

Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2009, Vol. 5, No. 2

Saluti from the Board

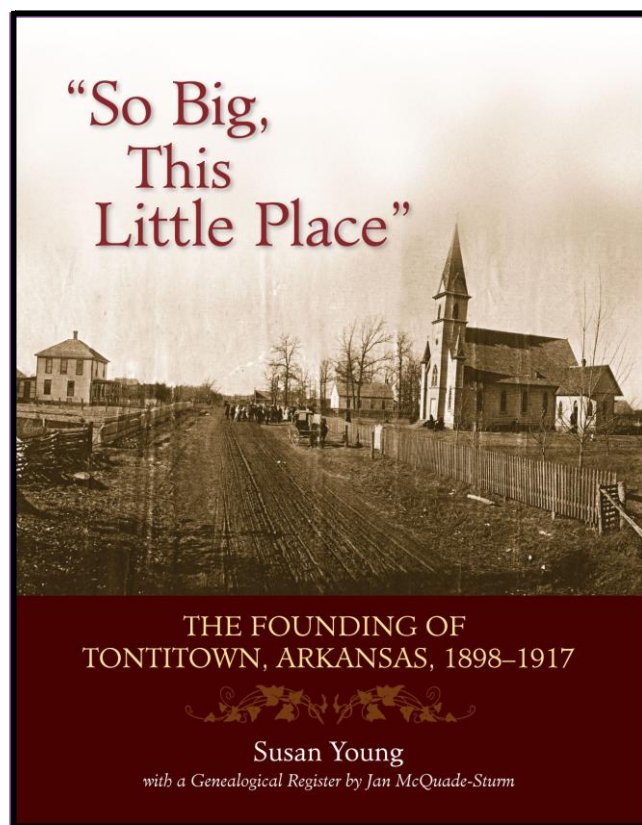
It's a dream come true. After years of discussion and two years of intense research sponsored by the Tontitown Historical Museum, the book is here!

Yes, "*So Big, This Little Place*," *The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917*, authored by Susan Young, outreach coordinator at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, with a genealogical register by Jan McQuade-Sturm, was released at the 111th Tontitown Grape Festival in August. Susan and Jan were on deck at the festival for three days to autograph books. They had a steady stream of people anxious to get the book, and to share their personal family connections to Tontitown, or their personal interest in the unique Tontitown story. The Tontitown Historical Museum book booth was a buzz of activity, and it was an exciting three days for all.

"*So Big, This Little Place*" far exceeds the Board's expectations. Our wish list included a pretty, coffee-table book filled with photographs and stories of the birth and early years of Tontitown. It is all that and more. It is a hardback book with a lovely book jacket, designed by Liz Lester. It has nice glossy paper, with a look that first invites you to peruse the 100+ large, high-quality photographs, so detailed that you can see the pioneering spirits of our ancestor's faces, and then to delve into all 177 pages. It includes maps of family origin and original land purchases. Susan has received scholarly acclaim for her thorough and fully documented research, and the book has been requested by several state libraries.

The thank you's are many. Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan got the ball rolling by spending hours recording the Tontitown Correspondent's columns from the *Springdale News* from 1901 to 1917. Susan Young once said that Mary and Nova Jean Fiori Watson came into her office like "two little tornadoes," seeking help with "a book on Tontitown's history." Their enthusiasm and passion for preserving Tontitown history, along with Curator Charlotte Piazza, is unmatched and spread to all the Board. Brenda Pianalto's helping hands and photographic expertise always play an important role.

continued page 5



"So Big, This Little Place"
The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917
by author Susan Young and
genealogist Jan McQuade-Sturm

"So Big, This Little Place" is a good history of the early years of Tontitown. That doesn't do it justice really. It blows me away – how good it is!

~ Curator Charlotte Piazza

In This Issue

Curator's Choice, Museum Donations, 2
Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri, 3-4, 7-10
Inside Front Jacket, Saluti con't, Preface, 5
What folks are saying, For You So Far Away, 6
Mark Your Calendar, Donations, 2009 Museum Board, 11



Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza

The many bells the ol' Tontitown school had! The bell that was rung in the entry, hung in the steeple, with a rope dangling down through a hole in the entry. A knot was tied onto the end to grab and pull hard for a good swing and a loud deep ... Bong! Bong!

