

# Tontitown Storia



*The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum*

*Spring 2009, Vol. 5, No. 1*

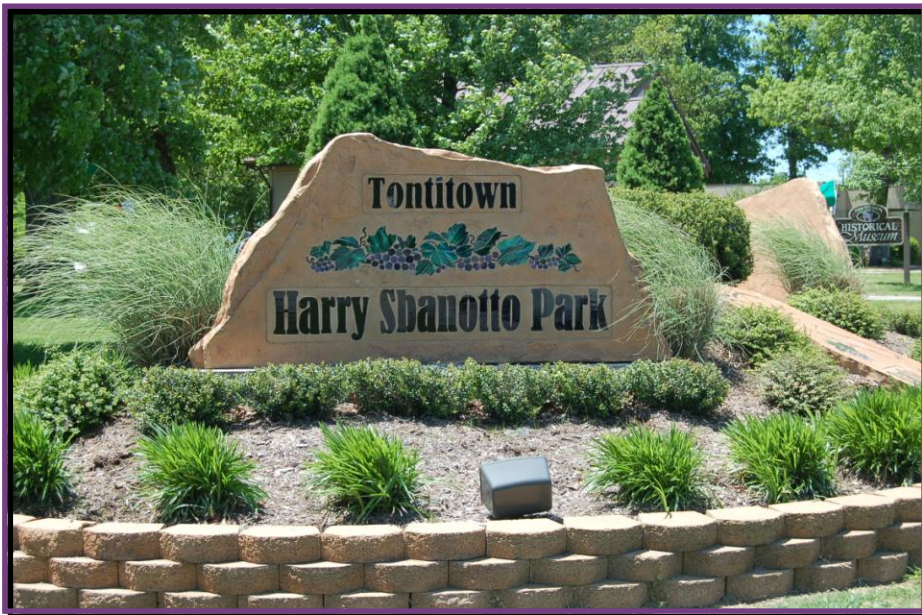
## ***Saluti from the Board***

The story of the founding of Tontitown is an interesting part of Arkansas history and one we are proud to share as we celebrate 100 years of its founding. On May 17<sup>th</sup> join the City of Tontitown, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and the Tontitown Historical Museum as we share a small part of our town's history and traditions. The City of Tontitown encourages all of its citizens to continue to celebrate the many great things we have to be proud of in our city.

In 1898, led by a courageous Catholic priest, Father Pietro Bandini, a small group of Italian immigrants arrived in Northwest Arkansas. By 1909, Tontitown was a thriving community. There was a post office, two hotels, and a railroad.

The Italian immigrants were not all farmers. They were a diverse group with many talents – merchants, carpenters, brick masons, blacksmiths, vintagers, teachers, and many other skills were to be found among the population. The new citizens to America were acquiring more land. When growth dictated it was time to incorporate their village into a town, governed by the United States and the laws set forth by the State of Arkansas, they again turned to Father Bandini to guide them.

Eleven years after the Italians arrived in the area, in October 1909 Tontitown was incorporated. The incorporated area covered 1340 acres, or about two square miles.



***Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration – 1909-2009,  
including Arkansas Heritage Month Willow Tree Plantings,  
in Harry Sbanotto Park on May 17***

*photo by Brenda Pianalto*

Thirty five residents signed a petition asking for the incorporation of Tontitown. Some of the original petitioners are still familiar names in Tontitown – Bandini, Ardemagni, Bariola, Cortiana, Fiori, Fantinel, Lazzari, Maestri, Mantegani, Morsani, Penzo, Pianalto, Piazza, Pozza, Roso, Sbanotto, Taldo, Tessaro, and Zulpo.

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## Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza and Bev Cortiana-McEuen

The first Tontitown City Seal press was donated to the museum by Pete Pianalto. It looks like the press that is on Father Bandini's desk in the photo of Italian Ambassador Baron des Planches' visit to Tontitown in 1905. Come see this and many other artifacts displayed on Father Bandini's desk at the museum. The first city incorporation seal is shown with a palm tree in the center, which was later changed to SEAL 1909.



