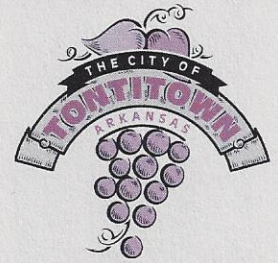


Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2006, Vol. 2, No. 2

Saluti from the Board

It's time to celebrate! The Tontitown Historical Museum turned 20 this year. The museum opened its doors on August 10, 1986, and was dedicated on September 21, 1986.

When the Tontitown City Council approved the purchase and renovation of Mary and Zelinda Bastianelli's house for a city historical museum, many volunteers were eager to help. Henry and Charlotte Piazza spearheaded the effort, and it was largely due to their persistence and dedication that the museum succeeded. Pauline Fiori Franco and Claudine Penzo Pianalto led the effort to collect artifacts, photographs, and documents. The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History provided guidance to index and masterfully display donations. Later, Kathy Pianalto Miller, Robert Serio and Beth Serio provided expert professional help and personal touches to redesign many displays.

In 2002, the Tontitown Preservation Project added new vitality to the museum. With increased fervor to preserve our heritage, volunteers interviewed, recorded, and transcribed over 50 oral history interviews of what life was like in early Tontitown. We plan to develop a book from these personal memories to save our history.

Tontitown Historical Museum has much to celebrate, and will do so during the 5th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Polenta Smear on November 5th. We have a very special program planned, including an Awards Presentation by David Jordan, Chairman of the Arkansas Office of Volunteerism. Although too many to name here, know that our volunteers are the lifeblood of our success and we are deeply grateful to all. Come celebrate with us!



Photos courtesy Brenda Pianalto and Tontitown Historical Museum

Tontitown Historical Museum Dedication September 21, 1986

Top photo, 1986 City Officials; l-r: Joe Roso, Henry Piazza, Gabe Pianalto, Recorder-Treasurer Frances Franco, Mayor Fredie Taldo, Leon Zulpo, and Harry Sbanotto.

Bottom photo, l-r: Charlotte Piazza (behind camera), Claudine Pianalto, Fredie Taldo, Henry Piazza, Representative Jerry Hinshaw, and Pauline Franco, cutting the ribbon.

In This Issue

Curator's Choice, Grazie to our Donors, 2
Family Focus ... Memories of the Bastianelli Family, 3-6
Shiloh Presentation, Mille Grazie, Tontitown Genealogy, 6
Mark Your Calendar and more, 7
Tontitown Cryptoquote, 8

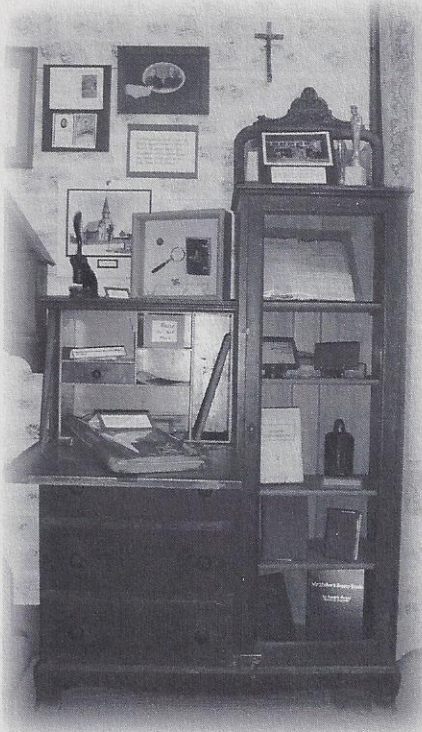


Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza and Bev Cortiana

On this 20th Anniversary of the museum, it's fun to remember the first donated artifact, as well as the most recent one. In 1986, all of the volunteers working to gather artifacts were excited to receive Father Bandini's secretary desk.

It had been housed in Mary and Zelinda Bastianelli's home, and was stored in St. Joseph's church rectory. It provides the perfect piece to display many artifacts from our beloved Fr. Bandini.



Father Bandini's Secretary Desk
Donated by the Bastianelli Family

The most recent museum artifact is a stained-glass donation nameplate from the Giacomo Tessaro family – a very special memento of the first St. Joseph's Catholic Church dedicated in 1899 and destroyed in 1934. Andy Franco built a lovely lighted case for the nameplate. On the wall behind it, you can see photos of the beautiful old church and imagine a visit there.



