over 2,000 agents selling an ever expanding line of Walker products and demonstrating the "Walker System" of treating hair. Madame Walker's ingenuity and ability laid the foundation for the modern cosmetics industry that serves black women today.