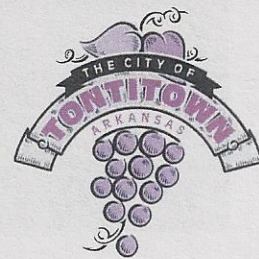


Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Spring 2008, Vol. 4, No. 1

Saluti from the Board

On May 18, 2008, the Tontitown Historical Museum will celebrate Arkansas Heritage Month. This year's theme is *Arkansas's Political Heritage: The People Rule*. During the Tontitown event, the Museum will honor the many public servants who have served our city since 1909. The youth of our city will go through a mock political process of electing a Mayor from their ranks, culminating in an election. Anyone attending the event will be eligible to vote. The candidate with the most votes will assist Mayor Joe Edgmon during the June City Council meeting.

Next year Tontitown will celebrate its centennial. Tontitown was incorporated in 1909, with Father Pietro Bandini serving as the first mayor. While the Italian population of Tontitown was learning English, Father Bandini was also teaching them about the privileges of being an American, and about the state of Arkansas — its history, constitution, and the laws by which it was governed. The state of Arkansas's motto is *Regnot Populus – The People Rule*, and it struck a cord with this small group of Italians. A proud people, they studied for their citizenship papers and learned how important it was to become involved in the political process.

Tontitown has a colorful political history. The Italian landowners did not understand the need to pay their taxes on newly acquired land by a given date. One year in the early 1900's, while Father Bandini was away on business, the taxes fell due. Returning home, Father Bandini learned the taxes had not been paid, and their land was to be auctioned off from the steps of the Court House. Paying the delinquent taxes he requested leniency for the landowners, who would be pressed to pay the penalty on overdue taxes. The judge was not



Father Pietro Bandini, Tontitown's First Mayor
Join Us for an Arkansas Heritage Month Event
Celebrating Tontitown's Political History
May 18 ~ 1-4 p.m. in Harry Sbanotto Park

sympathetic to his request. Returning to Tontitown he informed the people they had to pay the tax penalty, and their only recourse would be to vote against the judge who was running for re-election. They listened to his advice, and the judge lost the election. The new citizens from Tontitown learned the importance of their vote. On another occasion, a Tontitown correspondent to the *Springdale News* wrote that the election on the previous Tuesday had received a poor turnout. He remarked that for those who did not vote, there was to be no criticism on how the elected ran the city.

continued page 2

In This Issue

Curator's Choice, *Saluti from the Board* (con't) , 2
Tontitown Historical Museum Book Project, 3
Traveled Roads, Photo Identification, 4
Tontitown Genealogy, 5
Mille Grazie to Amici Members, 6
Mark Your Calendar, Memorials and more, 7
Amici Membership Form, 8



Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza and Bev Cortiana

After twenty years, we are taking time in 2008 to make needed repairs and renovations to the museum.

First, we've tackled the floor. Our desire was to remove the linoleum and refinish the original hardwood floors. However, because much of the original wood needed replacement, it was more economical to replace the entire floor with new pine hardwoods. It will be beautiful and long lasting. The floor will be completed in May.

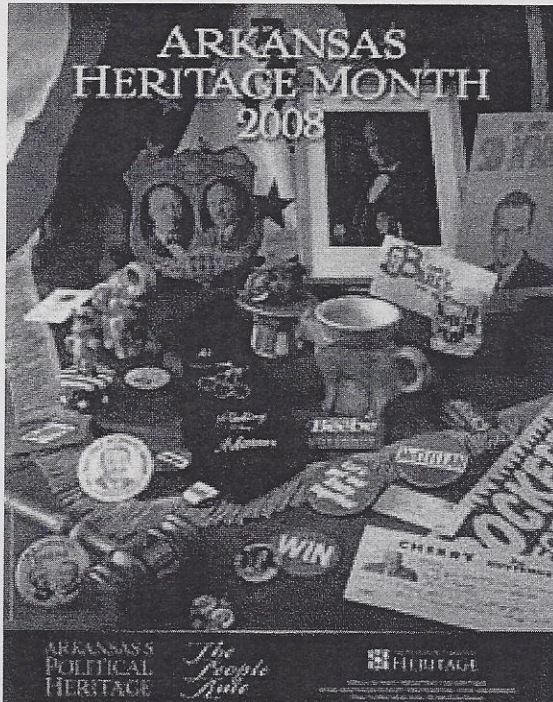
Next, we plan to paint and develop new exhibits. We are blessed and grateful for many generous donations, and we are anxious to include more in displays.

