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## "Raising Kane Takes Its Toll on the Old Chambersburg Turnpike": A Tale of Photographic Detection

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# "Raising Kane Takes Its Toll on the Old Chambersburg Turnpike": A Tale of Photographic Detection

## **Abstract**

Inquires to which the staff of the society responds fall into several categories, but all can be characterized as sensible, ludicrous, or somewhere in between. Most sensible requests focus on genealogy, old businesses, or some other facet of early Adams county history. Many other times, ludicrous requests are received from parties who want to know something about their ancestors from some foreign state who fought in the battle of Gettysburg. The society simply does not have that information.

At face value, however, some requests only border on the ludicrous. Such was one relatively recent inquiry which the author was asked to answer. In early September 1996, the society received a letter from a collector of Gettysburg memorabilia. Enclosed were two photographs which the collector indicated were identified as "Toll Gate, Gettysburg, Pa. 1907." [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Adams County Historical Society, ACHS, Adams County, Pennsylvania History, Toll Road, Charles Kane

## **“Raising Kane Takes Its Toll on the Old Chambersburg Turnpike”: A Tale of Photographic Detection**

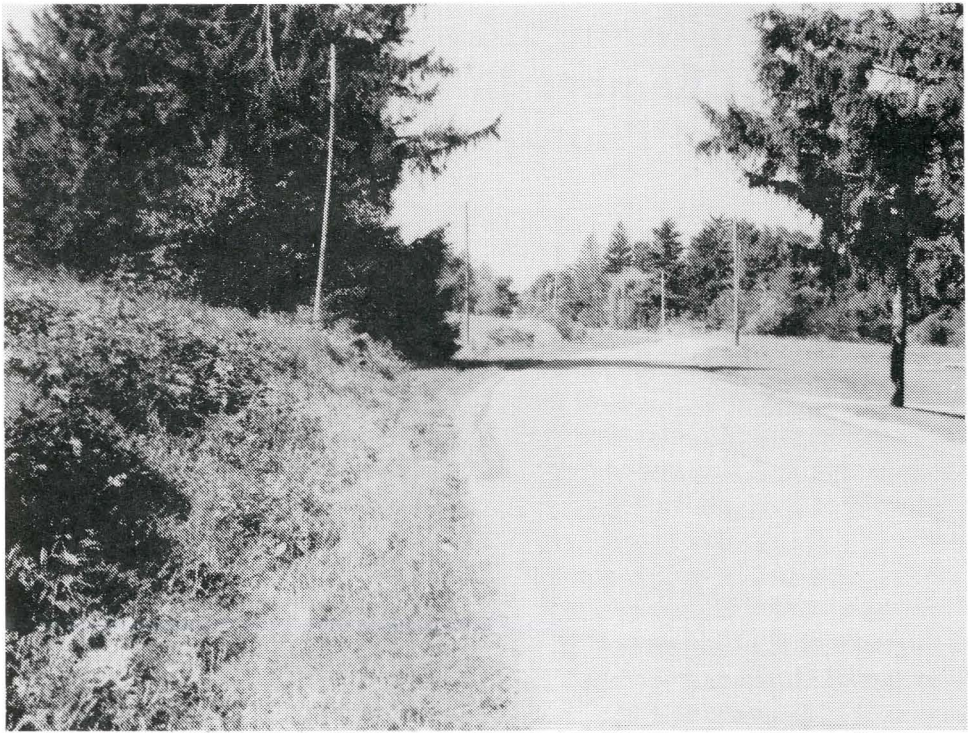
by Elwood W. Christ

Inquires to which the staff of the society responds fall into several categories, but all can be characterized as sensible, ludicrous, or somewhere in between. Most sensible requests focus on genealogy, old businesses, or some other facet of early Adams county history. Many other times, ludicrous requests are received from parties who want to know something about their ancestors from some foreign state who fought in the battle of Gettysburg. The society simply does not have that information.