Correction: The Fall 2008  
Curator's Corner photo  
incorrectly identified Lillian  
Cigainero Edwards as Eileen.  
Our apologies, Lillian.

## 2009 Arkansas Heritage Month ~ Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Heritage



ARKANSAS HERITAGE MONTH 2009

The 2009 Arkansas Heritage Month theme is *Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Heritage*. As part of the Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration, three willow tree branches will be ceremoniously planted in Harry Sbanotto Park. The Yellow Willow tree branches were used in Italy to tie grape vines after pruning. Master Gardener Gail Pianalto and Henry Piazza will share stories and techniques on the use of willow, corn husks, soapweed yucca, and baler twine to tie Tontitown vineyards. Don't miss their presentation and tree plantings scheduled around 3:45 p.m. in the park.



**Grapevine tying  
with willow**



## *Saluti from the Board ... continued*

The ancestors of present day Italians knew the meaning of struggle, first in their mother country and for the next fourteen years in their new country – they were survivors. They realized their dream of living in a town they founded, a town governed by their own elected officials, with ordinances drawn up to protect its citizens. How proud they must have been!

Father Bandini became the first mayor of Tontitown, serving from 1909 until 1913, with the understanding that his tenure of office should last only until the framing of the most essential city ordinances.

The first City Council members passed eight city ordinances in March 1910.

**Ordinance No. 1** designated the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. as the regular meeting of the City Council.

**Ordinance No. 2** levied a 3 mill tax on each dollar of real and personal property assessed within the city limits, to pay for the expenses of the new municipal government.

**Ordinance No. 3** created the office of town marshal to serve as conservator of the peace and street commissioner.

**Ordinances No. 4 through 6** covered the conduct expected from the citizens of Tontitown and the punishment for those who disobeyed the law.

**Ordinance No. 7** levied a tax on any circus, menagerie, or exhibition that came to town. The ordinance did not apply to lectures on history, science, or literature.

**Ordinance No. 8** set out the official city limits.



Over the last 100 years, sixteen dedicated Tontitown citizens have served Tontitown as mayor.

**Father Pietro Bandini ~ 1909-1913**

**Felix Ardemagni ~ 1914-1915, 1921-1927**

**Leo Maestri ~ 1916-1917**

**Frank Baudino ~ 1918-1920**

**Frank Perona ~ 1927-1930, 1935-1936**

**Albano Maestri ~ 1931-1934**

**Cel Cortiana ~ 1936, 1949-1954**

**Claude Morsani ~ 1937-1941**

**Gene Ardemagni ~ 1941-1948**

**Harry Sbanotto ~ 1955-1978**

**Harold Bausinger ~ 1979-1984**

**Fredie Taldo ~ 1985-1999**

**Dan Watson ~ 1999-2005**

**Paul Maestri ~ 2005-2006**

**Steve Smith ~ 2006**

**Joe Edgmon ~ 2007-**

Tontitown enjoyed a short period of prosperity before World War I. Tontitown's sons enlisted and James Zulpo gave his life for his new country. Tontitown's citizens survived the Great Depression and adapted to change. Once again during World War II, Tontitown's young men fought for their country and another son, Virgil Fiori lost his life. During the Viet Nam conflict, Virgil Sabatini died fighting for his country. Today the young men and women of Tontitown still serve in time of conflict.

Modern technology has brought the descendants of the first Italian immigrants into the 21st century. The citizens of Tontitown cannot know what lies ahead, but one thing they are certain of, they are still a caring community and have the respect of new citizens and neighbors to Tontitown. Supported by families and friendships, it's the good times that bring laughter and bonds together anyone who has ever called Tontitown home.

*by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan*

# Tontitown Successful ~ 1906

*L'Avvenire* was a souvenir magazine promoting Tontitown, edited and published by Father Pietro Bandini and D. Danzero on **June 28, 1906**. It sold for 10¢. Pick up a free copy when you visit the Tontitown Historical Museum. Here are a few excerpts.