The museum will be closed during these renovations. Watch for the grand reopening of the museum during the 110th Tontitown Grape Festival. We look forward to seeing you then!



Saluti from the Board ... cont'd

by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan



Arkansas Heritage Month 2008 ~ Poster
Arkansas's Political Heritage: *The People Rule*

For Italians of Tontitown, love of the soil and the acquisition of land are like the air they breathe. Most of Tontitown's original land passes from one generation to another. As custodians and caretakers of this land — even though this generation earns a living in almost every field of endeavor, the land is truly where their hearts lay. As proud citizens of Tontitown, this new generation of Italians are accepting growth and welcoming old neighbors and new citizens to Tontitown, as they stretch their borders to this still thriving community.

This year the citizens of Tontitown will vote to elect a new President of the United States. Political years are both exciting and exasperating. Our votes are important. Participating in the political process, starting with small town politics to the highest level of government, the people from every walk of life have a voice with their vote. This privilege is what keeps our country free.

Tontitown Historical Museum Book Project

We continue to gather research on the early days of Tontitown for our book, *Tontitown: The First Twenty Years*. The process is much like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. We know many facts; but some don't quite fit together yet. The work is rewarding, yet very slow.

Recently, author Susan Young and Tontitown Museum Board members Frank Maestri and Mary Maestri Vaughan went to the Diocese of Little Rock to obtain copies of information from priest files. It was a very successful trip, uncovering letters from Father Bandini and other documents from the early 1900's. Below is a copy of a handwritten letter from Father Bandini to Bishop Fitzgerald, in March of 1903. Just imagine the mindset of these leaders as they worked to support their widespread congregations and communities.

Although we hoped to publish the book this year, now we know that goal was too ambitious. We will keep working and keep you posted on our progress, with a new goal of 2009. Thanks in advance for your help, support and patience in the book project.

St. Joseph's Church
P. Bandini, Rector.

Tontitown, Ark., March 10th, 1903

Rt. Rev. Bishop E. Fitzgerald
Little Rock, Ark.

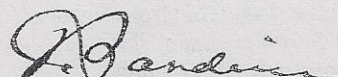
Rt. Rev. dear Bishop,

I received your favor and your check for \$25.00, and I thank your Lordship most sincerely, as your help came just in time. We have at present the most miserable weather, the mud is so deep that we cannot get out of the house, and yet it is raining more or less every day. Farmers begin to weary about their garden, as they have had no chance to plant any seed.

Harrison and all the vast country E. and N. and south of Eureka is supposed to be attended by Eureka. I have myself quite a territory N. and W. of Fayetteville, but there are no places to attend except few times in summer Siloam Springs. I went until now 3 or 4 times a year to Sunnyside, but I hope a priest will be stationed there very soon. Two Italian priests from Italy well-recommended by their Bishops are ready to come down at any moment, only I wish the people of Sunnyside would give me some security that they would pay the honorary to the priest, and then he would come down at once. What your Lordship think would be the best to insure and arrange this affair, so that we may have the priest down in a very short time?

Imploring your blessing I remain

Most obedient servant



Traveled Roads

by Kathy Pianalto Miller

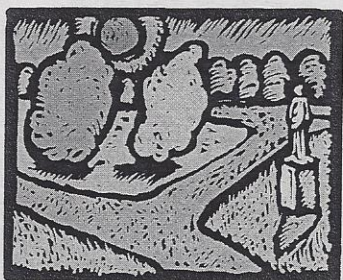
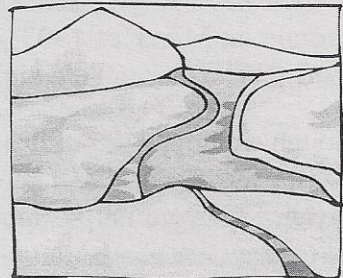
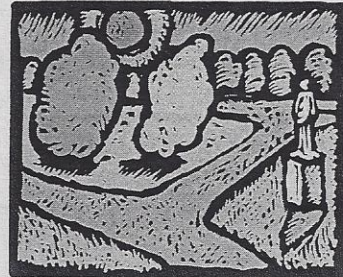
We travel these roads of Italian names
Ardemagni, Mantegani, Bariola, too!
This land where our ancestors worked long ago
This road where gravel once was.