At face value, however, some requests only border on the ludicrous. Such was one relatively recent inquiry which the author was asked to answer. In early September 1996, the society received a letter from a collector of Gettysburg memorabilia. Enclosed were two photographs



*Fig. 1a: “Toll gate, Gettysburg, PA 1907”; looking west along the Chambersburg Turnpike from the Kane farmhouse. (Achs).*



**Fig 1b: Approximate site of Kane's toll gate, Old Chambersburg Turnpike, 1996, looking west (E. W. Christ). Over the years, the roadbed has been worn down, creating a steeper bank seen at left.**

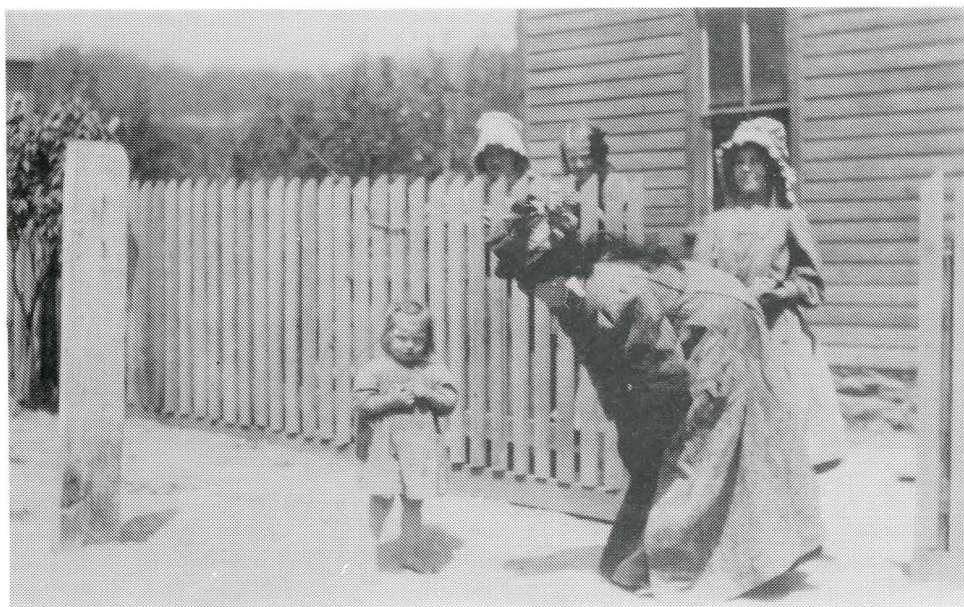
which the collector indicated were identified as "Toll Gate, Gettysburg, Pa. 1907."\*

In one image a male traveller balances himself on the toll gate, a cigar in his mouth (Fig. 1). His expression suggests that he was hamming it up for the camera.

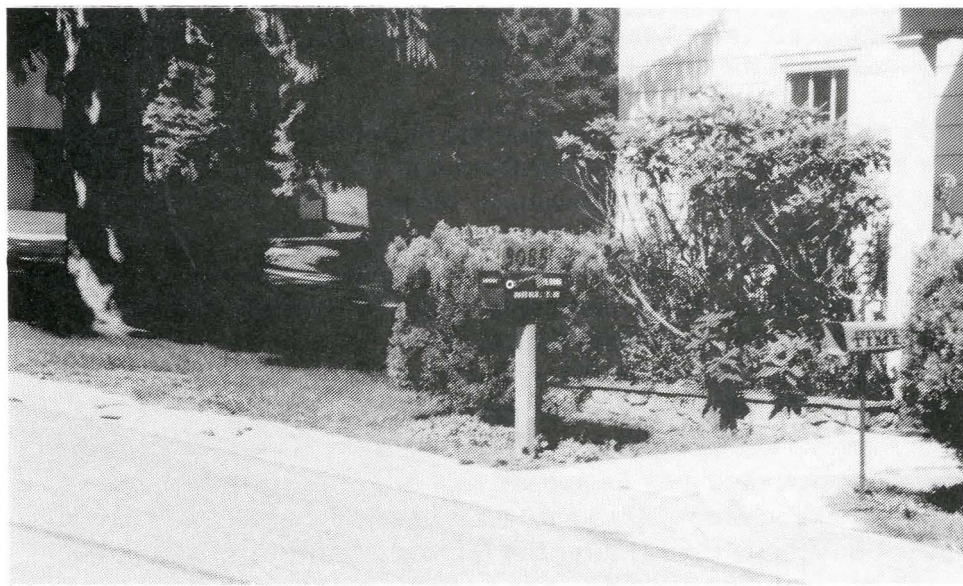
In the other (Fig. 2a), a female traveller, bundled up and wearing driving goggles, bends down to look at a small child. The young child, aged about three years old, seems oblivious to the woman, who probably appeared to her as some alien from another galaxy. Meanwhile, three other females, two of them young girls, watch the scene with but casual interest.