One bell was found in the attic of the old school. This bell was placed in a brick structure in front of Tontitown City Hall during America's Centennial on July 4, 1976 under Mayor Harry Sbanotto. I recall it was rung at 12:00 p.m. on July 4th, as were many bells in churches and city halls all across the country at this same time.

At that time, a hand-held bell was used to welcome students to daily class or to bring students in from recess or lunch. In an interview with Mrs. Norina Stolfi, students saved this hand-held school bell from the school fire in the early 1930's. Also, Mrs. Stolfi remembered that the bell was rung a certain way to get the full ring tone to hurry wayward students along. Many thanks to Marlene Piazza for her help in getting the ol' school bell for the museum.

During off-season months, visit our museum by special appointment to see this bell and other school-related artifacts and pictures. Call me at 361-2498 to schedule a convenient time for you.



Hand-held School Bell
Acquired by Marlene Franco Piazza



Grazie to Our Donors



Many thanks for these 2009 museum donations.

Victor (High) Ceola's wine barrel augers; *by Pete Sbanotto.*

Old school desk (not from Tontitown), to be used as museum prop; *by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan.*

Hand-stitched cotton quilt, 1941-43; *by Frank & Clara Fiori Pianalto estate, Robert I. Pianalto and Loretta Pianalto Pappani.*

Wooden and glass display case; *by Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.*

Cel Cortiana's Day Book and Order Register, including entries from his mayoral term; *by Darlene Granata Johnston for Lillian Cortiana Granata family.*

Family Focus ... Aldo & Mary Maestri

Founders of Mary Maestri's Restaurant, since 1923 and still strong

By Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, Niece

Aldo and Mary Maestri played a vital role in Tontitown's history. Aldo was born on March 11, 1878 in Zocca, Modena, Italy to Pier Antonio and Melania Maestri. Antonio and Melania, with their children Ciro, Leo, Aldo, Albano, Grace, and Kate, were among the first group of Italian immigrants brought to the United States by Austin Corbin and Emanuele Ruspoli to work on Austin Corbin's cotton Sunnyside Plantation in Chicot County, Arkansas. They arrived with the first group of Italian immigrants on the ship *Chateau Yquem*. The ship docked in New Orleans on November 19, 1895.

The Maestri's settled in Sunnyside, Arkansas, and along with other Italian immigrants, over the next two years shared the disappointments and illnesses in Sunnyside. In 1897, Antonio was one of the men who went with Father Bandini to scout for new land. In 1898, Antonio and Melania Maestri and their children were one of the 40 families who along with Father Bandini founded Tontitown, Arkansas.



Aldo Maestri picks garlic cloves from his garlic tree.

Photo courtesy Dan Maestri / Tontitown Historical Museum

Mary Ritter Quinn was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1888. Mary lost her parents when she was very young. Her father died from injuries sustained in a hotel fire in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her mother died soon afterwards and she was adopted by an Irish family named Quinn. When Mary was 16 she was living in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Mary was invited by friends to attend the Tontitown "Picnic" on June 29, 1904.

June 1904, Springdale News ~
Mr. Goose, Tontitown Correspondent wrote:

Remember the Picnic; we are going to have fine oratory; the best games and the best delicacies that you may expect any place.

July 5. The rains came and nearly spoiled our picnic. Our picnic was a great success, the crowd was immense. Among the presents raffled off was a handsome pearl-handled pocket knife to ticket # 4 Virgil Pritchard.

Mary gave an interview to the *Northwest Arkansas Times* on January 18, 1978, when she was 90.

Her memory served her well as she recalled the events of her first Tontitown Picnic.

"It was just a one-day affair then. Of course it had rained all day long so we had to stay cooped up most of the day." But it was at the "Picnic" that she met Aldo Maestri. Mary laughs when remembering. "We were selling chances on a pearl-handled knife. Father Bandini had given all of us something to do. We saw a bunch of boys over at the ice cream stand and thought that would be a good place to sell some chances. My husband was fine looking. He had a black moustache and beautiful black hair. Oh, he was so good looking." When we left my friend said, "We did sell a lot of chances didn't we?" And I said, "Yes, and that man with the black moustache is the man I'm going to marry."

