

Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2005, Vol. 1, No. 2

Saluti from the Board

2005 is flying by. For the past several months, the Tontitown Historical Museum Board has been very busy promoting the museum here in Tontitown and throughout Northwest Arkansas. Here are some highlights.

In April, we hosted Tontitown tour day for the College at the Crossings (CATC), the senior outreach center for Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC). The day started with a tour of the museum and showcased the history and heritage of Tontitown. Next, the group enjoyed learning about and playing bocce, a game unique to the Italian culture. After bocce, a spaghetti lunch was served and the group was introduced to Father Bandini through Bob Mello's "living history performance." The day ended with a driving tour of Tontitown's historic sites.

In May, the museum joined with the Department of Arkansas Heritage to promote Arkansas Heritage Month. The theme this year was Arkansas Gardens — The Roots of Our Heritage and could not have been more appropriate for Tontitown. When Father Bandini brought the first Italian immigrants to Northwest Arkansas they were displaced farmers looking for a place to plant their crops and put down roots. Their first gardens provided food necessary for life, and flowers to decorate their church, the house of God. The fruit of their orchards and vineyards were the cash crops that provided economic subsistence. This summer, descendants of those first farmers with names like Ranalli, Penzo, and Piazza provided fruits and vegetables to exhibit for Arkansas Heritage Month. Proof that the Roots of our Heritage do indeed run deep.



2005 Tontitown Historical Museum Board

l-r: Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan; Brenda Pianalto; Kathy Pianalto Miller; Charlotte Piazza, Curator; Joyce Penzo; Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie; Lynda Cross; Bev Cortiana, Treasurer; Denise Pellin; Karen Ardemagni Collins; Andy Franco, Vice-President; Frank Maestri, President.

Photo by Alice Walker

In June, two Board members took the Tontitown story on the road. They presented a program entitled "Tontitown — Now That's Italian" to the Washington County Genealogical Society. The program included a presentation about the history of Tontitown and then explained the ongoing work that the museum is doing to preserve the history and heritage of Tontitown.

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Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza and Bev Cortiana

When Tontitown purchased the four-room home of Mary and Zelinda Bastianelli for a museum, the city was truly blessed. Walking through this old house, you can feel the murmurs of Tontitown life from the early 1900's to today.

We encourage you to spend some time in Father Bandini's room at the museum. Father Bandini celebrated his 25th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood just four years after founding Tontitown. Demetrious, a correspondent to *The Springdale News*, reported on this event.

On Tuesday, September 30, 1902, the twenty-fifth anniversary of ordination of our paster, Rev. Father Bandini, was celebrated here. Very early a multitude gathered on the parochial grounds to participate in the joyous festivities. The first and principal feature of the celebration was the Solumn Mass at 10 a.m. Rev. Father Bandini was the celebrant and was assisted by nine other clergymen. The choir under the direction of Miss Brady, assisted by the Tontitown Band, rendered excellent music. ... After Mass, the Rev. P. O'Laughlin of Rolla, Missouri gave an eloquent sermon portraying beautifully the duties, devotion and sacrifice of the Catholic priest for the welfare of those entrusted to his spiritual care, holding as a model our novel and zealous pastor. ... It was through his energy, that in less than two years, they succeeded in reducing their almost forestal homes to a flourishing little village.

A special museum item is one of Father Bandini's beautiful vestments, housed in a protective glass case. Father Bandini received this vestment in 1911 as a gift from Queen Mother Margherita, the last Queen of Italy. It is believed the vestment was hand made by girls in a school in Italy.

Father Bandini spent several months in Italy in 1911. Luna, a correspondent for *The Springdale News*, shared these thoughts upon Father Bandini's return on October 20, 1911.



Father Bandini Vestment ~ 1911

Photo by Bev Cortiana

[Father Bandini] has been away since February and while in Italy was in communication with many Societies and individuals interested in immigration and colonization. He says he was kept quite busy while over there talking and answering questions and there are many people in Italy who now know there is such a place as Arkansas.

While at Rome, Father Bandini had the rare privilege of being received twice in private audience by the Pope Pius X, who became deeply interested in Father Bandini's colonization work and future plans. On a photograph [Pope Pius X] personally wrote:

"To my beloved son, Rev Peter Bandini, Missionary of the United States of America, and to all the equally dear children of every tongue but especially to the poor Italians confided to his pastoral care, with that the Lord bestow his greatest graces, we heartily impart the Apostolic Benediction from the Vatican, April 27, 1911."



