

Alma Lodge #523
Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Founded January 1, 1856

- Odd Fellowship began in England, where brothers and sisters came together to use their limited money to help others.
- These people were known as “Odd Fellows” because it was odd to find people that were willing to give aid to those in need.
- The first lodge in America was founded in Baltimore in 1819 by Thomas Wildey.
- The Odd Fellows are a fraternal organization based on the principles of **Friendship, Truth, and Love**.
- Members of Alma Lodge #523 participate in and support a variety of community events and initiatives.
- Members of Alma Lodge #523 enjoy social events such as parties, dinners, bus trips, and more!
- Members and their families can also take advantage of programs providing scholarships and learning opportunities.

For more information on our organization, or to request an application for membership, visit www.almalodge523.org or call 814-536-8341.

History of Alma Hall and Alma Lodge #523



Alma Lodge #523, I.O.O.F.
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www.almalodge523.org
<https://www.facebook.com/AlmaLodge523>



Alma Hall

440-442 Main Street

Construction began in 1883 Dedicated August 30, 1884
First Four Story Building in Johnstown
Style: Queen Anne Commercial Architecture

Heroes of Alma Hall

- Attorney James M. Walters was swept into his 2nd floor office by the force of the water.
- Rev. Dr. David J Beale and his family went across moving housetops to reach the security of Alma Hall.
- Dr. W.E. Matthews had three cracked ribs, but he overcame the pain to assist those who needed medical attention
- Attorney Walters was named director of the building, and the other two men were in charge of each floor, along with Squire A.N. Hart.

The Night After

- Sobs, tears, moans of the injured, and prayers were heard throughout the night. Two women gave birth, while two women had broken limbs. Many had scrapes and bruises. Most were cold and shivering, as they were still in their wet clothes. Amazingly there were no deaths inside the building.

Building Rules

- Lights were not used, since there was a fear that escaping natural gas may be present. Liquor was not allowed, and those who sought refuge willingly surrendered their pocket flasks.

Exciting Rescues

- Those inside the building used ropes to pull some into the building. Many were exhausted or had been pinned by timbers.
- Mrs. Kress' spaniel, Romeo, swam beside her as the current carried her. He finally nudged her toward Alma Hall, where she was pulled from the water. Afterward, he was revered as a noble old dog.

All Through the Night

- Suppressed moans and suspense. Would Alma Hall continue to stand? Howls of the terror-stricken throughout the darkness. Reflections from the huge stone bridge fire.

Daybreak

- After the waters had somewhat subsided, survivors crawled out the 2nd floor window and over the rubble to Green Hill.

The Loss

- Ten members of Alma Lodge #523, Independent Order of Odd Fellows died. 15 wives and 50 children of members also perished.

The Following Days

- Several fraternal organizations used the building as a headquarters to dispense relief. The Grand Lodge of the Odd Fellows dispensed over \$56,000 to its members.
- The explosion used to free the debris at the stone bridge blew the windows out at the lodge building.

Other Floods

- Alma Lodge provided a refuge for some during the 1936 and 1977 Floods.