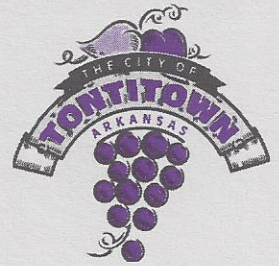


# Tontitown Storia



*The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum*

*Spring 2005, Vol. 1, No. 1*

## Saluti from the Board

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Tontitown Historical Museum, I am pleased to introduce the first issue of the museum's newsletter, *Tontitown Storia* ... which means Tontitown History. The board is proud to be a part of the museum's new vitality and we want to share that pride with our readers. The newsletter will inform readers about what is happening at the museum. There will be articles about museum artifacts, activities, projects, and exhibits. The newsletter will also include articles that profile an event, a person, or a family that has impacted Tontitown's history.



257 E. Henri de Tonti Boulevard, just east of Tontitown City Hall

An example of the museum's new vitality is its lead sponsorship for the three Tontitown Reunion and Polenta Smears. The museum's objective was to provide a forum where the history and heritage of Tontitown could be rediscovered, recorded, and preserved. Those of you who attended the Polenta Smears can attest to the good time that everyone had. The food was great, the sharing of pictures and stories was nostalgic, and tracking our genealogy was very interesting. As for the museum's objective, I can attest to that success. The three Polenta Smears produced over 800 photographs that were copied, and are now a permanent part of Tontitown history.

The success of the Polenta Smears has energized the Tontitown Museum Board to become more active in searching for information that can relate to the history of Tontitown. As an example, over 50 oral interviews have been conducted with people who were willing to share with us memories about their early years and about growing up in Tontitown. These interviews are now a permanent part of Tontitown history.

The history and heritage of Tontitown and its people belongs to everyone, and about that history and heritage there is a story that needs to be told. The story of those spirited immigrants who left their homeland to make a new life in what was to them, "a new world." Now, a hundred plus years later, their descendants are working to find out everything they can about those people who came and settled in Tontitown. We want to know about the hard times and about the good times. Their story is our story. The history they made is our heritage, and is worth preserving. That's our job!

Frank Maestri  
President

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## Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza and Bev Cortiana

An artifact you don't want to miss in the Tontitown Historical Museum is the first Postal Money Order book from 1901. It's on the secretary desk in Fr. Bandini's room. The label on the book cover reads "Register of Money Order Advices Received by the Post Office at Tontitown, State of Ark, Commencing Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> 1901." Ray Watson, a Springdale postman who delivered mail in Tontitown for many years, donated this book.

With the help of Susan Young and Jane-Ellen Murphy at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, just a few minutes of research uncovered the following article significant for this artifact.

*The post office business, under the efficient management of our postmaster, John Pozza, is booming. On the second of this month he was granted all the privileges of the Money Order System.*

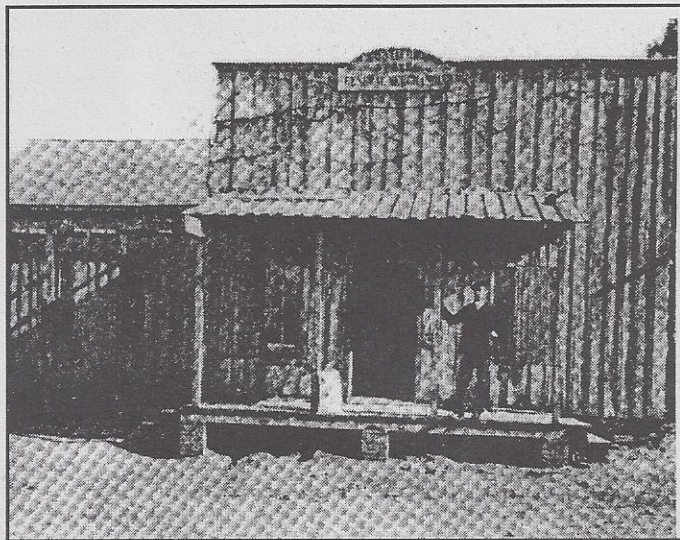
*The Springdale News, January 13, 1901*

Exactly what "all these privileges" were, we aren't sure. It seems likely that John wrote entries in this book however.