The collector wanted to know if we could confirm that the toll gate was in the Gettysburg area.

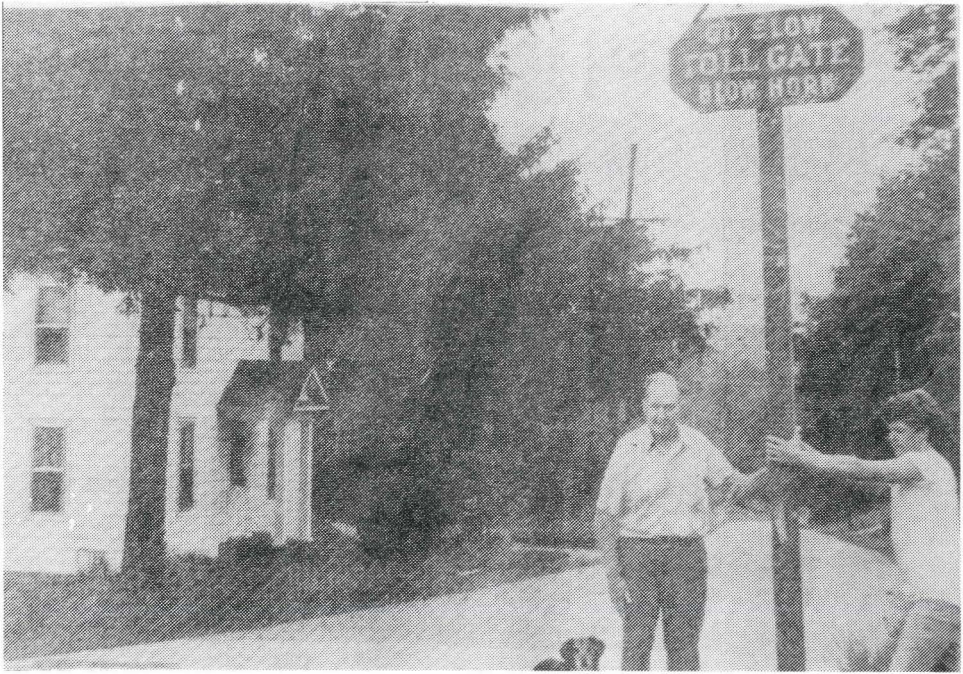
\*The collector, Doug Redding of Rockville, MD, has kindly donated the two ca. 1907 photos to the society.



*Fig. 2a: "Toll gate, Gettysburg, PA, 1907," looking west-northwest, past the Kane farmhouse. (ACHS).*



*Fig. 2b: Site of Kane's tollgate, Chambersburg Turnpike (1996), looking west-northwest (E. W. Christ). The small child stood about where the mail box stands in this view. The northeast corner of the barn, barely visible in the top photo, can be seen at the upper left-hand corner of this modern view behind the tree.*



**Fig. 3: Lamont Kane and company at the old Kane tollgate, Old Lincoln Highway, looking east, 1974 (*Gettysburg Times*). Compare Lamont's face with that of the young girl in the 1907 photo (Fig. 2a).**

My preliminary reaction was that the views were definitely not taken in or around the borough of Gettysburg and that they probably were not even taken of a site in Adams county. Besides the number "41" written on the back of each, nothing in the photographs indicated that they were associated. They could be views of two sites taken miles and years apart. I started to draft a letter beginning with the phrase, "Regretfully, we have not been able to identify the toll gate."

Nevertheless, I did check the society's road and tollhouse files to make sure that I did not miss the proverbial "needle in a hay stack." In the back of my mind I thought to myself, "Well, if these views were taken in Adams county, they may have been shot either in the northern part of the county, or in the western part somewhere along the old Gettysburg and Petersburg Turnpike, later the Lincoln Highway or old Route 30.

