

Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2010, Vol. 6, No. 2

Saluti from the Board

We welcome fall with another exciting celebration in Tontitown – the opening of the Tontitown Winery! We'll share lots about that.

But first, we're anxious for the 9th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear. We have a very special guest this year, Elizabeth "Libby" Olivi Borgognoni from Lake Village, Arkansas. She was so kind and sharing when several of the Board members visited Lake Village last February. It's still one of the highlights of our year.

Libby and her husband's families were original settlers in Sunnyside. She edited and compiled *Italians of Sunnyside: 1895 - 1995* for the Centennial Celebration of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Lake Village. She also compiled and assembled the Our Lady of the Lake Altar Society cook book, *"Old World" Cookery: Italian and European Favorites*. Now in its 17th printing, you might want to think about this wonderful cookbook for a Christmas gift, or just for your own collection.

Libby will speak about the "Italians of Sunnyside - Italians of Tontitown." She is a delight and will have everyone's attention for sure, and we know it's hard to quiet our crowd. We look forward to seeing you there on November 7, from 1-4 p.m. at St. Joseph Parish Hall. As always, we'll have polenta, umedo, and desserts. Be sure to bring any photos or documents that you've newly uncovered to copy for our collections.

Besides anxiously awaiting the Polenta Smear, Tontitown is all a buzz with a winery again! The winemaking tradition runs deep in Tontitown. And we're thrilled that owners Bob & Pam Hunt and David & Heather Ranalli Peachee are now open for business. Read more about the Tontitown Winery inside.



Tontitown Winery sign includes photo of its location ~ originally The Taldo House

Beyond wine, the Winery offers specialty Italian gifts, fine Italian cheeses and salami, and a History Room. It's a treasure for our Italian heritage and Tontitown!

*by Bev Cortiana-McEuen
Winery photos by Brenda Pianalto*

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Curator's Choice

By Charlotte Piazza

We welcome our new winery to our city and are reminded of the wineries of our past, and the impact they made in our tradition. Early wineries were the (Felix and Peter) Ardemagni Brothers Winery, Guiseppe Taldo fine vineyards and wine,

John Granata Winery, Gildo Mantegani Winery, Javello Winery, and the Joe Taldo winery in his basement -- now home to the Tontitown Winery. And, there was always a little home-grown wine bottling in a cellar or barn, among other places.

Our museum has many interesting artifacts of winemaking from long ago -- wine labels, grape crusher, wine keg, wine bottling machine showcasing wine bottles from various old wineries, and old wine jugs. We also have many grape growing artifacts, which precedes the winemaking -- grape pruners, saw, vine tying, and a one-person sprayer. We have many pictures related to grape growing, grape baskets, and a device to put handles on grape baskets.

Until regular season hours, contact me for a special tour at 479-361-2498. Or, maybe I'll see you in the History Room at the new Tontitown Winery. It's a tribute to our rich history for sure. The Curator's Corner wishes the new Tontitown Winery much success!



Winemaking Artifacts

Making History ... Tontitown Winery

Heather Ranalli Peachee was kind enough to answer questions for us about the new Tontitown Winery. They opened on October 15. There's so much to learn ...

How did you and your husband, David, get the idea to open a winery?

Well, I made wine with Dad (Chris Ranalli) since I was pretty young. He would let my sister, Summer, and I stomp grapes, then once the wine was ready we would help him wash bottles. As he filled the bottles with wine, we ran the corker. Then, David came along (about 8 years ago) and started to take an interest in winemaking, too. We shared Dad's dream to someday open a winery. Just last fall, David told me that he really wanted to see this happen so we asked Dad if he would be okay with us opening a winery. We realized that he is spread so thin with everything on the farm that it probably wasn't a possibility for him. Dad was so excited and has become our "unpaid winemaker" alongside David. And, David's mom and stepdad, Pam and Bob Hunt, became interested as well and became our partners.

What about the location? How did the Taldo/Brunetti house come about?

We contacted our awesome realtor, Rhnee McClung, who immediately told us that she knew the perfect place. We really didn't know much about the house at that time, just that it was known as the Taldo/Brunetti house. We didn't learn until closing that it actually housed a winery once before. It's just so funny how everything works out. I'm pretty sure this house was meant for us!