Grazie to Our Donors



Many thanks for these 2005 museum donations.

2003 Queen Concordia Crown, from 105th Tontitown Grape Festival; *by Jessica Pianalto.*

1987 Queen Concordia Crown, from 89th Tontitown Grape Festival; *by Jackie Pellin Williams.*

Toothpick holder, Phone from the old school; *by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan.*

Cheese mold, Prayer book; *by Riley Tessaro.*

Granata Honeymoon Wine bottle; *by Susan Jergensmeyer.*

Also, *Alma Cigainero Hartman* and *Bobbi Lynch* were omitted from last issue's donors list. Our apologies and thanks to you.

1985 car raffle tickets, from the 87th Tontitown Grape Festival; *by Elizabeth Pianalto.*

Apple sack; *by Ellis Graham.*

Pressure Canner; *by Joyce Penzo.*

Tontitown Band Hat, Altar & Rosary Society Ledger; *by 107th Tontitown Grape Festival Committee.*

St. Joseph's Church letterhead and other old paper documents; *by Roy and Jetty Franco.*

Saluti ... continued

In July, the museum joined with the Knights of Columbus to sponsor a bocce tournament and lunch. Twelve teams competed in this first Tontitown Fun Day, and more than 75 people came to play, or watch, or eat, or just enjoy a day of good fun and fellowship. We thank the Knights for having the museum join with them to rediscover the fun of playing bocce. Bocce was brought to Tontitown by the original settlers and is part of our living heritage. We look forward to next year's tournament, and hope that more young people will come to rediscover the game their great-great grandfathers played.

In August, the Grape Festival provided the museum with an opportunity to put its best foot forward. There was a great profile of our museum in the Grape Festival Annual, and the museum responded with expanded hours to give Festival visitors more time to rediscover the history of Tontitown. Those that visited came away with a better understanding of Tontitown's place in history.

Also in August, the Board took the Tontitown Story to share with the residents of Homestyle Assisted Living in Springdale. Board members and the St. Joseph's Church Choir presented a program of music, information, and gifts to lift the spirits of the Homestyle residents.

After an active summer, it's time for the museum's fall activity. The 4th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear will be November 6, 2005. You are invited to come and enjoy the polenta and umedo, the history and photo exhibits, a look at our genealogy, and a visit with old friends. The museum still needs your family information. Please bring anything you have that relates your family to the history of Tontitown. Items would include photos and document information about your family.

The Tontitown Historical Museum Board is looking forward to next year with much anticipation. September 21, 2006 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Tontitown Historical Museum, and activity throughout the year will be planned to celebrate the museum's 20th birthday.

Family Focus ... St. Joseph's Church

Within Her Walls Echo Sounds Of Our Past

By Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan

Born from adversity, founded on faith, Tontitown was established in 1898 by Father Pietro Bandini and forty-five Italian families. It was one of the first Catholic communities in Northwest Arkansas. The first building used for worship was Smith School, which served as the first school, Father Bandini's residence, and their first church. When a picture of St. Joseph, earthly father of Jesus, survived a fire, the new church built in 1901 was named for the saint.

Described in an article from *The Springdale News* as the most beautiful church in the area, St. Joseph's Church, a white frame



Smith School – first school and church in Tontitown
Courtesy Tontitown Historical Museum



St. Joseph's Church ~ 1901
Courtesy Tontitown Historical Museum

structure with a pitched roof, high steeple, and arched windows, surrounded by a white picket fence, appears on a postcard with Father Bandini's photograph in the upper corner. Today this postcard, along with other photographs, is on display in Tontitown Historical Museum.

Synonymous to Tontitown, this beautiful church attracted the eye of visitors, but the true beauty of this edifice was the bond it created between the Italians and their creator. Within her walls they worshiped God, celebrated Mass, received the sacraments, were consoled in their troubles, married their life partner, baptized their children, and paid their last respects to friends and relatives.

Father Bandini celebrated mass in Rogers, Bentonville, Eureka Springs, Fayetteville, and other missions. Through the years, St. Joseph's Church sponsored many missions, given in both English and Italian, with large attendance. Catholics from the mission areas attended services at St. Joseph's when possible, especially Christmas and Easter. Correspondents to *The Springdale News* often described holiday and special services, such as the following excerpts.

Continued next page
Tontitown Storia

St. Joseph's Church ... continued

So many attended Easter services that buggies lined the road in front of St. Joseph Church, in both directions as far as the eye could see.