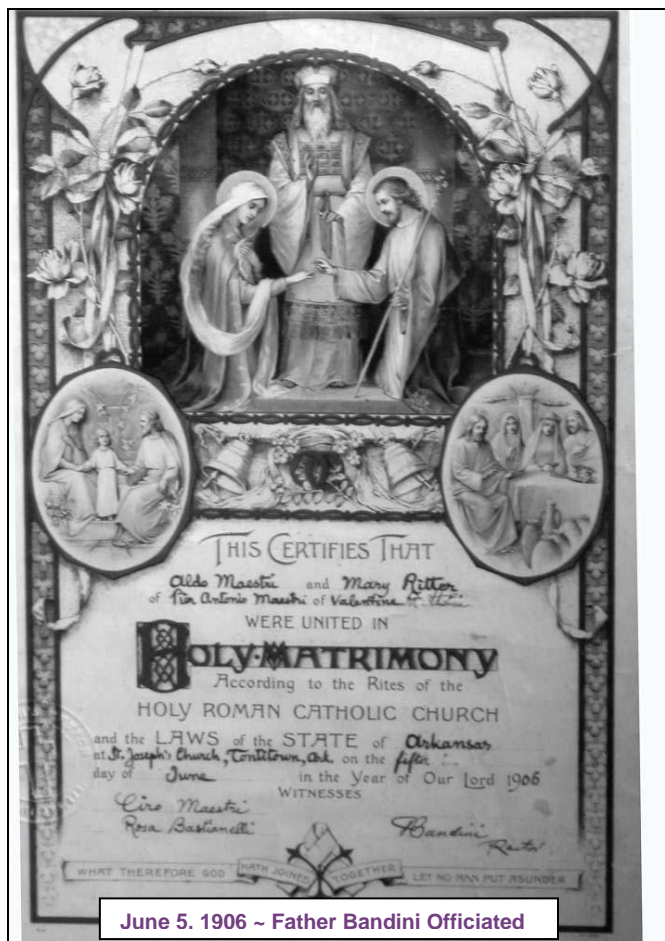
Aldo Maestri wasn't the only one Mary fell in love with that day; she also fell in love with Tontitown. Staying with the many friends she had made, Mary visited Tontitown often over the next two years.

continued next page

Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri ... continued

June 8, 1906, Springdale News ~
Morviccia, Tontitown Correspondent wrote:

Aldo Maestri and Miss Mary Ritter were united in Holy bonds of marriage on Tuesday morning June 5th at the church of St. Joseph. Rev. Father Bandini officiated and the ceremony was followed by a Nuptial Mass. After the celebration of marriage the happy couple went to the groom's house, followed by their numerous friends and partook of a scrumptious dinner. That God bless them with peace, happiness, joy and mutual love for all their days is the good wish of all their friends.



Aldo Maestri and Mary Ritter Marriage Certificate,
Witnessed by Ciro Maestri and Rose Bastianelli,
Photo courtesy Dan Maestri / Tontitown Historical Museum

Aldo and Mary Maestri moved in with Aldo's parents and Mary found it easier to learn Italian than to try to teach her in-laws English. Mary learned to cook Italian food from Mrs. Maestri. This was not without struggles. Mary did not know what upset Mrs. Maestri while she watched Mary roll the pasta. Asking Aldo, she learned that her pasta was uneven and lumpy. Mama Maestri said, "It looked like a possum hide, a leg here and a tail there."

With determination Mary finally learned to roll pasta to perfection. Aldo and Mary took care of his parents until their death. Mama Maestri always wondered what she would do after Papa Maestri was gone. She died 14 days before he did in 1917.

Aldo and Mary were very active in the social structure of Tontitown, especially those centered on St. Joseph Church. Parties and dances were a release from hard work, and a way to socialize with neighbors and friends. The new citizens of Tontitown worked hard. Families were often separated for long periods as many worked outside the town in order to earn a living. Aldo and his brothers were among those who traveled to Illinois, Oklahoma, and places around the State of Arkansas to work. Aldo and Mary are mentioned often in Tontitown correspondent's articles that describe the social activities of Tontitown in the *Springdale News*.

