the key word in the book’s subtitle (“Rise”) is central to the plot. This is a coming-of-age narrative. The incremental steps that bring forth an Indianapolis, for instance, are teasingly spread like breadcrumbs across a smooth exposition on a fast-maturing Midwest.

Thomas J. Jablonsky is professor emeritus at Marquette University.

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Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women’s Movement, 1870–1967
By Joan Marie Johnson

Joan Johnson’s Funding Feminism is a welcome addition to the literature on women and philanthropy. Many studies document women’s work as leaders and members of voluntary associations; others illuminate women as effective fundraisers for causes such as abolition, war relief, temperance, and basic human needs. Funding Feminism examines wealthy women who underwrote social movements that were acutely female issues: suffrage, higher education for women, and birth control. Johnson’s work goes beyond biography by looking at a network of women and therefore allows for a deeper understanding of women’s “money and power.”

Funding Feminism spans almost one hundred years but concentrates on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The story begins with Sophia Smith’s bequest to Smith College in 1870 and ends with the opening of the second of Katharine McCormick’s residence halls at MIT in 1967. Chapters are tightly organized around the themes that, taken together, illustrate a feminist agenda that supported women’s independence and equality.

Johnson profiles a fascinating group of women for this study, some well-known and others who have eluded historians: Alva Belmont, Sophia Smith, Jane Stanford, Helen Scripps, Mary Elizabeth Garrett, Phoebe Hearst, and Katharine McCormick. Johnson deftly weaves their stories together into cohesive narratives of women’s issues. She acknowledges upfront that her research subjects are white women and notes other works that portray women of color.
All the profiled women intended their financial donations to increase a variety of opportunities, and therefore financial security, for other women. Interestingly, these wealthy women did not see themselves as reformers or grassroots organizers. Instead their contributions supported high-profile reformers—including Alice Paul and Margaret Sanger—by lending legitimacy, making connections, and financing offices, management, publicity, and research.

This book devotes two chapters each to movements—suffrage, higher education, and birth control rights—in which wealthy women succeeded in advancing women’s strides. Chapter three, “Dictating with Dollars,” contains perhaps Johnson’s most intriguing argument, as she demonstrates the limitations of wealth and power. Johnson illustrates wealthy women’s unsuccessful attempts at building cross-class alliances with working—that is, wage-earning—women. Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) leader Grace Dodge and Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL) leaders Mary and Margaret Dreier Robins strove to empower working women but failed to fully recognize the existing cultural divides. Privileged women thought of themselves as workers, and therefore believed they could relate to wage-earning women; their naiveté contributed to social boundaries that remained impermeable. Chapter three is a useful reminder that money and power cannot always combat social inequalities. Funding Feminism is highly readable and relevant for anyone interested in women’s history, philanthropy, and social justice.

**Kathi Badertscher, Ph.D.,** is the Director of Master’s Degree Programs at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

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*Baking Powder Wars: The Cutthroat Food Fight that Revolutionized Cooking*

By Linda Civitello


Apple pie might earn the patriotic superlative for “Most American” baked good, but it simply cannot compare to the variety of baked goods that arose from the “chemical independence” provided by