

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTIONS ADVISOR

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DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY: GOING AFTER GRANTS FOR COLLECTION STORAGE

By Daviess County Museum

"Why don't we apply for a grant?" It's an idea frequently discussed by staff and volunteers at local Museums when trying to raise money to fund exhibits, programs or needed building repairs. The suggestion usually goes no further when most people respond, "I'm not qualified." The prospect of submitting a grant application for the first time can be intimidating.

In 2005 the [Daviess County Historical Society](#) in Washington, Indiana, moved the [Daviess County Museum](#) to the former Masonic Lodge, a four story brick building on Main Street constructed in 1868. When Becky Kremp took over as Museum Director in 2016—and initiated an ambitious reorganization program—she put together a team of dedicated unpaid volunteers to handle the work load. Becky soon learned she could depend on two volunteers, Rose Palmer and Peggy Holland, to manage the most challenging projects. In 2019 an opportunity presented itself for the Museum to apply for a grant from the [Daviess County Community Foundation](#). Although neither Rose nor Peggy had been involved with a grant application in the past, Becky asked them to take on the challenge of submitting a grant for the Museum.

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DeMolay Room, before.

For many years the ground floor of the Washington Masonic Temple had been rented to Tom Daily Furniture. In early 2019 the owner of the retail business notified the Historical Society she no longer needed a 15 x 40 foot room at the back of the building. In the 1950s and 1960s the room had been used for meetings of the DeMolay Club, an organization for young men sponsored by the Masonic Lodge. The DeMolay Club disbanded by 1970 and thereafter the windowless room gradually fell into disrepair. When Becky, Rose and Peggy inspected the DeMolay room in early 2019, they discovered there was no heat or air conditioning, plaster was falling from the walls, the electrical wiring was dated and the joists supporting the wooden floor were failing.

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DeMolay Room, before. View looking south to the front doors of the building, just visible through the alley of doors.

But these volunteers recognized the dilapidated DeMolay Room was an opportunity. If sufficient grant funds could be obtained from the Community Foundation, the room could be renovated and turned into a badly needed storage area for Museum artifacts. John Hopkins, a local contractor who specializes in renovating older buildings, was contacted and he compiled estimates for stabilizing the floor, repairing and painting the plaster walls, upgrading the electrical wiring, removing a partition wall and installing a metal door at the back exit.

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DeMolay Room, before. View looking north standing in the entrance doorway. The wall dividing the space was removed to create more flexibility.

A grant application for \$7,200 was submitted to the Community Foundation in March 2019. Out of 20 applicants, the Daviess County Museum was selected as one of three finalists. Rose and Peggy made a 20 minute presentation to the Women's Foundation—with enlarged photographs and several information posters—emphasizing the importance of preserving history for the women of Daviess County. However, the museum was soon notified the grant had been given to one of the other finalists. But the President of the Daviess Community Foundation encouraged them to apply for a Community Goods Grant later that year. She also told them they could request more than \$7,200.



DeMolay Room, after. Now the view facing south reveals a large space in the entry for receiving new collection items, processing items, or whatever else can be dreamed of in a currently open space in collection storage.

John Hopkins was asked to revise his estimates. Additional items were added including a HVAC unit to provide heat and air conditioning and metal shelves for the DeMolay Room. The expanded grant application totaling \$13,500 was submitted in July. Representatives of the Community Foundation later came to the Museum to inspect the DeMolay Room and ask questions about the Museum's plan for a climate controlled storage area. On September 19 the Daviess County Historical Society was notified it had been selected to receive a \$13,500 grant.



DeMolay Room, after. The view facing north shows the lack of a dividing wall and all of the beautiful new red metal shelving, perfect for sturdily storing collection items. Space was used to the max with pegboards for art storage lining the west wall.

The volunteers at the Museum were thrilled. "When we started we really did not have any experience in grant applications," Rose admitted.

"Peggy and I did attend a grant application workshop presented by the Indiana Historical Society, but this was the first grant we had ever submitted." She offered this advice to other Museum volunteers considering a grant application for the first time, "Don't be afraid to try."

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