

Madame C.J. Walker

Sarah Breedlove was born December 23, 1867, on the Burney Family Plantation in Delta, Louisiana. Her parents were both former slaves who share-cropped on the plantation. After her mother's death and her father's remarriage, Breedlove married at the age of fourteen in hopes of finding economic security. In 1887, she became a widow, and decided to move with her two-year-old daughter to St. Louis. While working in Missouri, she developed a line of styling products, including straightening products, pomade, and a hair growth serum. As her cosmetics business became increasingly successful, Breedlove moved to Colorado. There she met and married newspaperman Charles J. Walker. The marriage did not last, but the Walker name stuck. In July of 1905, "Madame C.J. Walker" opened for business in Denver, CO. By 1908, she had opened a second office in Pittsburgh, which was run by her daughter. In 1910, she opened a production plant and office headquarters in Indianapolis. By then a household name, Madame Walker, became the first female African American businessperson to be worth one million dollars. Madame C. J. Walker devoted much of her later life to philanthropy.