Not less than a thousand people attended services at Tontitown Easter.

May 5, 1905

As Easter season approaches great preparations are being made for its celebration in St. Joseph's Church. ... To avoid confusion and disorder tickets will be distribute at the gates and presented to the ushers in the vestibule of the church. A small offering of 10 cents will be required of each person who wishes to occupy a seat during the service. All are cordially invited to attend the imposing ceremonies of Easter Sunday.

March 22, 1907

But the true note of glory was reached Easter Sunday morning. ... At the hour set for Solemn High Mass so large was the attendance that practically every seat in the edifice was occupied, the gallery being also crowded and many were compelled to stand for lack of seating accommodations. Yet was such an orderly crowd that not a single inconvenience disturbed the ceremonies.

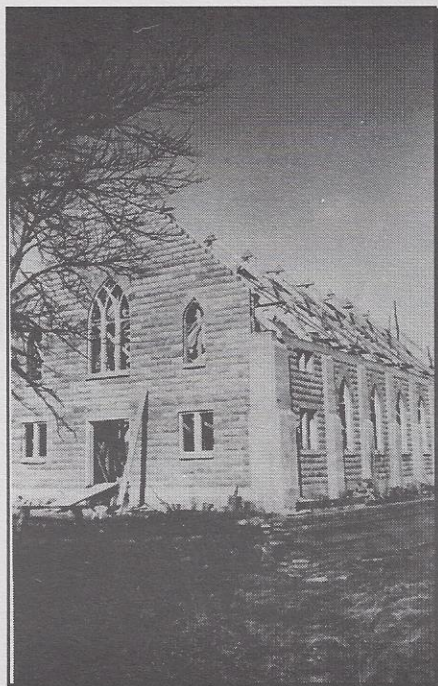
April 5, 1907

On November 29, 1908 a series of lectures on Christian Principles, using the King James version of the Bible, were given over an eight-day period by Rev. Thomas L. Healy, of Nashville, Tenn. Open to every one of whatever denomination or no denomination, all were invited to attend.

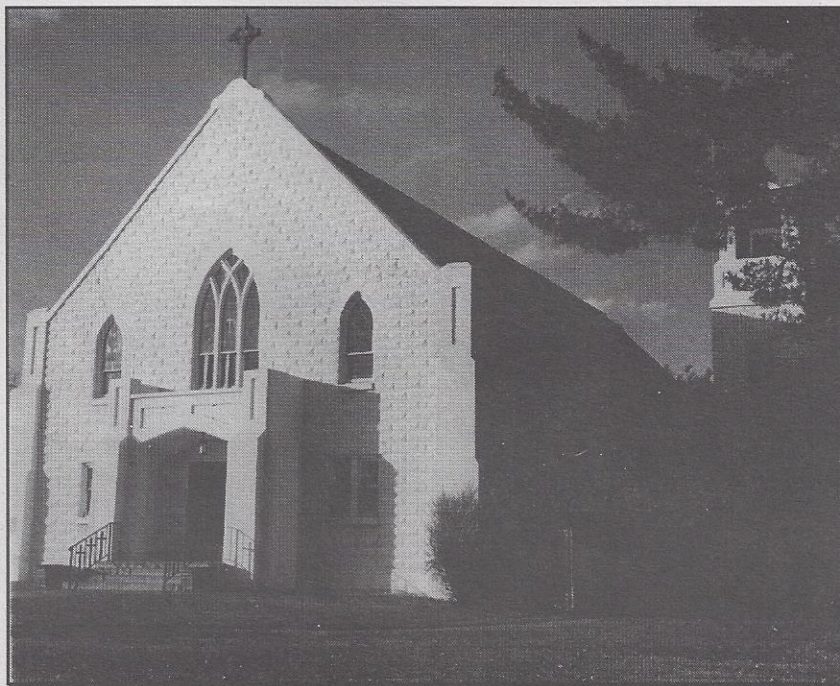
Demetrious

St. Joseph's beautiful church, which served so many, was destroyed by a tornado in the late thirties. Deep into the depression and with World War II on the horizon, St. Joseph's third edifice was not rebuilt until the mid-forties. Church services were conducted in the basement of the Catholic school during those ensuing years.

Again the people of Tontitown came together to build their new church, which today still sits on the corner of Highway 412 and Barrington Road. Everyone worked. The blocks were made by hand; young and old provided free labor. Albano Maestri acted as foreman, and was the only full-time employee. The only accident during construction was a fall from scaffolding by Jim Finn, who suffered, among other injuries a broken leg. A complete record of cost, hours provided by each worker, and materials purchased and donated were kept by Albano, and are preserved in Tontitown Historical Museum.



