



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



December 2021 Her Story ENewsletter Women in Cosmetics

Did you know that one hundred years ago in the U.S. there was a lipstick war? The issue was whether respectable women could wear lipstick or not. A high school student in Arkansas was sent home from school for wearing lipstick and powder. Although her parents sued, arguing that her civil rights had been violated, the case was dismissed. The nationwide press coverage resulted in the young woman being deemed “the heroine of the lipstick war” and a \$1,000 per week offer by a Los Angeles motion picture concern.

Cosmetics have been of interest to women throughout the centuries. Two women entrepreneurs who established business models in the U.S. cosmetics industry that could result in economic self-sufficiency for those who adhered to their models are featured in this month’s ENewsletter – Madam C.J. Walker and Mary Kay Ash.



The first self-made female millionaire in the U.S., **Madam C.J. Walker** began developing her own hair care products after suffering scalp and skin disorders associated with the harsh products available for African-American women in her day. In 1905, Walker moved to Denver where she sold her products door-to-door; she also taught other women how to groom and style their hair. Her business expanded and she eventually settled in Indianapolis where she established her headquarters, laboratory and research center.

She trained other women in her “Walker System,” and they sold her hair care and skin care products. By 1917, the company claimed to have trained 20,000 women. She also trained the women on how to budget, build their own businesses and become economically self-sufficient. Walker has been featured on a U.S. postage stamp and inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame. She said, “I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. . . I have built my own factory on my own ground.”



Frustrated after training yet another man who had been promoted over her and paid more, **Mary Kay Ash** sat down at her kitchen table and drew up what she thought would be the ideal place to work. This became the business plan for Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc. which she started in 1963 with her life savings of \$5,000. Her business was based on the Golden Rule, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Today, the Mary Kay sales force numbers more than 3.5 million women worldwide, who work to achieve economic self-sufficiency. It is symbolized by the sales incentive of the pink Cadillac. Ash’s honors include induction into the National Business Hall of Fame and the Horatio Alger Distinguished American Citizen Award. She stated, “I’ve often said that we are doing something far more important than just selling cosmetics; we are changing lives.”

Madam C.J. Walker and Mary Kay Ash are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women’s accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women’s stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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