Name plate from old church
Donated by Riley Tessaro



Grazie to Our Donors



Many thanks for these 2006 museum donations.

Unopened Granata's Uncle Joe Apple Wine and Red Fox Grape Wine; by *Annette Pianalto Jacobs*.

Thread spoolholder made by Angela Lazzari; by *Sister Teresina*.

Large sea shell, gift from the Bastianelli sisters; by *Gloria Mae Maestri Sallis*.

Stained-glass window nameplate from St. Joseph's Church destroyed by fire in 1934; by *Riley Tessaro*.

Family Focus ...

Memories of the Bastianelli Family

By Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan

On November 5th of this year we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Tontitown Historical Museum located in the Bastianelli house, which was built in 1910 and financed by Rose Bastianelli, for her widowed mother and two younger sisters.

Many second and third generation Italians touring the museum reflect on the past ... stirring fond memories of the Bastianelli sisters and their mother. In this house built out of love, and where in shared love for one another, they lived long productive lives. They honored their God, served St. Joseph's Catholic Church, cared for its priest, and were loyal to their many, many friends.

In an article from a September 1910 issue of the *Springdale News*, a Tontitown correspondent wrote, "*Miss Rose Bastianelli the amiable teacher of Sunnyside Ark. is visiting her home here in Tontitown. The other day for the first time, she beheld the pretty little house which owes its existence so largely to her efforts. Her two sisters, Mary and Zelinda, and needless to say her mother are delighted to have her with them. On Sunday a party in her honor, enjoyed a trip to Cave Springs.*"

And two months later, the correspondent wrote, "*Miss Rose Bastianelli is enjoying the comforts of her pretty home. She entertained her many friends at a linen and china shower, and was recipient of many pretty gifts.*"

Paolo Bastianelli sold his home in Chiaravalle, Italy to come to America in 1896. He arrived in New York with his wife Teresa and three daughters – Zelinda, Rose, and Mary. They traveled to America aboard the steamship Kiser Wilhelm. "*The voyage was made in December and was so rough that the sisters remember that as the Christmas rice was being brought into the dining room, a violent lurch caused the waiters to lose their footing and rice spilled everywhere.*"



The Bastianelli Family. Standing, l-r: Mary and Rose. Seated, l-r; Zelinda and their mother, Teresa.

Photo courtesy Tontitown Historical Museum

"It was in New York that the Bastianelli family was first met by a man who would one day shape their destiny . . . the Reverend Father Pietro Bandini, a man of small stature, but with a great and gentle spirit. They traveled with him and other Italian immigrants to Austin Corbin's plantation in Chicot County, Arkansas."

They arrived in Northwest Arkansas in the spring of 1898. "*Springdale --- Springdale,*" came the loud,

Continued next page

Family Focus ... continued

long drawl of the train porter in the spring of 1898, " --- a wonderful place, but no money." *"Those were hard days but I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world,"* Miss Mary remarked.

Farmland was divided and they drew lots and signed a note for their farm. When they arrived at their new location in Northwest Arkansas, Paolo Bastianelli and his extended family shared living quarters with the Papilli and Morsani families in an abandoned barn a mile west of Barrington and Hwy 68.

In an interview for the 68th Annual Grape Festival in August 1966, the Bastianelli sisters spoke of their early time in Tontitown, *"There was only one small cookstove to heat the drafty old building and they stuffed the cracks with newspapers and linens brought from Italy. They used outdoor ovens to bake their bread. They carried their water with an ox-yoke on their shoulders. Some even could balance the water on their heads, like Miss Zelinda. I tried it once and had a headache for a week."* remarked Miss Mary.

Paolo Bastianelli died on March 12, 1899, leaving his widow and daughters to manage the farm. They managed the hard work mostly on their own. Miss Mary once said in an interview, *"... The only charity they ever took was one field plowing from the church congregation."*

"Good linens were the pride of Italian women, and however depleted their other supplies might have been, they never were short of linens." The Bastianelli sisters treasured some that their mother made by hand. She not only wove the heavy oversize sheets but she also made her own thread. Some of the linens date back a century, as reported in the interview. The Italians were met with a guarded welcome and in some cases hostility. But prejudice gave way to curiosity, and curiosity to understanding. *"We were like a show to them at first,"* Miss Mary laughed and then she added, with wisdom, *"The wars made our boys much more broadminded."* Father Bandini reminded them,

"We are here to stay." He told the Springdale merchants, *"Give my people what they want ... they will pay for it."* Apprehension soon gave way to trust.