Browsing the first page of entries helps us imagine the many hard-working, Italian men sending money "home" to their families in Tontitown. Although some names are difficult to read, familiar names are – Aldo Maestri, Pietro Pianalto, Guiseppe Roso, Silvio Tomiello, Tomaso Zulpo, Felice Ardemagni, Eugenio Brunetti, Antonio Sbanotto, and others. These men worked the mines of Oklahoma, in the Wilburton Indian Territory and the Hartshorne Indian Territory.

Some men sent money home to their wives or other family members. Names listed on the money orders are Pier Antonio Maestri, Virginia Roso, Marianna Zulpo, Enrica Ardemagni, Millinia Maestri, and Angela Taldo. Many sent money to Father Bandini, perhaps to pay on land.

Money orders ranged from \$1 to \$100. Think about what one dollar would buy in 1901. An advertisement for Farrah Dry Goods Co. in *The Springdale News* included McCall's sewing patterns for 10¢ or 15¢ – quite the bargain over today's \$10 to \$15 prices.



John Pozza in front of his Tontitown General Mercantile store, which housed the first Tontitown Post Office.

*Photo courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, from the Washington County Plat Book, 1910.*

It is sad to think that forefather families were separated for long periods of time while making their dreams of a better life in America come true. But it's comforting to know that the men returned home for holidays, and even brought friends with them, to enjoy their loving Italian families. On January 4, 1901, *The Springdale News* reported these happy times:

*Midnight High Mass was celebrated in St. Joseph's Church New Years evening. The ceremonies were beautiful and impressive and largely attended.*

*Tontitown has been the scene of many gaieties during the holidays. Besides the luncheon at Mrs. Roche's, young and old enjoyed the dinner prepared by Mrs. Teresa Bastianelli last Sunday and the luncheon at Mrs. Morsani's the following evening. During the week a dance was also given by Mrs. J Taldo.*





## Grazie to Our Donors



Many wonderful items have been donated to the museum over the years. In this first newsletter, we want to recognize our donors and thank all who have contributed priceless memorabilia to benefit their descendants. Without you, we couldn't be here. Anytime you clean out a closet, trunk, attic, shed, or barn, consider whether you have items significant to the early days of Tontitown. As we increase our collection, we increase the rich heritage of Tontitown. Help us preserve *Tontitown Storia* through your donations.

Some of the donated items are ... grape baskets; many different types of tools; table cloth; shirt; wine bottle labels; Grape Festival crowns (6); cabinet; woven cloths (3); books; chairs; rocking chair; wooden boxes; penguin; chalice; wooden bucket; prayer book; crochet items; wooden table; piano; crucifix (4); wooden candle sticks; metal candle sticks; Altar Society banner; clapper; desk; dishes; milk can; ink pen; golf clubs; rolling pen; bocci balls; forge; blacksmith tools; old fence stretcher; shot glasses; picture album; organ; bell; video; Grape Festival shirt; Grape Stomper t-shirt; trophy; grape press; grape basket handler; wooden plane; wine jugs; glass; crockery; buttons; old Boy Scout flag; American flag (3); Italian flag; delivery cabinet; old wine barrel; grape cutters; balloons from Grape Festival; wooden yoke; walking cane (2); farm cane; money order book; hallowed out door; churn; coffee grinder; coffee bean roaster; vestments; baby wrap (2); checkbook dated 1913; shoe repair tool, fancy lady's fan; Mayors pictures; pasta maker; accordion; books ... and others.

To all our donors ... many, many thanks! Please accept our apologies if we missed your name or made some other error, and please let us know. We are working hard to get our records complete and accurate.