Maestri, Morsani, Mussino, and Granata
Do we still have family on this original land?
This land where the hope of prosperity came true
My hope is for descendants to be prosperous.

Sbanotto, Tessaro, Cortiana, and Sabatini Road
Where our children run and play.
That three-story rock house stands with strength and pride
With a great-great grandson's house by its side.

Penzo, Pozza, Roso, with Taldo Loop.
Oh, my! How this land has changed.
Zulpo, Piazza, and Ranalli names
So many proud children still remain.

Then we have that Pianalto name
They seem to have the most of all.
Some have come and gone through years
With hope of heritage, laughter, and tears.



Identifying Photos

l-r: Tontitown's Dorothy Bersi Kever, Nova Jean Fiori Watson, and Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan with Marie Demeroukas, photo archivist/librarian at Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.

They worked together in the Shiloh Museum Library to document photos from Dorothy's family albums.

Photo Identification

We truly piece history together when people share priceless photographs. The real treasure for the future though is knowing the story behind the photograph – its people, place and time.

If you still have a photograph album with several photos to contribute to the Tontitown and Shiloh museum collections, we encourage you to contact Marie Demeroukas at 479-750-8165 or a Tontitown Historical Museum board member (page 7). We can work with you in Shiloh's offices to ensure that the photos are not duplicates, and to identify the people, places and times. Many thanks for continuing to help us document the Tontitown story.

Tontitown Genealogy ... My passion and a labor of love

by Jan McQuade Sturm

Ciao! Let me introduce myself. I'm Jan McQuade Sturm, great-granddaughter of Albano and Agnes Maestri. I'd like to share some questions that I often receive about my passion of many years – Tontitown Genealogy.

How did you become interested in genealogy for Tontitown?

When my grandfather passed away, I inherited his desk which contained many small scraps of newspaper. I was quite curious that much of this information, marriage, birth and death announcements and obituaries, related to families from Tontitown. While working on my own family tree, I discovered very quickly that those 40 or so original families of Tontitown intermarried. I found it would be easier to develop a family history on each of the families in order to determine who was who.

How much data have you actually collected?

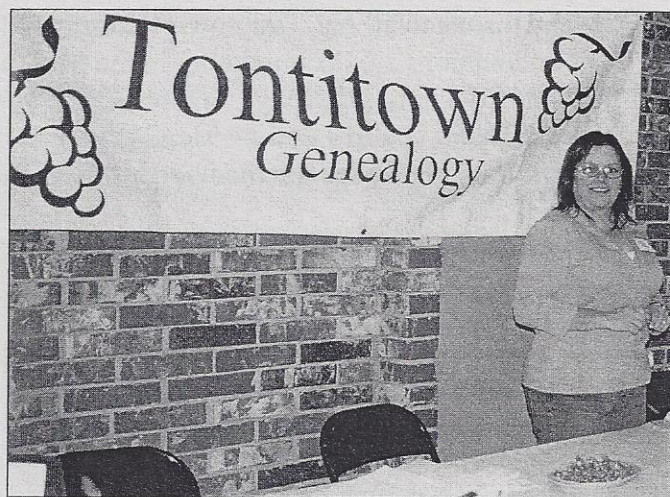
Currently in Tontitown Genealogy there are over 3,600 individuals, and of these 1,212 marriages, spanning 10 generations with 840 different surnames.

And this is all generated from Tontitown?

Yes. Much of this includes information on parents, siblings and children in Italy and throughout the United States, as well as data on immigration, census, vital records, military service, newspaper articles, letters, wills and probate, court documents and much, much more.

What do you plan to do with this information? Will we ever see a book?

Ultimately to have this information available to future generations for their own family tree research would be ideal. Where that information would be located is still to be determined. Most likely it will be through the Tontitown Historical Museum and/or the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.