The Bastianelli sisters were excellent students. They often received premiums for their schoolwork and deportment. In May of 1905, Rose and Mary were awarded books, including works of Whittier, Hawthorne and Dickens, for excellence in studies.

Rose Bastianelli began her teaching career in Sunnyside on January 1, 1907. Pleased with her work, she came home to continue her studies with the Sisters at St. Mary's Academy, where she received her first grade certificate in May 1907, and returned to Sunnyside to continue teaching.

In June of 1912, Emma Papili, Katie Pianalto, Mabel Neale, Mary Bastianelli, and Rose Bastianelli attended the Teachers Institute in Fayetteville. In 1912 the Springdale News reported that Rose Bastianelli had returned to Lake Village Arkansas to continue her teaching career. Mary Bastianelli began her teaching career in Antlers Oklahoma in 1913.

The Bastianelli sisters also worked as domestics for Father Bandini and others. From the Springdale News, by Tontitown correspondent October 12, 1906, *"Master Anthony Papilli, whose sight has been failing for some time left Tuesday for Little Rock where he will attend the state school for the blind. Miss Zelinda Bastianelli took charge of him during the journey. She stopped at Ft. Smith on the return trip to visit friends."*

Their dear friend and mentor, Father Bandini died in January, 1917 and Mary and Zelinda returned to California as domestics for Father Bandini's nephew, Reverend Titus Bandini. They remained with him until his death in 1926.

Mary was engaged to James Zulpo who lost his life during World War 1. He was the love of her life and she never married. Miss Rose married

Continued next page

Tontitown Storia

Family Focus ... continued



Upper left: Tontitown Historical Museum, 1986.

Middle: In front of their house, Zelinda, Mother Teresa, and Mary Bastianelli, ca 1930's. The porch area was enclosed after this photo, to enlarge the inside living space. Notice the roof line of the house and early museum.

Lower right: Tontitown Historical Museum, 2006.

Photos courtesy Brenda Pianalto and Tontitown Historical Museum

Memo Morsani and they built a house just east of the present Bastianelli home. Mrs. Rose Morsani became Post Mistress at Tontitown, a position she held for many years. Mary Bastianelli served as Post Mistress for nine years and qualified for Social Security. Their mother, Teresa Bastianelli died on January 1, 1942.

One of Mary and Zelinda's many friends was Mary Tessaro. Her nephew, Riley Tessaro, shares this story. *"The Bastianelli household had a cistern, but they did not have well water. It was my job to draw two buckets of water from the well behind the convent across the street, every other day for their drinking and cooking."*

Another good friend of the Bastianelli sisters was Josephine Maestri. Her daughter, Gloria Mae, shares her story. When Gloria Mae was a young girl living in Ft. Smith with her mother, she would come to Tontitown to spend the summers. She often stayed with Mary and Zelinda. *"They were set in their ways and the house had to be locked up tight at night. The windows were closed and*

the shades drawn and cotton stuffed in the keyholes. The air was stifling." Gloria loved the sisters, but dreaded summer nights at their home.

From the late forties until the store closed, Miss Mary and Zelinda liked to trade at Lichlyter's in Springdale. Lichlyter's sold dry goods and up scale clothing. When the sisters entered the store, the clerks bided for the chance to wait on them. They were treated like celebrities. I worked next door at the First National Bank and there was excitement in the air during their visits to Springdale.

Miss Zelinda saw her entire family laid to rest; she lived past her 99th birthday and spent her last years in Holland Nursing Home in Springdale. She was near enough for her extended family and loving friends to visit often. During her last years when ask why she had never married, true to form, she replied; *"I never found a man I wanted to spend the rest of my life with."*