Helen Allen  
Nataline Allen  
Bernie Ardemagni  
Memory of Richard Ardemagni  
Madaline Bariola  
Devon Branstetter  
Elvira Fiori Ceola  
Pearl Taldo Ceola  
Liz Gaiche Ceola family  
Margie Ceola  
Mark Ceola  
City of Tontitown  
Carrie Clem  
Everet Collins  
Roy Lee Collins  
Jim Cortiana  
Sandra Cortiana, Adriano Dal Pra  
Florence Granata Fiori  
Santo Formica  
Premo Franco  
Roy & Jettie Franco  
Pauline Fiori Franco  
Andrew & Frances Verucchi Franco  
Kay Franco  
Johnnie Dick Franco family  
Analita (Ricconi) Fratesi  
Dee Frizzo  
Jay & Florene Frizzo  
Mary Pianalto Fucci  
Lidi Gasparotto  
Rosetta Gasparotto Nelke  
Vickey George  
Patsy Taldo Graham  
Lillian Cortiana Granata

Jerry Hinshaw  
Veronica Keith  
Dorothy Bersi Kever  
Joseph Lazzari family  
Mantegani family  
Kathy Pianalto Miller  
Eda Montag  
Dorothy Morsani  
Joe & Goldie Mussino  
Earl & Beatrice Mussino  
Joann Jaro Mussino  
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Denise Pianalto Pearce  
Ed & Adele Bariola Penzo  
Andrew Penzo  
Agatha Ranalli Penzo  
Arthur & Joyce Penzo  
Louie & Pat Perona  
Frank Perona family  
Margaret Perona  
Gene & Debbie Perry  
Eleanor Zulpo Pianalto  
Mary Louise Pianalto  
Robert & Jacquie Pianalto  
Pete & Lou Franco Pianalto  
Gile & Ester Pianalto  
Louis & Helene Pianalto  
Philip & Connie Franco Pianalto  
Maurice & Mary Ann Dobbs Pianalto  
Brenda Pianalto  
Elsie Mae Fiori Pianalto

Francis Pianalto  
James Pianalto  
Leo Pianalto family  
Sandy Pianalto  
Henry & Charlotte Piazza  
Albert Piazza  
Dick & Blanche Taldo Piazza  
Hubert Piazza  
John (J.H.) Pozza  
Felix Pozza  
Eddie Roso  
Sarah Taldo Russell  
Rosalee Pianalto Sabatini  
Gloria Mae Maestri Sallis  
Dorothy Fiori Sbanotto  
Robert & Beth Serio  
Norina Mantegani Stolfi  
St. Joseph's Church  
Glen & Bertie Wiseman  
Bert & Catherine Taldo  
Fredie & Lorine Pianalto Taldo  
James Riley & Marie Tessaro  
Tontitown Parents Asso.  
Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan  
Leigh Verucchi  
Ray Watson  
Barbara White (Morsani descendant)  
Emma Verrucchi White  
Lavinia Maestri Zulpo  
Leon & Sally Verucchi Zulpo  
Christi Ranalli Zulpo  
2003 Junktique  
Anonymous



# Family Focus ... Felix Ardemagni

## Tontitown's First Mayor after Father Bandini

By Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan

In the June 10, 1904, *Springdale News*, I came across this news item written by a Tontitown correspondent who's penname was Mr. Goose.

*Felix and Enrica are the proud parents of a fine boy who came sometime last week.*

Without providing a last name, Felix and Enrica were so well known to everyone in Tontitown that now, 100 years later, I know who Mr. Goose was talking about.

Felix (Felice) Ardemagni was born on September 30, 1872 in Casabuttano, a town in Northern Italy near the city of Milano.

On December 9, 1897, Felix, along with his father Luigi and brother Pietro (Peter), arrived at the Port of New York aboard the German steamer, *GermanLloyd*. Felix was 25 years old when he came to America.

Felix Ardemagni was one of the first settlers of Tontitown, arriving in Northwest Arkansas in late 1898. On December 20, 1901, this short sentence appeared in the *Springdale News*, "*Felix Ardemagni came home from Wilberton.*" One of the first jobs Felix had was working in the mines in Oklahoma.