January 30, 1909, Springdale News
Luna, Tontitown Correspondent wrote:

The evening of February 3rd is to be a gala night at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Aldo Maestri, whose house is at the milepost of Tontitown. Some of the ladies of the Rosary Society have united to give an evening of entertaining pleasure for the benefit of the church. As the program is intended to please those who, beyond the first flush of youth, love to dwell on the past and recall tales of other days, to sit down quietly and play games or look on at others enjoying the mad pranks of youthful foolishness, the Committee has planned to cater to the taste of the matron, "fair, fat and forty." As well as to that of her sylph-like daughter of sweet sixteen. Of course, Papa will be present to smile upon the lady of his choice, while we know the young men cannot resist the charms of the Tontitown bells. Numerous games are to be played among which may be mentioned Flinch and Pit, besides some kind of monkey show. Though the older folks will find entertainment to their taste, the younger members who may come will take part in the pleasure of dancing. A collation will be served for which each couple will be charged twenty-five cents. As the older folks prefer other edibles rather than cake, a spicy menu will be offered. A gathering is expected and all are invited.

In 1908, the *Springdale News* announced that Mary had undergone an operation and was recovering rapidly.

continued page 7

"So Big, This Little Place" ~ by Susan Young

Inside Front Cover

"I went into a strange and beautiful country that I had never seen before, and I found my people happy, contented, prosperous, upright, respected citizens, filled with a fond remembrance of their mother country, yet imbued and inspired with a devotion to their adopted country. Italy, the place of their birth, was their mother, while America was their wife. They have reverence for the former, but love for the latter."

—Baron Edmundo des Planches,
Italian Ambassador to the United States,
after a visit to Tontitown, Arkansas in 1905



Meeting the Ambassador at St. Joseph's Church, 1905
Courtesy Bastianelli Collection / Tontitown Historical Museum

By the time Ambassador des Planches came to Tontitown, the Italian community nestled in the Arkansas Ozarks was already receiving national and international attention as a model of successful immigration. The town's idyllic rural setting was in direct contrast to the crowded tenements of East Coast cities where so many Italians settled upon their arrival in America.

"So Big, This Little Place" is about those early, attention-getting years of Tontitown, Arkansas. The time period chosen —1898 to 1917—mirrors the time spent in Tontitown by Father Pietro Bandini, the town's spiritual and secular leader. Bandini's role in the establishment and early success of Tontitown cannot be overstated, but the story is certainly not his alone. Many Italian families helped lay the foundation for the thriving settlement with a rich heritage that survives today.

Drawing on columns written by Tontitown correspondents to the *Springdale (Arkansas) News*, richly illustrated with photographs of community life, and complemented by Jan McQuade-Sturm's genealogical register of the early Tontitown families, "So Big, This Little Place" offers a testimony to the power of faith, hope, perseverance, and the American Dream.

Saluti ... cont'd from page 1

Book Committee members who worked hours alongside Susan were Denise Pellin, Frank Maestri, Mary Vaughan, and Ernie Deines. Jan McQuade-Sturm put in endless hours to tailor the Genealogical Register for the time period of the book. And although she doesn't seek recognition, Susan Young gave up much in her personal life to accomplish our goal, and **Mille Grazie** hardly covers it. But, she knows. Finally, we thank all the families who graciously shared, and continue to share, family photos, documents, and artifacts to keep our rich history alive.

"So Big, This Little Place" captures the hearts and souls of the early days of our heritage – and for that we are proud and grateful. What's next? From 1917 to ...

~Bev Cortiana-McEuen

FROM SUSAN'S PREFACE -

Much of the information included in ["So Big, This Little Place"] was gleaned from Tontitown's community column that appeared in the *Springdale News*. The submissions ran sporadically—sometimes weekly, more often every two or three weeks. Several different writers took turns at reporting Tontitown happenings, and some were more thorough than others, but each and every column is a delight to read and a treasure trove of local history. It would be fitting and proper to acknowledge these early chroniclers of Tontitown by name, if I only knew who they were, for they all used pen names—Demetrious, Italamericus, Lamb, Luna, Mariuccia, Melissa, Menogo, Mr. Goose, Mugwumps, Papilio, and Rodon—and their real identities remain unknown to this day. Even so, their writings survive and make Tontitown history all the richer.

