



# Madam C.J. Walker

*Indianapolis, Marion County*

December 23, 1867 – May 25, 1919

Born Sarah Breedlove on December 23, 1867, in the Louisiana Delta, Madam C.J. Walker transformed herself from an uneducated farm laborer and laundress into one of the twentieth century's most successful, self-made women entrepreneurs. After marrying at the age of fourteen and having a daughter, Sarah found herself widowed at twenty. She began experimenting with hair products as a way to control a scalp ailment. She began selling Malone's products when she moved to Denver in 1905. After a short second marriage, Sarah married Charles Joseph Walker in 1906.

Encouraged to start her own business, she changed her name to Madam C.J. Walker and started selling "Madam C.J. Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower." To promote her products, Madam Walker traveled and sold her products door to door, demonstrating her scalp treatments. After visiting Indianapolis in 1910, she decided to move the Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company headquarters to the city. That year, she set up a laboratory and beauty school and made plans to establish a large scale manufacturing facility along Indiana Avenue. Eight years after her death, the Madam Walker Building and Theater opened in December 1927. It housed a drugstore, a beauty salon, a beauty school, a restaurant, professional offices, a ballroom and a 1500 seat theater. Still standing, it is listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

When Madam Walker died in 1919, she left of legacy of not only a successful businesswoman but also a philanthropist and civil rights activist. Among her many philanthropic activities, she donated funds to establish a YMCA in Indianapolis. She donated to the Tuskegee Institute and other African-American schools and began schools to teach her system of selling her company's products, allowing many African- American women to become independent businesswomen. In 1916, she became heavily involved in Harlem society and the NAACP anti-lynching campaign while living in New York.

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For more information about Madam C.J. Walker, go to:

<http://www.madamcjwalker.com/bios/madam-c-j-walker/>

For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Photo: *Biography.com* (ND). *Madam C.J. Walker*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.biography.com/people/madam-cj-walker-9522174>.

  
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