Felix married Enrica Pianalto on August 11, 1899, and they had seven children – Mike, Louis Alphonso (Gene), Beato, Lucy, Moses (Richard), Rosalia, and Agatha Pie. They lost three children – Rosalia in 1911 at age 2, Agatha Pie in 1914 at sixteen months, and Mike, who died in an accident when he was 25.

Felix was a good father, actively involved in the lives of his children, especially during their formative years. He often took the family to



Felix and Enrica Ardemagni, with daughter Lucy.  
The vineyards were very important to Felix and his family.

*Photo courtesy Shiloh Museum of the Ozark History.*

visit brother Peter in Fort Smith, as well as the Sisters of Mercy. Peter lived at St. Scholastic's Academy and worked as a gardener for many years. Felix and Peter seemed close, yet at times Peter expressed his impatience with Felix. J. H. Pozza, one of Felix's grandsons, translated this undated letter written to Felix from his brother Peter.

*Stupid, stupid, stupid, why didn't you send me the ham, bacon, salami, and coppa. Do you think I have time to waste at any moment? It was very clear; do you think I am your slave at your beck and call? Where is the wine? When will I receive salami? Will I receive your merchandise Wednesday? It was so clear that even a baby could understand and you think I am going to write and explain everything.*

Pietro

*P.S. Don't make excuses of the Devil, send it immediately. The wine must be of good quality and old.*

*Continued next page*



## Family Focus ... continued

Felix was a devout Catholic. Father Pietro Bandini baptized his children, and both Felix and Enrica were active in St. Joseph parish activities. Felix loved to sing in church. In the January 8, 1904, *Springdale News*, the Tontitown correspondent describes the New Year services at St. Joseph Church.

*The music consisted of a beautiful "Tantum Ergo" by Felix Ardemagni and Miss Brady, and several selections rendered by the choir under the directions of Miss Brady.*

Felix used his voice for more than singing in the church choir. He was outspoken in civic and business affairs. He served as mayor of Tontitown during the years 1914-1915, 1921-1927, and 1933-1935.

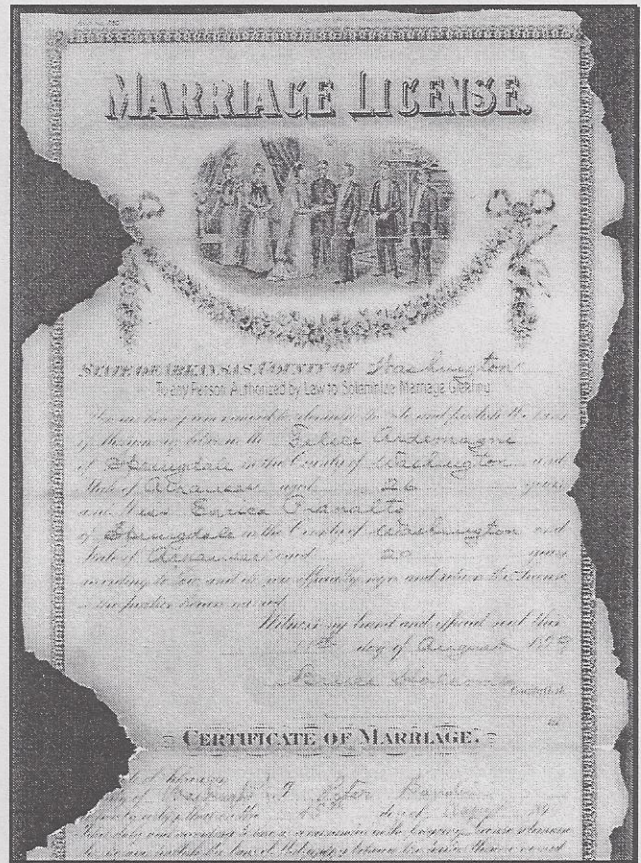
Felix was instrumental in promoting progressive farming, apple, grape, wine, and vinegar industries in Tontitown. In June 1904, the *Springdale News* reported, "*Felix Ardemagni and John Pozza are putting up a large dryer, which will be one of the most complete in the country.*" Through the years, Felix also served on Grape Festival Committees and was active in other community activities.