As I perused the road file, I came across an article that appeared in the 25 September 1974 *Gettysburg Times*, "Beautiful Old Lincoln Highway Area Once Was Part of Chambersburg Turnpike Route." The reporter had interviewed Leon Lamont Kane, who recalled helping his



*Fig. 4a: Looking east, down the Lincoln Highway from Kane's field, toward the Kane farm buildings (at center), ca. 1915 (ACHS).*

father, the late Charles Kane, collect tolls at the gate located at their farm house situated about twelve miles northwest of Gettysburg a short distance from Mt. Newman in Franklin township. In a photograph accompanying the article (Fig. 3), there stood Lamont who, with the assistance of a local youth, held up the sign that had once warned visitors of their approach to Kane's toll gate. Reading the article and looking at the photo, I thought to myself: "Humm ..., the Kane House does look similar to the house in the one ca. 1907 photo." I returned to writing the first draft incorporating information from the 1974 article.

However, something told me to dig deeper.

Checking the society's roads photograph file, I came across a view taken about 1915 whose caption read, "Lincolnway, taken from Kane's field, Adams County, Penna." (Fig. 4a). As I gazed at this new bit of evidence, a chill ran down my spine. The terrain around the Kane farm seemed reminiscent of the background in one of the alleged ca. 1907 views.

My brain had yet to confirm what my instincts were telling me, namely, that what I was looking at were two views of the Kane toll gate on the

Chambersburg Pike in Franklin township—until I compared the 1974 photo with one of the 1907 views.

Gradually, a wave of realization swept over me like the storm surge of a hurricane. The face of the young child looked almost identical to that of Lamont Kane! Re-reading the article, I noticed that Lamont was born in 1902. Assuming that the date of the two ca. 1907 views was accurate, Lamont would have been five years old, a bit old for the young child. Could the child, I speculated, be a sister?

Overwhelmed by my discovery, after the society closed, volunteer researcher Tim Smith and I, armed with photocopies of the ca. 1907 photos, drove out to the site. Though different—the terrain seemed steeper than what appeared in the views and seemed to have more tree cover—the site could possibly be the one seen in the 1907 views. Something, however, did not jive: there was a small barn directly west of the house which, to me, did not appear in the one 1907 view.



*Fig. 4b: "Lincoln way, from Kane's field, Adams Co., Pa." 1996 (E. W. Christ). The Kane farm buildings stand at photo center.*

Arriving about an hour early the next day before the society was open, I re-accessed the data. As Tim had suggested to me, we had misaligned the photo entitled “view from Kane’s field,” which we had not taken with us to the site. In that photograph, the toll gate was not just off the left edge of the ca. 1915 picture as I had assumed, but rather was some 300-400 yards in the distance where stood a small barn and the Kane farm house.

When Tim arrived later that day, his observations all but eliminated any reasonable doubts I had regarding where the ca. 1907 photographs had been taken. As Tim pointed out to me, I had wrongly assumed that the one view of the lady traveller, et al., was taken looking towards the west facade of the house. He thought the ca. 1907 view looked along the front, or south facade, towards the northeastern corner of the small barn which could barely be seen in the old 1907 photograph, but which was visible in the ca. 1915 photograph.

Then I began to wonder: “If this was the Kane toll gate, might I be able to identify anyone in the 1907 views?” After checking census records and the society’s vital statistics cards, I was reasonably sure that I could identify the women in the one view, except, of course, the woman traveller.

Assuming that the photograph was taken in 1907 and that the other women in the view were all members of the Charles A. Kane family, we might have standing behind the fence, left to right, the following: Mary Ellen Kane, aged 44 years; daughter Anna M., 9; daughter Jessie P., 12; and the little girl—Laura Catherine Kane, 3, born 15 October 1903. Ironically, Laura passed away on 2 August 1996—exactly one month before the gentlemen wrote his letter to the society inquiring about the photographs. She died at the age of 92, living nearly her entire life in the old Kane family home seen in the 1907, ca. 1915 and 1974 photos.

Family members not seen in the ca. 1907 photos included Charles A. Kane, 43; Charles A., Jr., 10; William M., 6; Leo L., 5; and Mary J., 1. About a year later, ca. 1908, Mary Ellen Kane gave birth to “Keillen” Grace Kane.

Although we at the society cannot be absolutely positive of the identification of the site or the people in the two 1907 photographs, one item teasingly suggests to the author that he might be correct: Mary Ellen Kane died in 1940 at the age of 76, on 26 August—the author’s birthday.