## ENTRANCE OF TONTITOWN.

A Cordial Welcome.

To Our American Friends, who have come to honor us with your presence on this day, the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, in our attempt to establish a settlement in the northwest corner of the state. We labor against so many disadvantages and yet succeed so far. The success is due largely to the sympathy and interest you have shown us from the very beginning. Moreover it is gratifying to us to state that at the same time you have the opportunity to see how our industrious, temperate and economical people speedily develope [sic] into good American citizens, and take deep interest in the political and social condition of our adopted country. Let us then enjoy together this feast, binding stronger the link of friendship between us, and labor with harmony for the glorious republic of the United States.

It is indeed truly wonderful the progress made by the people of Tontitown. They are indefatigable in their efforts to make their lands blossom as a rose, and if patient industry and the intelligent direction of Father Bandini can advise, in a few years the good people of Washington county will point with pride to Tontitown as one of its most flourishing sections. — *The Evening News*

*The Evening News* is right. Tontitown is slowly but steadily progressing. In the last three years about forty new houses have been built, the number formerly purchased being an insufficiency; to the old orchards have been added some twenty young ones and more than forty five vineyards. A store and some shops have been built, the school building is nearly completed and furnished, a beautiful, substantial Church has been erected, the telephone line extended, a Post Office with a lively Money Order System established; and more than \$60,000 has been paid for land and improvements. The sum displays the energy and good will of the people who have procured this money by the sweat of their brows.

## ***Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration ~ 1909-2009 ~ Family Fun for All!***

***“Celebration of the past calls forth an experience  
and makes this experience ours.”***

*Rev. John C. Dersten, “Bible Day by Day”*

The Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration will begin with Mass at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church at 10:00 a.m. A parade featuring horse-drawn vehicles carrying some of Tontitown’s citizens from the past, in 1909 dress, will originate on North Barrington, and proceed on to Harry Sbanotto Park at 11:00 a.m.

After lunch in the park at noon, opening ceremonies will begin at 1:00 p.m. with the *Star-Spangled Banner*, sung by sixth-generation Italian Ashlyn Brothers, daughter of Zach and Sarah Taldo Brothers. Father Bandini, portrayed by Bob Mello, will speak about his work in Tontitown. *Sempre Padre*, a poem for Tontitown written by Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni, poet laureate of Arkansas, will be presented by her granddaughter, Paula Marinoni. Tontitown Museum Junior Board members will present an encore performance of the *Coffee Pot Song*. After introduction of special guests, there will be more surprise announcements. Come early, you do not want to miss this part of the program.

Silverwings Orchestra will play throughout the afternoon, so bring your blankets, lawn chairs and umbrellas and enjoy the music.

At 3:00 p.m., our Tontitown Grape Festival Queens will be honored and a special photo taken.

We have planned something for everyone. There will be free cookies, ice cream and soft drinks. Games and contests are planned for young and old. Test your skills – you may win a prize!

Experienced bocce players will give demonstrations and lessons. Come learn how this traditional game is played.

Jan McQuade-Sturm will be present to share her many years of Tontitown genealogy. Stop by for a visit and share any new information you have about your family genealogy.

The museum will be open for tours throughout the afternoon. Stop by and see our new artifacts and our recently renovated facilities.

The last event of the afternoon will be a symbolic dedication and planting of three willow trees in the park. How many of you know how the Willow Tree played a part in Tontitown’s history? (See page 2.) This willow planting by Gail Pianalto and Henry Piazza is a 2009 Arkansas Heritage Month activity with the theme, *Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Resources*.

Bring your family and join us on a trip into Tontitown’s past and a look into her future. It will be a fun-filled day you won’t want to miss!



After eight years of research, Tontitown Historical Museum with the support of the City of Tontitown, is publishing a book entitled *So Big, This Little Place: The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917*. Authored by Susan Young, a fifth-generation native to the Ozarks born in Fayetteville, Susan has been in love with Tontitown since her early childhood. She now works as Outreach Coordinator for the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale, Arkansas. The book will be available in August, and there will be a book signing during the Tontitown Grape Festival. The book is the result of thousands of hours of research and is something everyone in the area will cherish for years to come.