Felix loved his vines. He always took visitors to see his vineyard, often sending them home with grapes or wine. Throughout the years he entered his products in State Fairs and other competitions from St. Louis, Missouri to Memphis, Tennessee, as well as Hot Springs, Ft. Smith, and Fayetteville, Arkansas. He operated one of the first bonded wineries in Tontitown. When he started the vinegar plant, his product was said to be the best in the country, and became a winner in competition. Felix attended seminars on farming around the country. He encouraged other farmers from Tontitown to attend these seminars and competitions.

Felix had two failed attempts to receive his naturalization papers. The first was dismissed without reason; the second because of incompetent witnesses, one of the witnesses being Bert S. Lewis, a well-known and

respected banker from Fayetteville. On his third request, Felix Ardemagni became a citizen of the United States, taking the oath of allegiance on November 1, 1913. His witnesses were W. W. Jackson and Linus Bash. The presiding judge was J. S. Maples.

Two of Felix's sons, Richard and Beato, owned and operated Tontitown Mercantile for many years. During the depression years they sold "On Credit." Many families depended on their line of credit until a batch of chickens or a crop provided payment. When bills were paid, a treat of candy was always sent home for the children. Some Tontitown businesses prosper today because of a loan from Richard or Beato during hard times. Gene, the remaining son, stayed on the land he inherited from his father and farmed. Felix's daughter Lucy married Hugo Pozza, and raised three children in Tontitown.

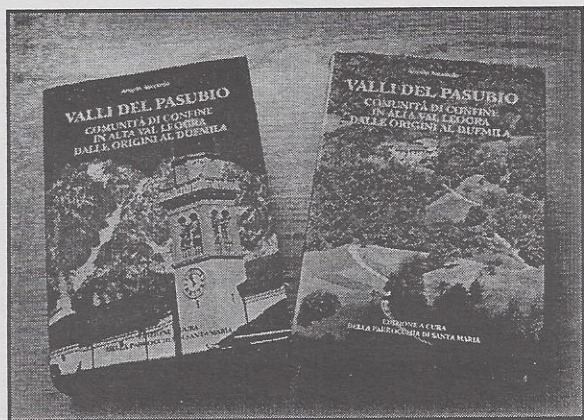


The tattered marriage license for Felix (Felice) Ardemagni and Enrica Pianalto, August 11, 1899, is on display at the Tontitown Historical Museum.

*Continued next page*



## Read All About It



L'autore (Author): Angelo Saccardo  
L'arciprete di Valli del Pasubio (First Priest):  
Don Maurizio Gobbo  
L'collaboratori (Collaborators):  
Sandra Cortiana, Adriano Dal Pra

The Tontitown Historical Museum recently received a beautiful two-volume book set from Sandra Cortiana and Adriano Dal Pra in Italy. The title is *Valli del Pasubio – Comunità di Confine in Alta Val Leogra Dalla Origini al Duemila* (Valli del Pasubio – Border Community of Alta Val Leogra from Origin to 2000). These books document the history and families of our homeland in Valli del Pasubio (known as Valle dei Signori until 1926). Although written in Italian, many gorgeous pictures tell stories without words. Sincere thanks to Sandra and Adriano for this wonderful gift.

*Also, many thanks to Elisa Stout and Dorothy Sbanotto for translating the lovely inscription in these books.*

### Italian Inscription ... Al Museum di Tontitown,

Alla popolazione e ai discendenti dei fondatori di Tontitown, doniamo con particolare piacere e orgoglio questa storia della terra che ha visto nascere gli italiani emigrati in quel luogo. Con l'augurio che i legami di sangue, di tradizioni culturali e di ricordi comuni siano sempre forti ed affettuosi. Fiscamente lontani, ma sempre vicini col cuore.

### English Translation ... To the Tontitown Museum,

To the descendants of the founders of Tontitown, we give you with particular pleasure and pride the story of this land – where your ancestors were born. With best wishes that blood lines, cultural traditions, and common memories are always strong and affectionate. Though physically apart, but always near at heart.

