Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2008, Vol. 4, No. 2

Saluti from the Board

What began as needed floor repair at the beginning of this year, escalated to a complete renovation of the Tontitown Historical Museum. The museum Board of Directors realized that since we had to move all the exhibits to replace the flooring, we had the perfect opportunity to raise the bar on exhibits – and that we did.

As we were going through the renovation process, "it takes a village to renovate a museum," often came to mind. Fortunately, we had an unending set of helping hands in our village. We will name a few, and forgive us if we leave out yours. Willing workers came out of the woodwork at times it seems.

Many thanks to all, including ... John
Dramis and the Dramis Hardwood Floors
crew, Gene Kordsmeir with Complete
Restoration, Rick Pianalto and his crew,
Shane Harrison, Susan Young, Liz Lester,
Beth Lowrey, Curtis Morris, Pat Pellin,
Bryan McEuen, Bruce Vaughan, Ernie
Piazza, Art Penzo, Henry Piazza, Jim Miller,
Lance Miller, Mike Della Rosa, Terra Firma
Garden Club, and of course, all of the
Museum Board Members and Junior Board
Members, and the City Officials for their
support. Countless hours of volunteer time,
as well as paid work went into our project,
and we are so grateful!



Tontitown Historical Museum new exhibits ~ August 2008

The Museum Board of Directors will continue to work to improve collections and research materials. The more we find, the more we appreciate the incredible story we have from our unstoppable *Tontitown ancestors*. We thank *them* most of all, for providing us "our story." Our mission is to ensure that it is never lost and always appreciated. Mille Grazie to all!

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Curator's Choice

by Charlotte Piazza and Denise Pellin



Denise Pellin, Treasurer of the Tontitown Historical Museum Board, shares this story about our most recent museum donation.

As the great granddaughter of Joe and Iginia Cigainero, this is how I imagine the baptismal gown and slip came to be. Please do not take it as fact, just the thoughts of a great granddaughter.

In 1913, Iginia Cigainero discovered she was going to give birth to her first child. She and Joe had been married only a few months when she made this discovery. Iginia and Joe were married on July 16, 1912 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Tontitown.



Alma Cigainero Hartman and Eileen Cigainero Edwards stand by the baptismal gown that they and their siblings wore.

When Iginia made this discovery, she and her sister-in-law Annie Cigainero Pianalto decided to sew a baptismal gown for their children. Using material they had and bought, the two women handmade the gown and slip. Working in unison, the women lovingly labored to create the gown that the child Iginia was carrying would wear to become a member of the church they loved. Within days of being born, Catherine was brought to the church and baptized by Fr. Pietro Bandini, the same priest who had married Iginia and Joe. The couple would go on to have four more children — Eileen, Alma, Madeline, and Lillian.

Mille Grazie ~ Terra Firma Garden Club



Many thanks to Dorothy Morsani and all the Terra Firma Garden Club members for adopting the Tontitown Historical Museum as a project. They provided bulbs, flowers, pots, landscaping, and most recently a red bud tree with mums in the southwest corner of the yard.

We so appreciate their help to make our renovated museum as beautiful on the outside as it is on the inside.

Mille Grazie!



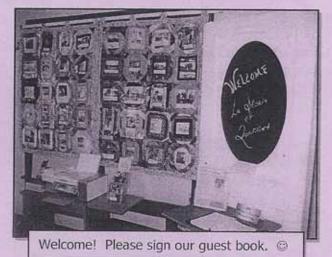
Looking Back and Planning Ahead

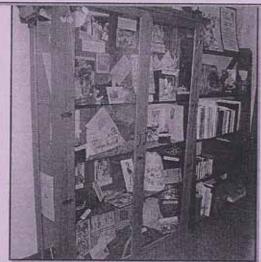
by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan photos by Brenda Pianalto and Bey Cortiana

The Tontitown Historical Museum Board and Curator are proud of the accomplishments made at the museum this year. This newsletter column usually recognizes a person or family that has contributed to the history of Tontitown. In this issue though, we will share a few photographs of our new exhibits in the museum that pay tribute to many deserving families who through faith in the outcome of their efforts overcame adversity to realize their dream.

The Italians immigrants who settled Tontitown came from diverse backgrounds and lived in different regions of Italy. They spoke different dialects, yet despite these obstacles they used their talents to build a community. They were merchants, cannery operators, and farmers. They built and operated a cheese factory and a fruit dryer. There were blacksmiths, cobblers, vintagers, hotel managers, restaurateurs, brick masons, builders, teachers, and men, women and children who worked outside of the community as tradesmen and employees. We pay a special tribute Father Bandini, the good priest who was their spiritual advisor and who later became the first mayor of the community.