Jan McQuade Sturm ~ 2007 Polenta Smear

photo by Brenda Pianalto, courtesy Tontitown Historical Museum

As for a book, I have for many years thought that yes, that would be the case. However, the information is constantly being updated. I do know that additional updated editions could be added in the future, but the key is to find a way to protect private information of individuals who are still living. And, “where do you draw the line?” is a tough one to answer. I’ve made good contacts with almost every family. Once this is accomplished, I’ll be in a better position to determine how to get the information out to all those who are interested.

What if someone has just a simple question or wants to contribute information on their family, how would they go about contacting you?

I have a wonderful resource and it is available only to Tontitown families. It is the website www.tontitown.org, and it is password protected, only available to those who are prescreened and have contributed their own family information.

I’ve been on board with the Polenta Smear since the beginning and plan to be there this year as well. I encourage everyone to stop by, see my research and check that the information I have on your family is correct.

Jan can also be contacted at her home in Golden, Colorado at 303.202.1257.



Mille Grazie to Amici Members



Many thanks to all our Tontitown Historical Museum Amici (Friends) charter members. Your donations are accumulating in the Museum Building Fund and will help preserve Tontitown's unique heritage. We welcome your annual Amici renewals, and give a special thank you to Lifetime Members for their one-time generous donations. If you'd like to join, please see the membership form on the back of this newsletter.

Lifetime Members

Richard & Bernadette Ardemagni
Ken & Kathleen Brock
Mike & Bernadette Collins
Frank & Evelyn Maestri
Henry & Charlotte Piazza
Robert & Beth Serio
Dennis & Evelyn Shaw

Sponsor Members

Jack & Becky Alston
Bill & Patricia Ardemagni
Leo Baudino (*deceased March 28, 2008*)
Jim & Sheila Canup
Bev Cortiana
Floyd Maestri
Jim & Kathy Miller
Carolyn Page
Shiloh Museum of Ozark History
Riley & Marie Tessaro
Bruce & Mary Vaughan

Family Members

Kurt & Penny Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Loyce Ardemagni
Dennis & Billie Bariola
Jimmy & Jean Bersi
Bob & Patty Besom
Jimmy Dick Cortiana
Laura Faraci-Weible
Tommy & Zita Greenlee
Oid & Tina Hankins
Leland & Mary Lawrenz
Irvin & Catherine Mantegani
Rosalie Cortiana McGinnis
Thomas & Karla McKinley
Evelyn, Michele & Lance Pellin
Claude & Agatha Penzo
Norbert & Judy Ranalli
Richard & Jennifer Rook
Pete & Elaine Sbanotto

Senior Family Members

Lenor & Betty Brunetti
Roy & Jettie Franco
Zelma & Virgil Franco
Clyde & Patsy Graham
Norris Kruse
Danny & Pat Pellin
Gloria Mae Sallis
Bill & Patricia Samuelson
Frank & Dolores Verucchi
William & Dolores Wilson
Ron & Rita (Toni) Wirts

Individual Members

Enrica Ardemagni
Loretta Brunetti
Sandra Harvey
Sunny Hinshaw
Kara Hooker
Liz Lester
Bryan McEuen
Denise Pellin
Brenda Pianalto
Roger Pianalto
Nova Jean Watson
Kristine Wirts
Steve Wirts
Susan Young

Senior Individual Members

Loyce Ardemagni
Jeanette Burditt
Victor J. Dalla Rosa
Barbara J. Greenlee
Donna Lorch
Claudine Pianalto
Margaret Roso

✓ *Mark Your Calendar ...*

2008 Museum Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
May 18, 2008	Celebrating Tontitown's Political History Harry Sbanotto Park and Tontitown City Hall, 1 – 4 p.m. an Arkansas Heritage Month 2008 Event
Aug – October 2008	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Season Hours Closed for Renovation until the 2008 Grape Festival Open Saturday's and Sunday's, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 361-2498 or 361-2607
August 5-9, 2008	110th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Thursday, August 7 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 8 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 9 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
November 2, 2008	7th 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.

~ Memorials ~

We are grateful for and honored to display
memorial donations in the
Tontitown Historical Museum.

Donations In Loving Memory of ...

Cathy Ardemagni
Cecil Ardemagni
Gene and Irma Taldo Ardemagni
Leo Baudino
Candida Morsani Crane
Albina Ranalli Dalla Rosa
Andy Franco
Russell Greenlee
Clementine Morsani Haney
Lee Wana Bariola Keck
Amerigo Morsani
J.H. Pozza
Danny Watson

Donations In Honor of ...

