

Aunt Mame

by Miriam E. Bixler

She really wasn't my "Aunt Mame" but her niece, Gertrude Diller, (Mrs. Ammon Longenecker, Manheim) was my best girl friend so I called her that. I don't think I knew, in those early 1920's, that she, Mrs. Levi B. Smith, had instigated the "Decoration Day" services at the Penn Square Soldiers' Monument. I did know she was a devoted worker in our Emmanuel Lutheran Church and a patriotic lady of sorts, but in my early-teen world her claim to fame was the ownership of a phonograph. Aunt Mame always warmly welcomed us two music-crazy kids to her house at 319 Pearl Street for she loved young folks. She also loved her country and flag and revered mightily those who fought for them.

Daughter Kit, Mrs. John Fawber, recalls that her mother was so proud that a member of the family had fought in each of our country's wars. They truly did beginning with Revolutionary War great-uncle Peter Shindle down to Aunt Mame's great-grandson, Gerald A. Sullenberger, 1931 Temple Ave., back from Viet Nam and now in college.

The first of the family's "service men", sixteen-year-old Peter Shindle, joined Col. George Ross' regiment in 1776 as a fifer. What a fifer he must have been! The story goes that not only did he obtain the rank of brigade fifer major but General Lafayette himself presented the soldier with a silver fife in honor of his heroic playing.

Thomas Montgomery, in the *Lancaster County Historical Society Journal* recounts that in 1825 when Lafayette was attending a complimentary ball in our Masonic Hall he left early to go to a dinner at Leonard Eichholtz' house.

Fifty old veterans of the Revolutionary War honored him there. There were toasts with music from fife and drum. Tradition says Uncle Peter was privileged to give the only toast to Lafayette. He drank to the "memory of General Lafayette and Brandywine"

Aunt Mame's other daughters, Miss Edith Killian and Mrs. Carrie Leaman of Columbia say that Peter was a substantial citizen of our town. He was one of the original subscribers to the capital stock of the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike in 1792. Ellis and Evans' *History of Lancaster County* notes that one of the largest of our city's early fires was that in 1811 when four dwellings, a blacksmith shop, a barn and other buildings were demolished. Peter Shindle owned one of the dwellings, a two-story stone house at the northwest corner of Orange and N. Queen Streets.

Uncle Peter was also a pillar of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and when he went to his very just reward he was buried, silver fife with him, in a local cemetery on his son-in-law's family plot.

An awed and excited seven-year-old Mame marched with her father in the parade which culminated in the dedication of the Soldier's Monument in Penn Square, July 4th, 1874. What a celebration that was after many years of collecting the monies and the impatient waiting for its completion! The family never would have considered not attending for wasn't their husband and father one of the honored? Abram Killian was a veteran of the Civil War and a member of the Grand Army of the Republic.

The Killian family had a few panicky moments at that dedication when little brother John got lost in the huge, milling crowd. He was found, and grew up to be a successful cigar maker in the state of Washington.

At sixteen years Mame was eligible and joined the Pennsylvania Women's Relief Corps of the Grand Army of the Republic which had formed during the Civil War. Her mother became president of the Lancaster chapter. Mame also attained that office. The year she was State President and the national convention met in Washington, D.C., the members of the Pennsylvania state organization gave Mame a half-carat diamond ring presented by the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson. Kit, who at sixteen had also joined the now defunct Corps, is the proud owner of that ring.

Aunt Mame was a member of other patriotic women's groups too. When some of the women of the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic split and formed the Auxiliary to the Sons of the Union Veterans she joined both organizations. However, the Relief



THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MONUMENT

This view of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Penn Square shows the monument before the base and fence were removed in July 1972. At present the uncovered base shows the monument to be resting upon dressed blocks of granite and hard limestone. When the Penn Square project is completed the monument will be closer to the traffic and the persons who will be strolling or resting (but probably just loitering) on the four "plazas" on each corner of the square.

Corps, and later the Monumental Association (membership open to both men and women) captured her enthusiasm.

For many years just before Memorial Day Aunt Mame accompanied two Civil War veterans to assigned school rooms. I can remember those patriotic teams coming to my school and talking of the holiday, telling stories of the Civil War and reminding us to put flowers on the soldiers' graves. Even after the teachers discontinued our annual flower bearing march to cemeteries Aunt Mame and her friends would give talks to us children on such topics as "Respect for the Flag".