## Family Focus ... continued

Still a prominent name in Northwest Arkansas, Ardemagni is synonymous with Tontitown. Today five generations of Ardemagni's still work, operate businesses, and raise families in or near Tontitown. They continue to honor the traditions Felix instilled in his children — faith in God and good citizenship. A great-great-granddaughter, Kara McKinley (daughter of Thomas and Karla Ardemagni McKinley), received high honors at the local 2004 History Day competition. Her exhibit, entitled "*Tontitown: Now That's Italian*," presented a timeline and pictorial history of Tontitown. After the competition, Kara gave her entry to the Tontitown Historical Museum, where it will remain a part of Tontitown history.

Grandson J. H. Pozza remembers the times he and his cousin, Mike Ardemagni, helped their grandfather bottle wine. Another of his fondest

memories is spending nights with his grandparents after his grandmother's stroke. He would sleep in her room, in a bed close to her, while Felix slept in the next room. When everyone was ready for sleep, Felix would call to J.H. in Latin, "*Sia Lodato Jesu Cristo (May Jesus be praised)*." J. H. would respond, "*Sempre Sia Lodato (May He be praised always)*."

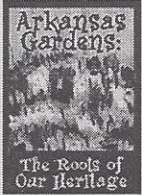
Felix lived to be 74; he died on December 17, 1946. His beloved wife Enrica was paralyzed from a stroke the last ten years of her life. Felix cared for her until her death on September 5, 1940.

Felix Ardemagni, along with Father Bandini and the other Italian immigrants, earned the respect of their neighbors and the nation for their integrity, honesty, work ethics, and knowledge of the soil. They leave their descendants a proud heritage.



## ✓ *Mark Your Calendar ...*

### *2005 Tontitown Historical Museum Events*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
May 22 	<b>"Tontitown – From Farm to Market"</b> Tontitown Historical Museum and Harry Sbanotto Park, 1 – 4 p.m.  This is an Arkansas Heritage Month special event.
June – October	Regular Season Hours Open Saturday's and Sunday's, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment.
August 9-13	107 <sup>th</sup> Tontitown Grape Festival, Special Museum Hours Thursday, August 11      1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 12      10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 13      10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
November 6	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Tontitown Reunion and Polenta Smear St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 1 – 5 p.m.

### *Memorable Words*

*"Lives there a man with a soul so dead who never to himself has said, this is my own, my native land?" There are few people in Tontitown who can claim it as the land of birth, but it is the land of their adoption, their hope, their joys and their sorrows. It is the land of their love and like true Americans they say "United we stand, divided we fall." Tontitown people are proud of Tontitown.*

*The Springdale News  
January 13, 1911*

### *A Little Italian*

#### **Italian      English**

la storia	history
saluti	greetings
grazie	thank you
ciao	hello or goodbye
la primavera	spring
i fiori	flowers
l'orto	vegetable garden
il verme	worm
la pioggia	rain
l'arcobaleno	rainbow

### *Tontitown Historical Museum, 2005 Board of Directors*

The Tontitown Historical Museum Board welcomes your input and involvement. Please contact us with your ideas on how we can best serve the community.

Charlotte Piazza, Curator, 479-361-2498  
Frank Maestri, President, 479-751-7393  
Andy Franco, Vice President, 479-361-2422  
Brenda Pianalto, Secretary, 479-756-5221  
Bev Cortiana, Treasurer, 479-361-2609  
Karen Ardemagni Collins, 479-756-6023  
Lynda Cross, 479-750-2433  
Denise Pellin, 479-751-5771  
Kathy Pianalto Miller, 479-361-2472  
Joyce Penzo, 479-361-2544  
Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, 479-751-6347  
Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, 479-751-6536

Many thanks to 2004 Museum Board members, Kenny Green and Nova Jean Fiori Watson. Your many hours of hard work and dedication were greatly appreciated.

*Tontitown Storia* is published in the Spring and Fall by the Tontitown Historical Museum Board. If you'd like to submit a story or have other ideas for the newsletter, please contact Bev Cortiana at 479-361-2609.