## Tontitown Pride & Humor ~ 1906

“Is the Italian a desirable citizen? He certainly is. He is sober, thrifty, economical and law abiding. He loves his family, its honor is as dear to him as the apple of his eye, and he knows how to protect and to defend it. He is an expert fruit grower. All he needs is a little encouragement. Give him the land and a good priest, and he will come to stay.”

by Western Watchman, *L'Avvenire*, June 28, 1906.

Enjoy these prideful and fun quips that were printed in Italian in the *L'Avvenire*.



### Tra Maestro e Scolaro.

(M) Quali sono le tre citta' piu grandi degli stati uniti?

(S) New York, Chicago, and Tontitown.

### Between Teacher and Student.

(T) What three cities are greatest in the United States?

(S) New York, Chicago, and Tontitown.

### Tra Amici.

Come e' che sei divenuto cosi grasso?

Come non lo sai?

O passoto l' Estate a Tontitown.

### Among Friends.

How is that you've become so fat?

Don't you know it?

Spending the summer in Tontitown.



## 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 \_\_\_\_\_



| ✓ <b>Mark Your Calendar ...</b> |  | <b>2009 Museum Events</b>   |  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Date</b>                     |  | <b>Event</b>  |  |
| May 17, 2009                    |  | <b>Special Event! Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration, with 2009 Arkansas Heritage Month Willow Tree Plantings</b><br>St. Joseph's Catholic Church and Harry Sbanotto Park,<br>10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.     |  |
| June – October 2009             |  | <b>Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Season Hours</b><br>Open Saturday's and Sunday's, 1 – 4 p.m.<br>or by special appointment, call 361-2498 or 361-2607  |  |
| August 4-8, 2009                |  | <b>111<sup>th</sup> Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition</b><br>Thursday, August 6            1 – 4 p.m.<br>Friday, August 7               10 a.m. – 7 p.m.<br>Saturday, August 8            10 a.m. – 7 p.m. |  |
| November 8, 2009                |  | <b>8<sup>th</sup> Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear</b><br><b>Co-sponsored by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History</b><br>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  
Lillian Cortiana Granata  
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 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

## ***Tontitown Historical Museum, 2009 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  
Denise Pellin, President, 479-751-5771  
James Riley Tessaro, Vice President, 479-361-2607  
Ernie Deines, Secretary, 479-751-1425  
Bev Cortiana-McEuen, Treasurer, 479-361-2609  
Cathy Mantegani, Membership, 479-306-4364  
Jennifer DeMartino, Historian, 479-587-1687  
Frank Maestri, 479-751-7393  
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, 479-361-2692  
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-McEuen at 479-361-2609.

## ***Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration ~ 1909-2009***



Join us on May 17<sup>th</sup> when the City of Tontitown, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and Tontitown Historical Museum team to present the *Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration* in Harry Sbanotto Park. Highlights of the afternoon activities to honor our city's past and future are:

1:00 ~ Special Program, with Father Bandini portrayed by Bob Mello and lots more!

2:00 – 4:00 ~ Silverwings Orchestra, Games for all, Museum tours, Bocce, Queen Concordia photo, CY Players, Tontitown Genealogy, Willow tree planting, Free refreshments – Fun, Fun, Fun!



Established in 1898



**Jan McQuade-Sturm ~ Tontitown Genealogy**



**Silverwings Orchestra**



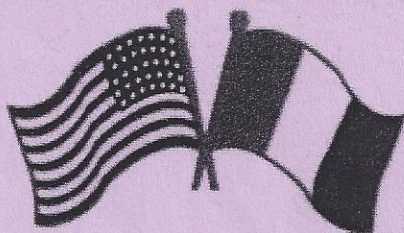
**257 E. Henri de Tonti Boulevard  
P.O. Box 144  
Tontitown, Arkansas 72770**



*Tontitown Storia*  
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insert follows



**Family  
Friendly  
Fun**



**Free  
Ice Cream  
Soft Drinks  
Cookies**

# **Join us in celebration of Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial 1909-2009**

**Sunday, May 17th  
Harry Sbanotto Park**

**11:00**

Join or watch the parade, with some of Tontitown's most illustrious citizens from the past, in period dress from 1909.