Mame Killian loved flowers. She was especially fond of cultivating roses to grace the altar of her church. On Memorial Day she would guide a delegation of children down the E. King Street hill to the bridge over "the creek" to strew the waters with blossoms in memory of the country's dead heroes. Then came the day when traffic made the walk dangerous and the site was changed to Rocky Springs Park.

In 1920 Aunt Mame originated the annual Memorial Day services at Penn Square Monument. As Treasurer of the Lancaster County Monumental Association she saw to it that there was money available for honest-to-goodness floral memorial wreaths—one for each side of the statue, four in all. Children always placed the wreaths there. In 1951 it was decided to make do with one large wreath facing N. Queen Street. Aunt Mame's great-grandson, Gerald, had the honor of placing it that year.

For years the late County Commissioner G. Graybill Diehm and our subject feuded about the amount of money to be taken from the County Treasury to buy appropriate flags for the ceremony. Kit asserts that the altercations had nothing to do with her mother's being a Democrat and the Commissioner the undisputed Republican leader for her father, Levi Smith, was a Democrat, too, and a close friend of Sen. Diehm's. Mr. Smith's trade had been blacksmithing but Woodrow Wilson appointed him Revenue Agent stationed at Lebanon, Pa.

A highlight of Mame's monumental career occurred the night of December 23rd, 1956 when she and George F. K. Erisman, veterans of the 1874 dedication of the statue, pulled the switches turning on twelve floodlights installed to light the monument. Many of us remember Mr. Erisman as the wonderful man who rented costumes and repaired our dolls. Others knew him as the last living man "to run with" the Union Fire Company. The Pennsylvania Farm Museum at Landis Valley has moved his shop from W. Orange Street to their grounds.

Aunt Mame was pleased that she was selected by the American Legion to assist John Kiehl unveil the monument in the soldier's plot in Greenwood cemetery.

Her church activities were an expansion of those two deep interests, flowers and children. The pre-teen girls in her Sunday School class were said to have been little imps, but not by her. She busied them with picking field daisies to decorate the church or planning the annual Christmas party at her home.

Perhaps it was at one of the latter that she, struck by how fast her "ginger cakes" disappeared, implemented a new project for the class. The church altar needed a cross. So it was that the girls baked dozens and dozens of the spicy cookies right in Aunt Mame's kitchen. They sold readily. Today a shining brass cross rests on the altar of the chapel at Emmanuel after years of service on the altar of the main sanctuary. A plaque credits the gift to the class.

Aunt Mame's Ginger Cakes

1 cup of lard	1 tablespoon of soda dissolved
1 cup of baking molasses	in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot water
1 cup of brown sugar	5 cups of flour
1 tablespoon of ginger	

Cream lard and sugar. Mix in well beaten eggs and molasses. Add soda in hot water. Sift flour with ginger. Add cup by cup of flour mixing well. Drop on well greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees. Makes 5 or 6 dozen.

When the class baked them in quantity more flour was added to roll out and cut in squares.

Editor's Note:

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Penn Square was threatened with destruction or complete removal from the square after the city administration and its traffic experts discovered the city could receive a large sum of state and federal taxpayers' money for redesigning and correcting a number of traffic problems including hurrying the downtown traffic through Penn Square. It would be easier, apparently the traffic experts thought, to get rid of the monument than to enforce the no parking and loading-unloading regulations along West King Street. Charges and counter-charges flew. State and federal officials supposedly would not approve unless the entire project was done as planned originally. The width of West King Street was "miscalculated" by an engineer, causing a chorus of guffaws from the citizenry who had had their fill of planners, engineers, and out-of-town consultants. The uproar resulted in thousands of citizens signing petitions, many others speaking out vigorously on the subject or writing letters, and others organizing groups to thwart the attempt to remove the monument. Finally, the city administration decided to allow a citizens committee containing elements from all sides to make the decision. A compromise was reached. The fence and floodlighting around the monument were to be removed, and the base cut back to allow more traffic lanes.

The corners of the square were to be made into small parks, with the curbing extended into the square. The net result is to be a "smoother traffic flow" in which motor cars will pass the monument without turning out as much as at present. The original premise that the change was to facilitate traffic seems to have been lost, and the philosophy behind the project now appears to be one of making Penn Square a center for human activity to attract shoppers to the downtown stores. The changes are to take place during the summer and fall of 1972. Aunt Mame would have been perplexed, probably dismayed, and perhaps a wee bit pleased!