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Looking Back and Planning Ahead ... continued

Tontitown was incorporated in 1909. It was a self-sustaining community with a church, school, bank, and Post Office. After just 11 years, the immigrants who settled Tontitown began to gain recognition and sell their wares throughout Arkansas and surrounding States.

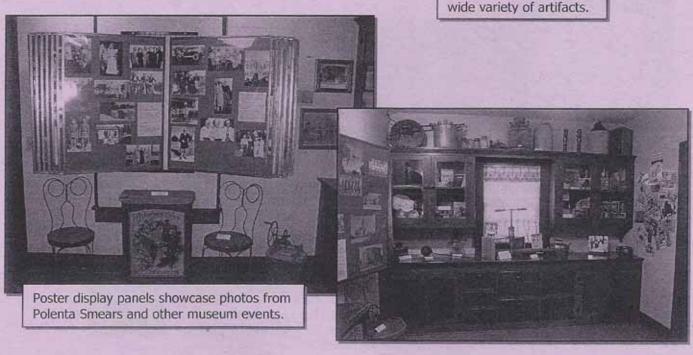
From the beginning there have been many Tontitown citizens and friends who have worked beside those of Italian heritage for the betterment of the whole. Without them Tontitown's story might have taken a different direction. It is humbling to realize what our families endured and accomplished over the last hundred years in search for a better life.

All of us on the Museum Board look forward to seeing you at the Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear on Sunday, November 2. The willingness to share your family history and photographs has not only helped to preserve Tontitown's history but is the catalyst for our book, *Tontitown, the First 20 Years*. The book signing will take place during the 2009 Tontitown Grape Festival.

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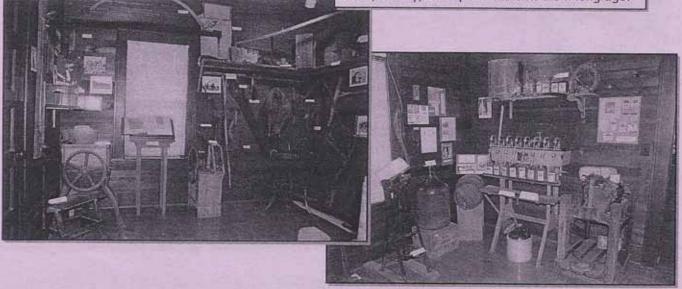


Looking Back and Planning Ahead ... continued

Today in our rapidly expanding population there are more demands that we as individuals conform to the establishment. We, the living descendants of those first Italian families like to think we still have some of the spirit, adventure, faith, integrity, and strength of our ancestors. As the Tontitown Historical Museum continues to research our past and look at better ways to serve the public through an online website and outreach programs, as well as continued research, may history say of us—their endeavor was worthy, their work pure.



The Wood Room is a favorite of many – lots of farm, winery, and sports artifacts from long ago.





Grazie to Our Donors



Many thanks for these recent Tontitown Historical Museum donations.

1960 Queen Concordia trophy; by Carolyn Granata Bowen.

Woodworking tools used to make barrels; by Lenor Brunetti.

Baptismal dress and slip worn by Joe & Iginia Pianalto Cigainero's infants, a nightgown belonging to Iginia Pianalto Cigainero; by Alma Cigainero Hartman and Lillian Cigainero Edwards.

Cel and Mary Ceola Cortiana framed Marriage certificate (1923); by Lillian Cortiana Granata.

1967 Queen Concordia trophy; by Joan Jaro Mussino.

Giuseppe Bariola's Declaration of Intent to become a U.S. Citizen (April 9, 1921); by Joyce Penzo.

Ceola family trunk used to move from Italy; by Lavinia Maestri Zulpo who received it from Cecelia (Chill) Ceola.

Martha Haney Wiggins, daughter of George and Erlinda Pianalto Haney, moved away from Tontitown when she was young and lives in California. She recently celebrated her 90th birthday, and still has Tontitown in her heart.

Martha's grandson, Jamie McConnell from Utah, stopped by the museum while in the area on business the end of July. Even though we were in the midst of the renovation, we had a great visit. And, I met a new cousin!



Jamie took old newsletters and Grape Festival books for Martha. We recently received a lovely handwritten note from her, which touched our hearts.

Grazie, Martha and Jamie ⁽³⁾ Hope to see you soon!

