



*Madame
Walker
Theatre
Center*

Madam C. J. Walker

Born Sara Breedlove on December 23, 1867, in Delta, Louisiana. Madam C. J. Walker was one of America's wealthiest, self-made businesswomen when she died in May 1919.

Living an early life of harsh poverty, this orphaned daughter of former slaves rose from an uneducated washerwoman to an outspoken social activist and generous philanthropist. Through the company she founded in 1905, her pioneering efforts in the development of hair-care products transformed the appearance and self-image of African-American women and helped establish a thriving multi-billion dollar industry.

Walker's visionary advocacy of women's economic independence and her innovative marketing strategies created entrepreneurial opportunities for thousands of former sharecroppers, maids, and factory workers during an era when legally sanctioned racial discrimination denied African Americans their most basic civil rights. Walker used her wealth and influence to aid political causes, educational institutions, and charities, making large contributions to the NAACP's anti-lynching funds, YMCA, YWCA, Frederick Douglass Home, Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, Mary McLeod Bethune's Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute. She was inducted into the Junior Achievement National Business Hall of Fame in 1992.

Today her legacy survives through two National Historical Landmarks: The Madame Walker Theatre Center in Indianapolis, Indiana and Villa Lewaro, her Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York estate as well as through the thousands of entrepreneurs who are inspired by her success.