What folks are saying about "So Big, This Little Place"

It's wonderful! It contains so much information. And, it has lots of pictures. There is one photo of my great grandparents, Joe and Iginia Cigainero, that I hadn't seen, and even my Nona Alma Hartman had not seen. ~ *Michael Hartman*

I think it's very good. My sister in California, Barbara Verucchi Faraci, read it all and was very impressed with the history and pictures. She wants me to mail her another for a gift. Most people I've talked to are very impressed with it. It's really nice to have a record like this. Wonderful book!
~ *Frances Verucchi Franco*

I just love it! I think it's wonderful! I've recommended it to several people. That's our heritage. The book brings back many wonderful memories of what my parents and grandparents would talk about. It makes a wonderful gift. I have it displayed on an easel in my living room. It's on an antique table made by the Lazarri's that my Aunt Clara Brunetti Pianalto gave me, and fits perfectly there. It's a beautiful book.

~ *Marlene Franco Piazza*

It's very informative. It has lots of facts that were new to me — like the purchase price of land and things like that. There is more detail than I ever knew. I love it!

~ *Gena Hartman*

I think it's a great book! I really enjoyed reading it. ~ *Pete Pianalto*

To You So Far Away ... A Te Che Sei Lontano

This article appeared in the August 2009 issue of *L'eco Delle Valli*, a newsletter from Valli del Pasubio, Vicenza, Italy. Sandra Cortiana, one of the contributors, included these photos of "So Big, This Little Place," the 111th Tontitown Grape Festival book, and one of Brenda Pianalto's photos of a young grape stomper from the festival. It's wonderful that our families in Italy share in the joys of Tontitown today.

A TE CHE SEI LONTANO

"So big, this little place"



La copertina del libro

Con questo titolo, che in italiano può essere tradotto in "Che grande, questo piccolo paese", è stato appena pubblicato un nuovo libro, edito dal Museo storico di Tontitown e messo in vendita durante il 111° Festival dell'uva (tenutosi dal 4 all'8 agosto scorso).



111° Festival dell'uva

Il volume contiene oltre cento immagini storiche tratte dagli archivi del Museo e comprende un registro genealogico delle prime famiglie italiane che hanno fondato la cittadina (Bariola, Ceola, Cortiana, Penzo, Pianalto, Piazza, Roso, ecc). Charlotte Piazza, curatrice



Pigiare l'uva a Tontitown

del locale Museo, ha detto che il libro copre i primi 20 anni di esistenza di Tontitown: da padre Bandini che nel 1898 la fondò, alla sua successiva crescita. Il libro si conclude con la morte del fondatore, nel gennaio 1917.

S.C.

Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri ... continued

On Nov. 2, 1908, the *Springdale News* announced what could have been a tragedy when John Bash was caught in the belt of the threshing machinery. "But for the timely interference of Aldo Maestri it is hard to see how he could have been saved from being ground to pieces."

February 28, 1913, *Springdale News* ~
Melissa, Tontitown Correspondent wrote:

Mary Maestri [husband Aldo] adopted a little boy who was born Dec. 14, 1912 and whose mother died at St. Edwards Infirmary in Ft. Smith. The baby was baptized by Rev. Bandini on December 15th and named Edward. Leo and Katie Maestri being sponsors. We wish Mrs. Maestri everything that is well, for she certainly shows a big heart taking this little one and giving it a home. She felt just as happy as if it were a child of her own.

This announcement changed their lives. A child was the one thing that could make their happiness complete.

Mary Maestri was a woman of many talents. She had a nursing degree and would go with doctors who served in Tontitown when they saw patients. Mary assisted the doctors and as she spoke Italian well, translated for them. Mary also delivered many babies as a midwife.



Mary Maestri in nursing uniform

Photo courtesy Dolores Maestri Stolfi Dicks /
Tontitown Historical Museum S-2008-102-3

In 1923, frost ruined Aldo's grape crop. Mary was one of the regulars who earned money for the church by serving spaghetti dinners after the last Mass on Sundays, for those who came from such a long distance to attend church. Admiring Mary's culinary skills, many of their friends urged them to open a restaurant. Thus, "Mary's eating place was born."

Mary and Aldo always ran their restaurant from their home. When Aldo became ill, Mary nursed him until his death on April 15, 1959 at the age of 81.

Mary continued running the restaurant until 1963. She still visited with "her friends," but left her son Edward to manage the business until his death in 1977, when her grandson Dan became the third generation of family to become a restaurateur. Dan still operates the restaurant today.