Continued next page

Family Focus ... ***continued***

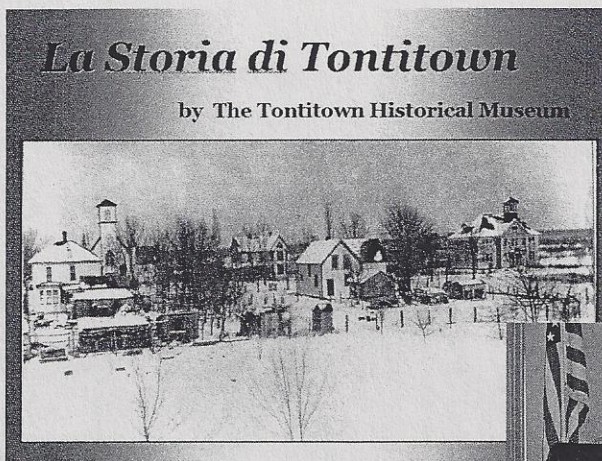
Like most of our ancestors who worked to make a living for their families and saved a little for the future, the Bastianelli sisters were frugal and lived a conservative life. In their will they left a sizeable amount of their savings to their beloved St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Tontitown.

Both Mary and Zelinda were on my Christmas card list. I searched for a card that celebrated Christmas with a nativity scene or a drawing of the Blessed Virgin with Baby Jesus to send them. I still remember their favorite pew in St. Joseph's Church on the east side next to a window.

Many of us remember the Bastianelli sisters and their mother, who represented all that was good about Tontitown. If you have a story about the Bastianelli family or another original settler, come by the Tontitown Historical Museum and share with us.

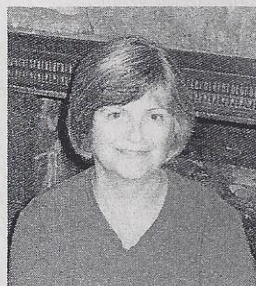
The first settlers of Tontitown, our own Nonos and Nonas, our Fathers and Mothers, were exceptional people. Small details of their lives, their faith, hopes, dreams, and even their eccentricities when shared with us today will help to keep their memory alive. They were a people with a generous spirit, who loved, laughed, and worked together in the belief that through their hard work and dedication their children and future generations would have a better life.

Shiloh Museum Presentation



Tontitown Museum Board members Vanessa Sbanotto and Denise Pellin, pictured left to right, presented "*La Storia di Tontitown (The History of Tontitown)*" at the Shiloh Museum Sandwiched-In noon program on October 18th. Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan developed the PowerPoint presentation using photographs from both Shiloh and Tontitown's museum collections. Mary also wrote the script, which shares the story of our ancestors' immigration from Italy to Father Bandini's founding of Tontitown today. This special program will be presented at the 5th Annual Polenta Smear on November 5th. Don't miss it!

Mille Grazie



The Tontitown Historical Museum Board gives a huge "Thank You" to Pauline Fiori Franco for all her help with the oral interview transcriptions. Pauline played a key role in starting the museum, and continues to help in many ways. Your contributions with the interviews and continued support are greatly appreciated, Pauline!

Tontitown Genealogy

Good news! Jan McQuade-Sturm (Genevieve Maestri Dean's granddaughter) will travel from Colorado again this year to join us at the Polenta Smear. Stop by her **Tontitown Genealogy** table and update your family information.

Also, note that Jan's website has changed. It's now www.tontitown.org. Or, use your username and password and enter through MyFamily.com.

✓ *Mark Your Calendar ...*

2006-2007 Tontitown Historical Museum Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
November 5, 2006	5th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear and 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Tontitown Historical Museum Co-sponsored by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 12:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.
May 2007 – date to be announced	Arkansas Heritage Month Museum Celebration Harry Sbanotto Park and Tontitown Historical Museum
June – October 2007	Regular Season Hours Open Saturday's and Sunday's, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 361-2498 or 361-2422.
August 7-11, 2007	109th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Thursday, August 9 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 10 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 11 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Memorable Words

"Perhaps in time, I can go back again to my other work, but this is so big, this little place!"

Father Pietro Bandini

A Little Italian

Italian	English
venti	twenty
ventesimo	twentieth
anniversario	anniversary
celebrare	to celebrate
la torta	cake
la candela	candle
il gelato	ice cream
il caffè	coffee
lo zucchero	sugar
la panna	cream

Tontitown Historical Museum, 2006 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. We welcome your input. Please submit story ideas or other comments to Newsletter Editor, Bev Cortiana at 479-361-2609.