St. Joseph's Church in progress ~ 1939
Courtesy Tontitown Historical Museum



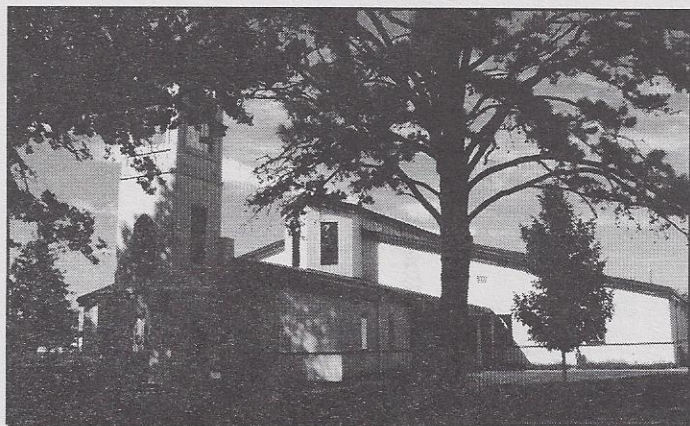
St. Joseph's Church ~ 1973
Photo by Bruce Vaughan; Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History

Continued next page

St. Joseph's Church ... continued

Distance prevented many Catholics, in surrounding communities, from attending church regularly. St. Joseph parish drew many Catholics to move in or near Tontitown and became part of the community.

Today the old St. Joseph's Church has been replaced by a fourth new structure, east of the rectory.



St. Joseph's Church built 1994

The new church with modern stained glass windows, white stucco siding and corrugated green roof, nestled behind a small grove of trees, still provides

parishioners, second through sixth generation descendants of the first Italians who founded Tontitown, a place to worship God, refresh their souls, ask forgiveness, forgive their neighbors, and connect with family and friends. The spirit of their forefathers still lives in voice and attitude of these Italians and keeps St. Joseph's Parish a vibrant community. The rich history of St. Joseph's Catholic Church is shared by almost everyone in Northwest Arkansas.

Like an abandoned friend, our old St. Joseph's Church, such a vital part of our heritage, sits waiting for restoration or demolition. From within her walls echo sounds of our past. A place of refuge, we all recall personal memories. The bell that tolled for mass, the Angelus, or a death within the parish. Our family pew, stained glass windows with family names, serving as altar boys, singing in the choir, where we knelt when we made our first communion, weekday Mass before first class, private prayer and answered petitions. Step inside her doors, stand still and listen to the voices of our past.

Tontitown Genealogy

We were sad that Jan McQuade-Sturm (a Maestri descendant) was unable to make the Grape Festival this year, but glad that she'll be at the Polenta Smear. Jan continues working hard to document Tontitown Genealogy. Stop by the Tontitown Genealogy table at the Polenta Smear and update your family information. Also, check out Jan's website at www.tontitown.net. See you there!

Gioco Buono (Good Game)!



Congratulations! Cheers to first place bocce tournament winners – Kenny Pianalto, Riley Tessaro, Pete Pianalto, and Andy Franco.

Crossword Answers

Across: 1. Ciao 3. Roots 5. Bastianelli 8. Storia 9. Tornado 10. Raviole
Down: 2. Italian 4. Saluti 6. Tradition 7. Rosary

✓ *Mark Your Calendar ...*

2005-2006 Tontitown Historical Museum Events

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Event</i> |
|------------------------------------|---|
| November 6, 2005 | 4th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear Co-sponsored by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 1 – 5 p.m. |
| May 2006 – date to be announced | 2nd Annual Bocce Tournament and Arkansas Heritage Month Museum Celebration – Co-sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Harry Sbanotto Park Bocce Court and Tontitown Historical Museum |
| June – October 2006 | Regular Season Hours Open Saturday's and Sunday's, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 361-2498 or 361-2422. |
| August 8-12, 2006 | 108th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Thursday, August 10 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 11 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 12 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. |

Memorable Words

"Tontitown is now known far and wide and it will forever remain a monument to the memory of Father Bandini, whose work is now ended and whose passing is deeply regretted by all people of Springdale."