"I never got far enough away to ever forget Tontitown. Tontitown has always been the love of my life. Wonderful place and wonderful people." Charlotte and Henry Piazza had a delightful surprise when they read the August issue of *L'eco Delle Valli* from Italy. On page 10, they saw this familiar magazine, with a lovely message, which we fondly return to our friends in Valli del Pasubio, Vicenza, Italy. It's touching that our families in Italy honor their connections in Tontitown.



A dear regard to our friends in Tontitown, Arkansas, USA



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+

Renew or join today!

Name		
Address		
City		
State	Zip Code	
Phone		
E-mail		

Mark Your Calendar		2008-2009 Museum Events	
Date		Event	
November 2, 2008	7 th 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 2009	Arkansas Heritage Month Celebration - Native Species/Only in Arkansas Event date and time to be announced		
June – October 2009	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Season Hours Open Saturday and Sunday, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 479-361-2498 or 479-361-2607		
August 4-8, 2009	111 th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Thursday, August 6 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 7 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 8 10 a.m. – 7 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 Lynn Maestri Amerigo Morsani Helen Crane Morsani Ed & Adele Bariola Penzo 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
Ernie Deines, Secretary, 479-751-1425
Denise Pellin, Treasurer, 479-751-5771
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: Caroline Franco, 479-361-2157 Michael Hartman, 479-361-2682

Kara Jo McKinley, 479-361-2134

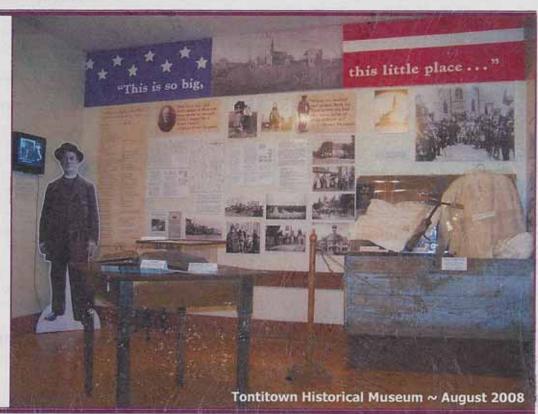
Tontitown Storia is published in the Spring and Fall by the Tontitown Historical Museum Board. Please submit story ideas or other comments to Newsletter

Editor, Bev Cortiana at 479-361-2609.

Honoring Our Ancestors

The Tontitown Historical Museum new exhibits honor our Tontitown settler families in special ways. Come see! During the off-season months, we invite you to schedule an appointment to visit. Please call Charlotte Piazza at 479-361-2498, or Riley Tessaro at 479-361-2607 for a time that is convenient for you.

Also, make plans to stop by the museum before the **Polenta Smear** on November 2nd from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You'll be glad you did!





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



7th Annual Tontitown Reunion & Old-fashioned Polenta Smear Sunday, Nov 2 from 1:00 – 5:00 pm St. Joseph's Parish Hall

Newly renovated Tontitown Historical Museum will be open from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. ~ Come early and visit!

1:00 − 5:00 Copy photos, look at photo displays, visit & laugh, update Tontitown Genealogy, win door prize, have fun! ©

2:30 Short program that you're sure to enjoy –
Stephen Sbanotto's extraordinary musical talent

2:00 - 3:30 Polenta & Umedo, Dessert served



Wanted: Letters from 1898 — 1918 - also Photos/Documents

This year's special search is for family letters between Tontitown and Italy during the early years of Tontitown's settlement, as well as photos and documents for our book, *Tontitown: the First 20 Years*. If you have items to help preserve the early days of Tontitown, please bring them for us to copy.

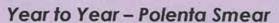


Sponsored by the Tontitown Historical Museum and the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History. For more information, call 361-2498 or 750-8165. No charge.

7th Annual **Tontitown Reunion & Old-fashioned Polenta Smear** Sunday, Nov 2 from 1:00 - 5:00 pm St. Joseph's Parish Hall

"GRAZIE" MIA ANCESTORS

by Loretta Brunetti I'm proud to be an Italian From a Town called Tontitown Where families came and settled And grew grapes from fertile ground. They did all this to make a stand For us to be proud to be on this land So every year when we celebrate We say "GRAZIE" to our ancestors who were so Great It's not about us; it's really about THEM God Bless those who have left us - AMEN and AMEN.



by Loretta Brunetti Every year when we congregate We are making history as we celebrate We are adding to our years of history So to our younger generation it won't be a mystery.

With your help and information that's gathered each year We'll carry on the importance of our yearly Polenta Smear Let's keep coming together with family and friends We need to make sure this Smear never ends.

So every year

See you at the Polenta Smear Sunday ~ November 2, 2008 Don't miss it!

Come early ~ Museum Open ~ 11:30 am - 1:00 pm