Mary died on January 17, 1980, at the age of 92. She loved the people she came to call friends during her many years of serving the public. Many lives were forever changed by having known her.

Aldo and Mary's lives centered on their faith and love of God, their son Edward and their grandchildren, and great grandchildren. They had a host of friends and counted them as blessings.

Memories of Aldo and Mary Maestri as shared by family and friends

Dolores Maestri Stolfi Dicks, granddaughter

Nona was generous to a fault and there were no strangers to her, only friends. It wasn't that she disliked banks but in the early days she had no transportation, she kept her money in her home; a cigar box, sock, etc. If she felt a family member or individual had a need, she disappeared and soon emerged from her bedroom with a folded bill to offer and wouldn't take no for an answer. Needless to say she always had something for the children too. When her grandchildren stayed with her, she served them delicious coffee latte for breakfast. This upset their Mother later when she found out. How could strong coffee, rich cream, sugar and crackers not be healthy?

Mary and Aldo had a small farm and grew most of their own produce. She made special use of Aldo's garlic patch. Chickens were raised for eggs to prepare her pasta and fluffy rolls. Aldo had a cow for milk and Mary had fresh cream and churned butter.

continued next page

Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri ... continued

Mary and Aldo did not own a car or drive. The supplies needed to run their restaurant were delivered by taxi. The Jewel Tea man delivered coffee and Mary collected many premiums which she redeemed for dishes. She was able to add to her stock plus share with others.

Tony Wirts, granddaughter

My memories of my grandparents are the same as expressed by Dolores. I do have a special memory of my grandmother. Nona found a litter of baby mice whose mother had died. She made them a bed in a little box and taught me how to care for them. They were my babies. I kept them in my dresser drawer until my mother found them. Mother was very upset -- that was the last of my baby mice.

Mary M. Maestri (Margi), granddaughter

To us our grandmother was Nona (Italian for Grandmother). I was named after her. The thing I remember most about Nona was her faith; she had more faith than any person I have ever known. She was a very devout Catholic, who lived what she believed in. She always had a rosary close by, holy medals and a crucifix. She loved St. Joseph Church and the people in Tontitown. She had a special devotion to the Virgin Mary. Nona was what I would call a prayer warrior; Nona taught us the importance of prayer. She was the person who most impressed me with spiritual insight and divine wisdom. There was a powerful and extremely holy woman behind the spaghetti queen apron.

When we were young we would go to the church in Tontitown and the lucky one of us would get to sit in the pew under the Maestri window with Nono and Nona. When Nona got so old that she could no longer go out to Mass, the priest would bring communion to her.

Lea Ann Crisp, granddaughter

As a grade school student selling brownies, I could always count on my grandmother for a good sale. Once when I asked Nona her middle name, I was told that she did not have one. I replied you must have one because there is a space for it on the receipt. Mary smiled, "Oh, you give me one." I named her "Bernadette." Mary would laugh and tell people I had named her. What I remember most about Nona was her wonderful laugh. My grandmother was one of the sweetest people I ever knew. She was good to people and they loved her.

Sharon Maestri, granddaughter

As a child I wanted to stay with my Nono and Nona. In their house my favorite smells were the garlic and yeast. Nona made doll clothes for my Toni doll and I loved it and thought it was a miracle she could sew up something so neat and so small. Nona used to call me Sharon Rabbit and I called her Nona Rabbit and still call her that name to this day.

Nono and Nona both knew how to love a child unconditionally. So kind, patient and funny was my Nono. When he died, I stayed with Nona the first week after his funeral. He was such a significant person in my life.

Nona was so wise, compassionate and understanding about children and their need for unconditional love. This was her gift to me and it is a rare gift. She thought my first born son Chuck was the most wonderful baby ever born.

I am grateful for these two loving people in my life and will always love them unconditionally and with all my heart.

Dan Maestri, grandson

Nona never would compromise on her food. "It's got to be something people say they haven't had any better or I won't serve it." Mary did not like to be called famous. "I'm just somebody else in the big parade," she would say.

Charles Clark, great grandson

I loved going to spend the night with Nona. Sitting at her window we would watch the birds migrate. Nona had a green thumb. She had beautiful flower gardens and she knew the name of every plant and flower. Nona would give me money to go across the road to the fruit stand to buy delicious peaches, watermelon, tomatoes, etc. We would cut up a delicious salad and eat juicy Arkansas peaches with the juice running down our chins.