Parade starts at the Knights of Columbus Hall and travels north on Barrington to Harry Sbanotto Park.



**1:00 - 2:00  
Program**

**2:00 - 4:00**

**Silverwings Orchestra**

Bring a Blanket & Lawnchair & Enjoy!



**Bocce Ball**

- Visit with Past Grape Festival Queens
- Symbolic Dedication & Planting of 3 Willow Trees in the Park at 3:45
- Museum Tours & much more...

 **Comic Performance  
by  
Museum Junior Board  
Members**

## **GAMES FOR PRIZES**

**Sack Races  
Flip Pancakes  
Horseshoes and more...**

**Join us for a trip into  
Tontitown's Past and a  
Look into her Future!**





# ***Incorporation of Tontitown Centennial Celebration***

***Sunday ~ May 17, 2009***

***Harry Sbanotto Park***



Established in 1898

**10:00 a.m.**

**Mass at St. Joseph's** *(note special time)*

**11:00 a.m.**

**Parade**

Parade starts at Knights of Columbus Hall, north on Barrington Road to Harry Sbanotto Park. Watch or join the parade, with some of Tontitown's most illustrious citizens from the past, in period dress from 1909.

*Family Fun  
for all!*

**12:00 p.m.**

**Spaghetti Dinner & Rolls in the Park \***

**1:00 p.m.**

**Special Program below & MORE \***

- ❖ *Star-Spangled Banner* by Ashland Brothers, daughter of Zach & Sarah Taldo Brothers
- ❖ Wisdom from Father Bandini, portrayed by Bob Mello
- ❖ *Sempre Padre*, read by granddaughter Paula Marinoni
- ❖ Special Announcements from Msgr. Mancini and Honorary Guests
- ❖ Encore performance of the *Coffee Pot Song* by Tontitown Museum Jr. Board Members

*Get your souvenir scroll of  
the Petition to Incorporate  
signed by our ancestors!*

**2:00 - 4:00 p.m.**

**Lots of Activities for all**

- ❖ *Silverwings Orchestra* performs Italian & Americana music
- ❖ Jan McQuade-Sturm with **Tontitown Genealogy** available \*
- ❖ **Bocce** demonstrations and lessons
- ❖ Tontitown Historical Museum open for tours
- ❖ Park games with **PRIZES!** ... sack races, pancake races, horseshoes, MORE!

*Cookies, Ice Cream  
& Drinks Provided*

*Games for  
all ages!*

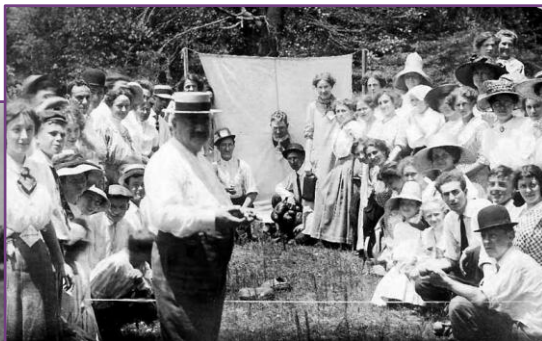
**3:00 p.m.**

**Presentation & Photo of Grape Festival Queens \***

**3:45 p.m.**

**Willow Tree Plantings \***

Gail Pianalto and Henry Piazza demonstrate willow tying of grapevines, and ceremoniously plant three willow trees. This is an Arkansas Heritage Month Event, the theme is *Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Resources*.



*Planned by the City of Tontitown, St. Joseph's Catholic Church and Tontitown Historical Museum.*

*\* In case of rain, these events will be held in St. Joseph's Parish Hall.*