Paul & Judy Maestri's 50th Wedding Anniversary

Tontitown Historical Museum, 2008 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
Bev Cortiana, President, 479-361-2609
James Riley Tessaro, Vice President, 479-361-2607
Vanessa Sbanotto, Secretary, 479-361-9075
Denise Pellin, Treasurer, 479-751-5771
Elaine Mussino Sbanotto, Membership, 479-524-4982
Ernie Deines, 479.751.1425
Kara Hooker, 479.361.2497
Frank Maestri, 479-751-7393
Kathy Pianalto Miller, 479-361-2472
Joyce Penzo, 479-361-2544
Brenda Pianalto, 479-756-5221
Roger Pianalto, 479-361-2207
Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, 479-751-6347
Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, 479-751-6536
Non-voting Junior Members:
Kara Jo McKinley, 479-361-2134
Kevin Sbanotto, 479-361-9075

Tontitown Storia is published in the Spring and Fall
by the Tontitown Historical Museum Board. Please
submit story ideas or other comments to Newsletter
Editor, Bev Cortiana at 479-361-2609.



Join Tontitown Historical Museum Amici (Friends)

- ☒ Yes, I want to be a member of Tontitown Historical Museum Amici!

Benefits:

- ✓ Satisfaction in supporting the growth of the Tontitown Historical Museum to preserve and protect the heritage of Tontitown.
- ✓ Receive annual membership card.
- ✓ Receive special invitations to museum events, including the Annual Tontitown Reunion and Polenta Smear.

Mail your tax-deductible check to:
Tontitown Historical Museum
P.O. Box 144
Tontitown, AR 72770
(or give it to any Museum Board member)

Annual Membership Levels

- ☐ Individual – \$10
- ☐ Family – \$20
- ☐ Senior Individual – \$8
- ☐ Senior Family – \$15
- ☐ Sponsor – \$50 to \$249
- ☐ Lifetime – \$250+



Name _____

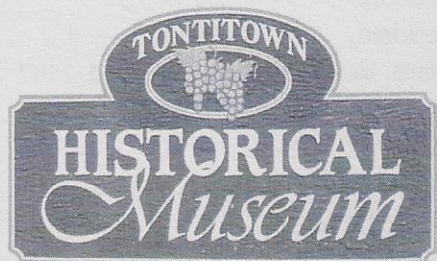
Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

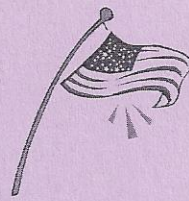


257 E. Henri de Tonti Boulevard
P.O. Box 144
Tontitown, Arkansas 72770

Tontitown Stora
Spring 2008, Vol. 4, No. 1
insert follows



*Tontitown Historical Museum Board
cordially invites you to a fun, free afternoon!*



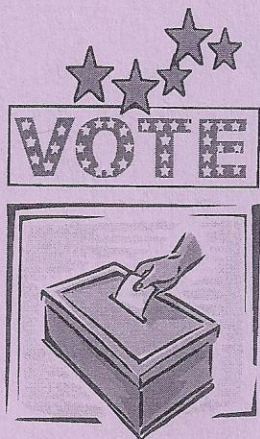
Celebrating Tontitown's Political History



Sunday ~ May 18, 2008

1:00 to 4:00 pm

Harry Sbanotto Park & City Hall



- ☒ Mock youth Mayoral Election
- ☒ Concert by **Silverwings Orchestra** ~
playing Americana and Italian music
(bring a lawn chair or blanket if you like)
- ☒ Tontitown Historical Museum photo
collections on display at City Hall
(Museum closed for renovation)
- ☒ Ranalli's cookies & drinks
- ☒ Lots of old-fashioned visiting & FUN!

*supporting Arkansas Heritage Month 2008
Arkansas's Political Heritage: The People Rule*

~ Cancelled if raining; No rain date. ~

Arkansas Heritage Month 2007 in Tontitown Was Great Fun!

Photos from May 20, 2007 ~ by Brenda Pianalto
The Picnic: Celebrating Tontitown Grape Festivals of Old



Join us this year!

Arkansas Heritage Month 2008
Celebrating Tontitown's Political History
Sunday, May 18 ~ 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Harry Sbanotto Park & City Hall