

# Lookin' Good, Harma Mae Smit: A Deeper Dive into the Life and Legacy of an Inspiring Force in American Hair Care



## Lookin' Good by Harma-Mae Smit



5 out of 5

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Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
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In the annals of American beauty history, the name Harma Mae Smit stands out as a beacon of innovation, entrepreneurship, and women's empowerment. As a pioneering African American hairdresser, she revolutionized the hair care industry and left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire generations of stylists and beauty enthusiasts.

## Early Life and Apprenticeship

Harma Mae Smit was born in 1881 in Marshalltown, Iowa. Her early life was marked by poverty and hardship. At a young age, she was forced to leave home and work as a servant in a white family's household. It was during this time that she discovered her passion for hair care. She would often style the hair of her employer's daughters, experimenting with different techniques and learning the secrets of proper hair maintenance.



In 1905, Smit moved to Chicago and apprenticed under the renowned Madam C.J. Walker, considered the "Mother of Black Hair Care." Walker's innovative products and business acumen had made her a successful entrepreneur and a role model for aspiring African American women. Under Walker's tutelage, Smit honed her skills and developed a deep understanding of hair chemistry and styling techniques.

### **Establishing Her Own Business**

In 1910, Smit established her own hair salon in Chicago, offering a wide range of services, including hair straightening, pressing, and cutting. She quickly gained a reputation for her exceptional skills and her ability to transform even the most unruly hair into a thing of beauty. Her clients included prominent African American women from all walks of life, including educators, entertainers, and socialites.



Smit's business flourished, and she soon expanded her operations, opening additional salons in other major cities. She also developed her own line of hair care products, which became popular among African American

women seeking to maintain their straightened hair. Smit's products were formulated with natural ingredients and were designed to nourish and protect the hair, setting a new standard for hair care in the African American community.

### **National Beauty Culturists' League**

Beyond her entrepreneurial success, Harma Mae Smit was also a tireless advocate for the advancement of African American women in the beauty industry. In 1920, she co-founded the National Beauty Culturists' League (NBCL), an organization dedicated to promoting professional standards and ethical practices among African American hairdressers. The NBCL provided training, networking opportunities, and financial support to its members, helping to elevate the status of the hairdressing profession within the African American community.



Through the NBCL, Smit played a pivotal role in shaping the beauty industry. She lobbied for the inclusion of African American hairdressers in mainstream beauty competitions and worked to establish licensing requirements for hairdressers in various states. Her efforts helped to legitimize the hairdressing profession and open up new opportunities for African American women.

### **Legacy of Empowerment**

Harma Mae Smit's impact on the beauty industry and the African American community was profound. She not only revolutionized hair care techniques but also empowered generations of women through her entrepreneurial spirit and her unwavering belief in their potential. Her legacy continues to inspire beauty professionals and entrepreneurs to this day.

In 2011, Harma Mae Smit was inducted into the National Cosmetology Association's Hall of Fame, recognizing her outstanding contributions to the hair care industry. Her story serves as a testament to the power of determination, innovation, and the ability to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Harma Mae Smit's life and work stand as a testament to the indomitable spirit of African American women and the transformative power of beauty. As a pioneering hairdresser, entrepreneur, and advocate, she left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire and empower generations.

Her story is a reminder that with passion, dedication, and a commitment to excellence, anything is possible. Harma Mae Smit's legacy will continue to live on, inspiring countless individuals to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact on the world.



### **Lookin' Good** by Harma-Mae Smit

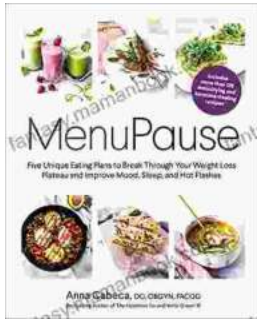
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