*The Springdale News
January 5, 1917*

A Little Italian

| Italian | English |
|----------------|------------------|
| l'autunno | fall |
| il vento | wind |
| la foglia | leaf |
| il rastrello | rake |
| le nuvole | clouds |
| rosario | rosary |
| la storia | history |
| saluti | greetings |
| grazie | thank you |
| ciao | hello or goodbye |

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
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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 Parole Crociate

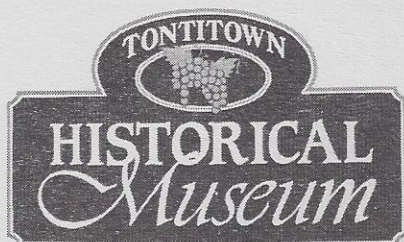
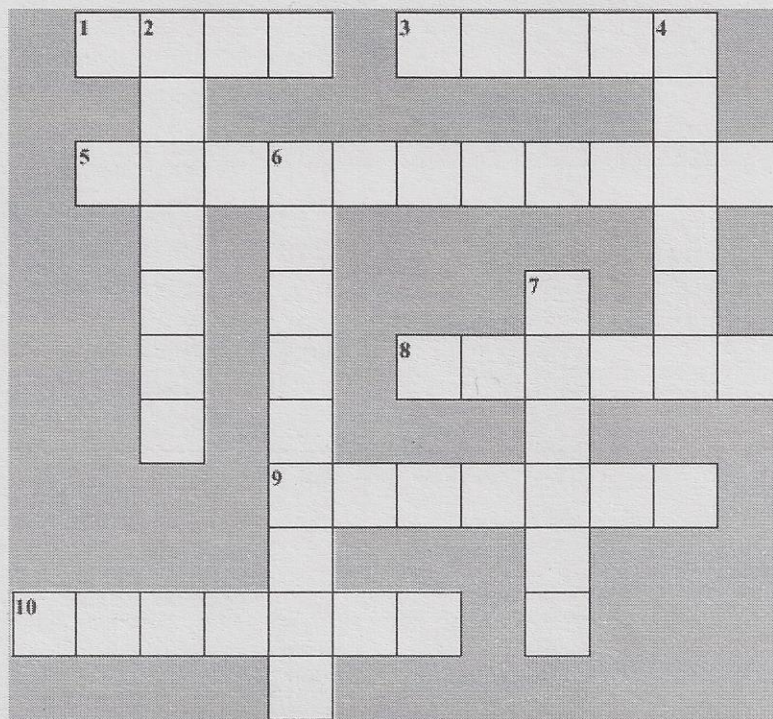
Have some fun with this Tontitown Parole Crociate (Crossword Puzzle). Most clues are from articles in this newsletter. Need a hint? Check *A Little Italian* on page 7. Stumped? Try the answer key on page 6. ☺

Across

- 1 Hello or Goodbye (in Italian)
- 3 Gardens, the _____ of Our Heritage – 2005 AR Heritage Month theme
- 5 Museum house originally belonged to Mary and Zelinda _____
- 8 History (in Italian)
- 9 Weather disaster that destroyed St. Joseph's Church in 1934
- 10 Stuffed pasta

Down

- 2 Tontitown, Now That's _____
- 4 Greetings (in Italian)
- 6 Tontitown Grape Festival, It's about _____
- 7 Catholic prayer beads (rosario in Italian)



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insert follows



First Communion, St. Joseph's Church, Tontitown, May 6, 1956. Left to right, top row: Danny Pellin (server), Father Cheney, Raymond Franco (server). Second row: Rickie Ardemagni (server), ?, ?, Domenico Stolfo, Jerome Fantinel, Joe Piazza (server). Third row: Pete Sbanotto, Tommy Walker, Kay Carnes, Marlene Franco, Onorina Stolfo, Ronnie Schmitz, Melvin Pianalto. Fourth row: Darlene Granata, Phyllis Brunetti, Agatha Ranalli, Alice Della Rosa. Front row: Loyce Ardemagni, Eugene Jaro, Michael Pianalto, Dale Carender, ?, Gene Allen Franco, Marion Pellin, Mike Ceola. *Photo courtesy Pellin/Franco families*

4th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear

Sunday, November 6, 2005, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

St. Joseph's Parish Hall

- Tontitown Historical Museum and Shiloh Museum will be **copying photos and paper items**. Bring all your pictures—we're **especially interested in photos related to church activities**.
- Sample homemade **polenta** (cornmeal mush) and **umedo** (sauce).
- **Photo exhibits** on Tontitown history.

Sponsored by the Tontitown Historical Museum and the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History

For more information, call 361-2498 or 750-8165