Nona always had a crucifix above her bed that she told me a Protestant friend of hers had found in a basement in Germany during World War I when he was fighting there. He knew how devout Nona was in her faith and brought it to her. Nona told me when she died I could have it. To this day I have it over my bed. It is a connection to Nona and to my Savior which she pointed me towards. My Nona was nonjudgmental, gave unconditional love, was generous, was always there for you. I can't wait to see her in Heaven.

continued next page

Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri ... continued

In the early years of running her eating place, Mary called upon neighbors and friends to help her in the restaurant. Clara Pianalto and Rosie Finn worked for Mary from 1948 until she retired. They were her support system. Through the years there were many friends and family who worked for Mary; a few share some of their memories with us.

Lavinia (Beanie) Maestri Zulpo, niece

When the crew making the Jessie James movie in Pineville, Missouri came to Tontitown to eat with Aunt Mary, Uncle Aldo found a man sitting in the car outside while the meal was going on. Aldo invited him to sit on the landing of the well house where it was cooler. After visiting for a few minutes, Aldo asked if the man was hungry. Learning that he was, Aldo went inside and made him a plate of chicken and spaghetti and returned with dinner, two glasses and a bottle of wine. The men enjoyed one another's company and when the group came outside, Aldo returned to the house. It was then that he learned it was not the chauffeur he had spent the evening with, but none other than Tyrone Power, the star of the movie.

Having no phone, reservations were delivered to Mary's restaurant in many forms. One of the most unique was devised by Bryan Works, a pilot from Springdale. He would write the number of people in his party on a piece of paper, tie it on a rock and fly over Mary's house a number of times, and drop the rock. They managed to find it most of the time. When they could not, Aunt Mary would just increase the amount of food she was preparing.

I started working for Aunt Mary when I was my early teens. I not only helped in the restaurant, but often walked a mile to Carl Stern's home for extra chairs when there were many people to feed. I could carry two at a time.



Mary Maestri serves Fr. Kennedy (left) and Fr. Stauder (right), ca mid-1950's

Photo courtesy Dan Maestri / Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2009



The Maestri home and original Mary Maestri Restaurant

*Photo courtesy Dolores Maestri Stolfi Dicks /
Tontitown Historical Museum*

Nova Jean Fiori Watson

My parents, Bill and Fern Fiori, were neighbors of Aldo and Mary. Like most of Mary's friends, Fern worked in the restaurant. During the early years, guests entered the restaurant through the back door. There was a screened-in porch which led to the kitchen where Mary greeted them as they made their way to the dining area, which might be the guest bedroom on busy nights.

After a busy night the crew cleaned the premises from stem to stern early the next morning. On one of these occasions Fern and Inez Burnett Zulpo were washing some of Mary's fine crystal and Inez was complaining, "We sure have a lot of dirty dishes for no more than we had to eat last night."

I followed Aldo around as he worked in his garden. He always picked a green pepper from the vine and ate it like an apple. One day I, mimicking Aldo, took a pepper from the vine. It was hot and made me sick, and to this day I do not like green peppers.

Frances Verucchi Franco

Mary Maestri delivered me. She was our neighbor and a good friend. We kids walked the two miles to school each day. On our return trip, we always stopped at Aldo and Mary Maestri's for a drink of water, knowing there would also be a treat of candy waiting for us.

When Andrew and I were married, we could not eat breakfast until the wedding service and Mass were over. The whole wedding party was starving when we arrived at Mary's for a delicious wedding breakfast.

continued next page

Family Focus, Aldo & Mary Maestri ... continued

Jim McNally, son of a prominent Springdale dentist

As a child I loved to eat. The trouble was, my mother was not the best cook. The best meals that our family ate were served at restaurants. When my parents did not want to go out to eat, and Mom could not come up with any ideas for dinner, she would say as she reached for her purse and car keys, "Jimmy, we're going to Mary's. Grab that large aluminum pot." Wow, good food tonight, and we flew down Hwy. 68 to Tontitown. Mary never asked what we were there for. She would simply go to the stove, raise the lid of the spaghetti pot, ladle out a bunch into Mom's pot; then another pot for the sauce which she would spoon into the spaghetti in Mom's pot. Chicken would be placed in a smaller pot that Mom had brought. Mom would pay Mary. If Mom did not overheat the spaghetti, it would be wonderful. It was hard for Mom to ruin Mary's cooking.

