



Alva Vanderbilt Belmont: Unlikely Champion of Women's Rights

Sylvia D. Hoffert

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A New York socialite and feminist, Alva Vanderbilt Belmont was known to be domineering, temperamental, and opinionated. Her resolve to get her own way regardless of the consequences stood her in good stead when she joined the American woman suffrage movement in 1909. Thereafter, she used her wealth, her administrative expertise, and her social celebrity to help convince Congress to pass the 19th Amendment and then to persuade the exhausted leaders of the National Woman's Party to initiate a world wide equal rights campaign. Sylvia D. Hoffert argues that Belmont was a feminist visionary and that her financial support was crucial to the success of the suffrage and equal rights movements. She also shows how Belmont's activism, and the money she used to support it, enriches our understanding of the personal dynamics of the American woman's rights movement. Her analysis of Belmont's memoirs illustrates how Belmont went about the complex and collaborative process of creating her public self.

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