## Tontitown on the Web

Have you visited the Tontitown Web site at [www.tontitown.com](http://www.tontitown.com)? It's a wealth of information ... both historical and current.

Check out the *History* link to read about the Tontitown Historical Museum. We plan to add family photos collected from the Polenta Smears in the future.

Also, use the Web site to stay informed of city happenings. The *Events Calendar* and *Agendas/Minutes* links will keep you current.

TONTITOWN  
EVENTS
HISTORY  
MUNICIPAL
ORGANIZATIONS  
CONTACT
COMMERCE  
HOME

*Home of the Grape Festival, one of the country's oldest community festivals.*

CITY ADMINISTRATION  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY BOARDS  
CITY ORDINANCES  
AGENDAS/MINUTES  
EVENTS CALENDAR





### Tontitown.

Where you can imagine the future and enjoy the past.

What makes a small American town great? A diversity of people, ideas, and businesses. And that's just what Tontitown has. We're a small but growing community, carefully planning for the future while preserving our storied past. Tontitown has everything you'll want in a small town, whether you're considering traveling for vacation, a business relocation or start-up, or your retirement.

Uniquely situated in the scenic Ozarks with great access to freeways and airports, Tontitown has the "can do!" attitude that has always made small-town America the engine of enterprise and our high standard of living. As you browse through the images and information on our Web site, we think you'll agree. So welcome to Tontitown!



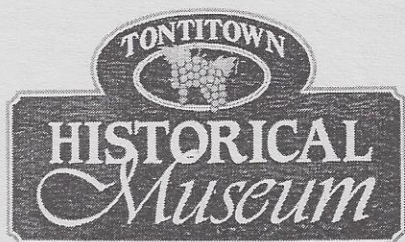






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257 E. Henri de Tonti Boulevard  
P.O. Box 144  
Tontitown, Arkansas 72770



*Tontitown Stora*  
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# *You are invited to* ***Tontitown: From Farm to Market***

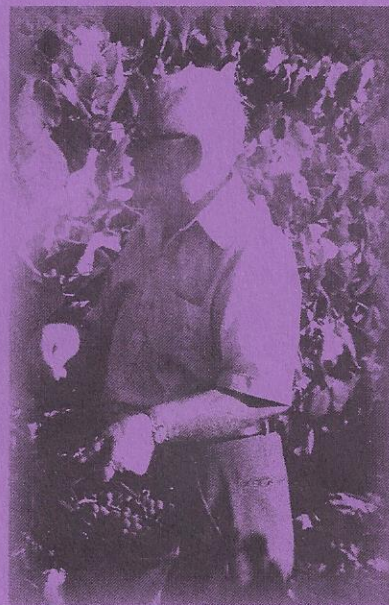
The Department of Arkansas Heritage sponsors a statewide event each May to celebrate our rich Arkansas heritage. This year's theme is "Gardens: The Roots of Our Heritage." Come celebrate Tontitown's "roots" ... of vineyards, vegetable gardens, and flower gardens, at *Tontitown: From Farm to Market* on Sunday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. This is a special event sponsored by the Tontitown Historical Museum. Bring your family and friends to a free, fun afternoon at the park and museum.

<b>When</b>	Sunday, May 22, 2005 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
<b>Where</b>	Tontitown Historical Museum & Harry Sbanotto Park – On the south side of Highway 412, just east of Tontitown City Hall
<b>What</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See photo exhibits of historic Tontitown vineyards and gardens</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See displays from today's Tontitown gardeners</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take a tour of the Tontitown Historical Museum</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enjoy the park – playground, Fr. Joe's Walking Trail, or bocci</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enjoy some snacks – cookies &amp; grape punch</li><li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit with old friends, make new friends, and have a fun time!</li></ul>

*See these photos and more ...*



Mary Cortiana Fiori proudly shows the fruits of their vineyard, 1985.



Leo Guiseppe Pianalto carefully picks their grape crop, 1979.

*Photos courtesy of Brenda Pianalto.*