

**Alto May Lowman (Kavanaugh) (1869-1912)**

Pioneering student



ALTO M. LOWMAN, B. Ph., Teacher, Frederick City, Md.

**[picture from Gallaher(1898) ]**

Born: October 31, 1869

Leitersburgh, Maryland

Died: 17 June 1912 (age 42 years old)

Ijamsville, MD

Buried in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery  
(Leitersburg, MD)

Family of origin:

Father: Samuel F. Lowman (Laborer)

Mother: Catherine "Kate" E. Nigh Lowman

Father from Pennsylvania, Mother from Maryland

Became Deaf age 11-12

"semi mute"

Contributions:

First Deaf Woman to complete full courses at the National Deaf Mute College  
(Gallaudet University) completing a B.Ph. Bachelor of Philosophy

Schooling:

1885: September 14<sup>th</sup> entered Maryland School for the Deaf, Frederick  
graduating June 15<sup>th</sup> 1887)

Note: "she was encouraged by several of her teachers, especially by Mr. G. W. Veditz  
to further her education by taking a course at the National Deaf Mute College"  
(Gallager, pg 91)

1887: entered Deaf Mute College

1892: First Deaf Woman to receive a Bachelor's of Philosophy from Gallaudet

Professional Experiences:

1892-1893: Teacher at North Dakota School for the Deaf

1897-1900: Teacher at the Maryland School for the Deaf Frederick

Personal information:

In 1900--Married John Kavanaugh Jr. (Deaf) (b. 1859 Indiana School f/t Deaf  
(Kavanaugh was from a Deaf family and his marriage to Alto Lowman was his  
second marriage)

Two children Katharine Mary/Marie K. (aged 11 when mother died) and Samuel  
Dennis (aged 9 when mother died). Dennis died in 1916.

References:

Gallaher, James, E. (1898). Representative Deaf Persons of the United States.  
Chicago: James E Gallaher Publisher.

Holcomb, Marjoriebell S. and Wood, Sharon K. (1989). Deaf Women: A Parade  
Through the Decades. San Diego, CA: DawnSign Press.

Jones, Nancy Carolyn (1983). "Don't Take Any Aprons to College! A Study of the  
Beginning of Co-Education at Gallaudet College." Master Thesis, University of MD.

Lang, Harry G., and Meath-Lang, Bonnie (1995). Deaf Persons in the Arts and  
Sciences. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Tiegel, Agatha M. (1895, March 28). Co-Education at Gallaudet College. *The  
National Exponent*, Vol. II, (1), pg. 3.

U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895.

US Census information from [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=79892545>

Other documents and information about Alto Lowman (Kavanaugh):

Gallaher (1898, pg. 92) writes:

"She entered the introductory class of the college in the fall 1887 with 5 other ladies.  
In the fall of 1888 she was admitted to the freshman class, without conditions, and  
received the honor of being the first lady student who was ever admitted to the  
college proper. She had made up her mind to take the full course and study for the

degree of Bachelor of Arts, but after experiencing much difficulty with mathematics, she dropped them at the beginning of the second term of the sophomore year and decided to pursue a special course. After dropping mathematics, she had little or not difficulty in pursuing the balance of the course, and in June 1892, she was graduated with a class of six young men, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy, in addition to the honor of being the first young lady who ever took a degree at the college....co-education at that time was an experiment, but upon Miss Lowman's graduation it became an established fact....and every year since then some young lady has been graduated from the college with her deaf brothers."

From Tiegel (1895)

"The number of young women to enter the first year was six; Miss Lowman of Maryland was the only one of these to graduate. In 1892 she took the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy. At her graduation, Dr. Gallaudet, our honored and distinguished president, announced from the platform that all of his doubts as to the advisability of admitting young women were satisfied, and that henceforth their presence in the college would be an assured fact. This was very gratifying and encouraging to the friends of co-education. In passing, I would say a word of Miss Lowman: She certainly deserves credit for overcoming so perseveringly all obstacles that lay in the path to her sheepskin."

1900 US Federal Census:

Name of Institution, <i>Maryland School for the Deaf &amp; Dumb</i>							
<i>Piame, Mary M.</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>1851</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Lowman, Alta M.</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>1869</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>S</i>

1910 US Federal Census:

<i>Kavanaugh John S.</i>	<i>Head</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>9</i>			<i>Maryland</i>
<i>— Alta M.</i>	<i>Wife</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>Maryland</i>
<i>— Marie K.</i>	<i>Daughter</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>S</i>				<i>Maryland</i>
<i>— Dennis S.</i>	<i>Son</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>S</i>				<i>Maryland</i>

(Below from [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com))