Mary Maestri was one of the most unique and wonderful women that God had ever created. She would rush up to me and give me a bear hug. "Oh, Jimmy and Dorothy, so nice to see you," Mary would say, and mean it. Her place was where I was nice because I liked her.

Final thoughts from Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, niece

I have always been proud to be a namesake of my Aunt Mary. My memories of her and Uncle Aldo are many, and always bring a smile. Aunt Mary was funny, kind and understood human nature.

I was one of nine children born to Albano and Agnes Maestri. Restaurant reservations came into the grocery store that my father owned, and we kids took turns walking the mile down the dirt road to deliver the message to my Aunt Mary. We often met one another on our trips back and forth. There were always coins or candy in our pockets on the return trip.

My husband, Bruce Vaughan, and I were married in a private ceremony in the church convent. My Aunt Mary learned we had no plans for a lunch after the wedding. She sent word that she would not hear of no for an answer; the wedding party was to have lunch with her. When we arrived at her home, she not only served a wonderful lunch but had made us a beautiful wedding cake. My Aunt Mary and Uncle Aldo were the most loving, generous people on earth.

This Family Focus story about Aldo and Mary Maestri renews our pride in our ancestors. Not only were they an example to follow, but there is a common thread that runs through these family stories that form the tapestry of Tontitown.

The Tontitown Historical Museum invites others to submit their family stories to the *Tontitown Storia*. Please contact Bev Cortiana-McEuen at 479-361-2609 or email bcortiana@cox.net.



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

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 ...**

2009-2010 Museum Events

Date	Event
November 8, 2009	8th 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 2010	Arkansas Heritage Month Celebration – Arkansas Rural Life/Small Towns Event date and time to be announced
June – September	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 3-7, 2010	112th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Thursday, August 5 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 6 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 7 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

~ **Donations in Honor of** ~

It is with gratitude and pride that we display memorial and family donations in the Tontitown Historical Museum.

Cathy Ardemagni
Cecil Ardemagni
Gene & Irma Taldo Ardemagni
Leo Baudino
Candida Morsani Crane
Lillian Cortiana Granata
Albina Ranalli Dalla Rosa
Pete & Mary Cortiana Fiori
Joseph Angelo "Andy" Franco
Chuck & Mary Fucci
Russell Greenlee
Clementine Morsani Haney
Lee Wana Bariola Keck
Lynn Maestri
Paul & Judy Maestri's 50th Wedding Anniversary
Amerigo Morsani
Helen Crane Morsani
Ed & Adele Bariola Penzo
Gabriel & Elsie Mae Fiori Pianalto
Leo & Lucy Ceola Pianalto
John Hugo "J.H." Pozza
Daniel "Danny" Ray Watson

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:

Michael Hartman, 479-361-2682
Martha Swearingen, 479-530-5719
Vincent Verucchi, 479-306-1260

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 or email bcortiana@cox.net.



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

***Available
Now!!***

“So Big, This Little Place”
THE FOUNDING OF TONTITOWN, ARKANSAS, 1898-1917

***Available
Now!!***

Susan and Jan signed books
during the 111th Tontitown
Grape Festival in August.



**Author
Susan Young**

***“So Big,
This
Little Place”***



THE FOUNDING OF
TONTITOWN, ARKANSAS, 1898-1917

Susan Young
with a Genealogical Register by Jan McQuade-Sturm

They will be available for
signings at the Polenta
Smear on November 8.



**Genealogist
Jan McQuade-Sturm**

Tontitown Storia
Spring 2009, Vol. 5, No. 2
insert follows

8TH ANNUAL TONTITOWN REUNION & OLD-FASHIONED POLENTA SMEAR SUNDAY, NOV 8 — 1:00 TO 5:00 PM ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH HALL

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 prizes, have fun! ☺

2:30 Short program by Susan Young, Shiloh Museum – Author of
“So Big, This Little Place,” The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917,
which will be available to purchase during the Polenta Smear.
Susan and genealogist Jan McQuade-Sturm will sign books on request.

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



Sponsored by Tontitown Historical Museum and Shiloh Museum of Ozark History