

COUNTY APPROPRIATIONS FOR HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

[The following law is printed partly in answer to inquiries and partly because there does not seem to be much cognizance taken of it by those who ought to take advantage of it. St. Joseph, Henry, Wayne and Monroe counties are the only ones known to the editor in which historical societies receive any substantial help from the county. Yet a properly managed historical society ought to be of great value to any community, and under the liberal law quoted below, can be easily maintained in almost any county in the State.—EDITOR.]

An Act for the encouragement of county historical societies, and providing for estimates for same by Boards of County Commissioners, and for the making of appropriations for same out of the county funds by County Councils, and for the expenditures of moneys for the benefit of such societies.

(H. 379. Approved March 11, 1901.)

SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, That in any county of the State of Indiana where there now is or may hereafter be a historical society, or local branch of a historical society, which, at the time of making petition, shall have maintained its organization and have been actively engaged in the collection of data and material for, and in the preservation of, county and State history and biography for a period of not less than five consecutive years, during which it shall have held at least one meeting in each year, at which papers shall have been read or addresses made, in the presence of the public, upon matters connected with the history of the county and State, the County Council of such county may, upon the petition of the president and secretary of such historical society and not less than fifty voters and taxpayers of the county, having been presented to the County Commissioners, at a regular session of the board, and by the Commissioners referred to the County Council at a regular or called session thereof, with estimates and recommendations as to amounts of such appropriation, or appropriations, as provided for in section nineteen (19) of an

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act entitled an act concerning county business, approved March 3, 1899, appropriate out of any moneys in the county treasury, not otherwise appropriated, a sum or sums of money not to exceed in the aggregate five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for the construction and furnishing of rooms and fireproof vaults for the meetings of such historical society and for the preservation of the records of such society and historical papers, souvenirs and natural history collections. Such sum of five thousand dollars or less to be appropriated at one time or at various sessions of the County Council; such rooms and vaults to be provided in connection with county court-houses or constructed separately upon land belonging to the county and to be the property of the county. Such rooms and vaults to be built and maintained for the purposes enumerated in this act by the County Commissioners and under their supervision, as provided in section thirty-one (31) of an act entitled an act concerning county business, approved March 3, 1899.

SEC. 2. Should the historical society for which and upon whose petition such rooms and vaults shall have been provided by the county, as prescribed in this act, fail or voluntarily surrender to the county its rights and privileges thereto, or discontinue its meetings for a period of two consecutive years, all its papers, records, collections of every kind and furniture shall become the property of the county, and the County Commissioners shall provide for the safe-keeping of the same before subjecting the rooms or vaults to other uses of or by the county; but this provision shall not be so construed as to prevent persons who shall have contributed papers or historical or biographical data from making copies thereof for their own private use and profit.

SEC. 3. Should there at any time be more than one reputable historical society or society devoted to some branch of historical or biological investigations in any county in which such rooms and vaults or permanent buildings as are provided for in this act shall have been built, it may be admitted to their use upon such conditions, to be determined by the County Commissioners, as shall not interfere with the rights and privileges of the original society; but appropriations of money shall be made only for one

set of rooms and vaults or separate buildings for such purposes in the county.

SEC. 4. Such rooms, or buildings and vaults, as may be constructed in any county of the State of Indiana, under the provisions of this act, shall be under the joint control of the historical society for the uses of which they shall be constructed, and its legitimate successors, and the Board of County Commissioners under such rules as they may, by their concurrent action, establish; but such historical society or societies shall alone be responsible for all bills for printing, publication, stationery, records and other expenses of every kind incurred in the prosecution of its or their work, except such costs for the construction and maintenance of the rooms or buildings and vaults as are heretofore provided for in this act.

SEC. 5. Upon or after the forfeiture or voluntary surrender of the occupancy of the rooms or buildings and vaults to the county by the historical society for which they were constructed, the County Commissioners may place them in charge of another society organized for similar purposes as the original society, if such society exist in the county, or shall be organized to the satisfaction of the board; but preference shall be given to a resumption of the old society, or a reorganization thereof, and any society that shall accept the use and care of the property and occupancy of the rooms or buildings and vaults shall be accountable to the county for the same, and they shall continue to be the property of the county as in the first case. The purposes of this act being to create and perpetuate a system for the collection and preservation of local and general history, making a record of the progress of the several counties of the State, and providing permanent nuclei for individual and family history and local observation of natural phenomena.