Tontitown Cryptoquote

Try your hand with this Tontitown Cryptoquote, a puzzle where each letter stands for another letter. Decipher the puzzle and read wise words from Father Bandini, founder of Tontitown. Ready for the solution? Check *Memorable Words* on page 7. ☺

"ABCDEAF GH JGIB G

"*P e r h a p s* _ _ _ _ _ *I*

KEH LM NEKU ELEGH

c a n g o _ _ _ _ _

JM IZ MJDBC YMCU,

_ _ _ _ _ ,

NXJ JDGF GF FM NGL,

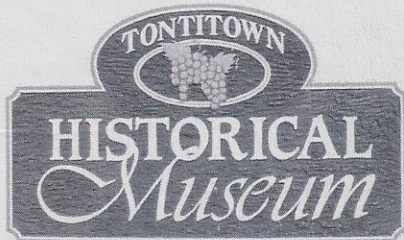
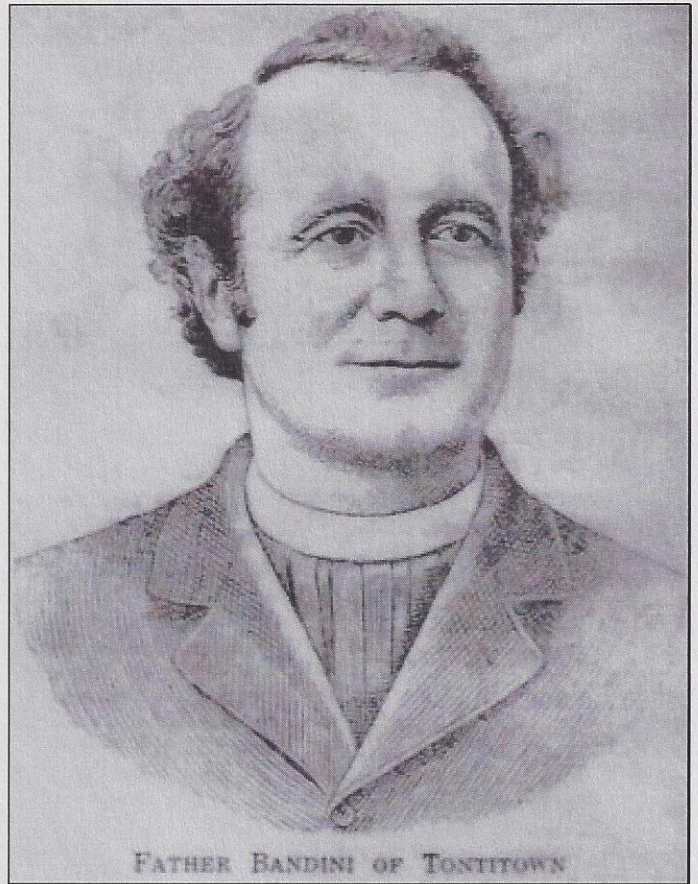
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Fr. Pietro Bandini

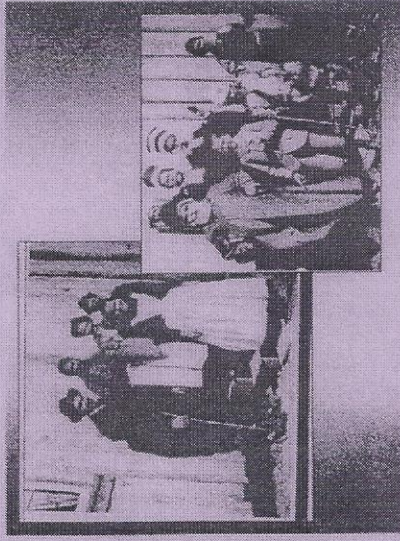


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Tontitown, Arkansas 72770

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Fall 2006, Vol. 2, No. 2
insert follows

You Are Invited to the Tontitown Historical Museum 20th Anniversary Celebration and 5th Annual Polenta Smear

*Please join us November 5, 2006, at 12:30 in the afternoon
at the St. Joseph's Catholic Church Parish Hall for the
5th Annual Polenta Smear Celebrating 20 years
of preserving Tontitown's Rich Heritage.*



*Our special program will begin
promptly at 1:00 with Awards Presentations
and a photographic history of Tontitown
in addition to tastings of Polenta and Umedo!*

*Bring your memories, your pictures, your documents and articles
and join family and friends for an afternoon of Celebration.*