What is the process to make the wine? How long does it take? What kind of equipment did you need?

It takes about 6 months. We have a stemmer crusher -- you just pour the grapes in the top and it crushes the grapes into a barrel, then spits the stems out the other end. This means ... no more purple feet for us! Then, we transfer it into primary fermentation tanks where we kill all of the yeast and bacteria, then add controlled yeast. It sits here on the skins for a few days. After this, we drain the juice and transfer it into barrels. We're starting pretty small, we're using 55 gallon stainless steel barrels instead of the huge jacketed tanks like most wineries use. This is in an effort to keep our start-up costs down.

Making History ... Tontitown Winery, cont.

What types of wine will you make? Other than grape?

We have some apple wine going right now, it should be ready around Thanksgiving (hopefully). Also, we have some blueberry wine this year, as well as some plum. We purchased several gallons of blueberries at the end of the season and also went out on a few different occasions and picked wild plums. Next year we will make some strawberry wine, since it's MY personal fav. We also plan to make some Peach wine next year, too. I want to name it "Peachee's Peach"... pretty cute, huh?

Where did you get "the recipe"?

Everything we know, we've learned from my Daddy (Chris Ranalli), who learned from his Dad (Joe Ranalli), who learned from his Dad (Nazzareno Ranalli) and working at the Granata Winery for 35 years. David has done a lot of research on the different yeasts and things, because it is a little different when you're mass producing this stuff. But we do plan to keep it as original as possible.

How is it that you can sell wine on Sunday?

We get that question a lot. In Arkansas, wineries and breweries are the only ones who are able to sell on Sundays. It's different when you have both a manufacturing and retail permit. It qualifies us as more of a tourist attraction.

Share some of the gems about the house and contents.

We have really tried to keep the house as original as possible, but also practical for what we need. We are using the original chandelier, after lots and lots of soaking and cleaning (thanks to Pam, my mother-in-law). Jan McQuade-Sturm told me that the chandelier is from the 20's. We were able to restore the original hardwood floors and have decided that the nicks and scratches are a part of the house's history, too.

David's mom, Pam, bought the barrel table from a man in Madison county, and the barrel came from Napa Valley. David made the bar totally from scratch. He's pretty darn handy! The fireplace mantle is made out of Arkansas Cedar and cut at a mill in Madison County. We then peeled the bark off and applied a few coats of polyurethane.

One of my favorite hidden characteristics of the house is in the basement. We found some pretty famous signatures on the rafters. We have -- JT Taldo, Sarah Taldo, Ida Mae, and Dora Taldo's signatures! I was able to take Bill Mussino, whose mother is a Beatrice Taldo Mussino, down in the basement recently and I think he really appreciated it as much as we did.

The Taldo Winery was in the basement?

Yes, Dick and Dora Taldo ran the "Dixie Pride Bonded Winery #40" out of the basement. You will notice that there is still an outside entrance to the basement on the south side of the house and the windows of the basement have bars on them. These things were mandatory for wineries back then. We really don't know a whole lot about the Taldo Winery, but would love to learn. Once we learn the details, I would like to get a plaque made saying something like: Taldo House ~ Former Home of The Dixie Pride Bonded Winery #40 (and the years of operation or something). I would love to have this on the front door to symbolize the history that we are trying to revive.

How was your opening week?

It's been fabulous! Loretta Brunetti was one of our very first customers. She kicked it off right when she walked in on our first day of business, stepped in the door and started singing, "When the moon hits your eye like a bigga pizza pie, That's Amore!" She was so full of energy and inspiration. We all LOVED it! We've had several Tontitowners visit, and I have really enjoyed seeing each and every one of them. They all seem to be very excited about having us here and pleased with the house and the decor. They love our History Room and I think some even feel a little famous when they see their pictures hanging on the walls. :-)



David and Heather Ranalli-Peaches
Photos by Brenda Pianalto

Family Focus ... The Nazzareno Ranalli Family

by Heather Ranalli-Peachee, great-granddaughter

It was a long journey for the Italians in Tontitown. All coming from the same homeland with the same destination, but many different paths along the way.

Our story starts with Nazzareno Ranalli, born January 17, 1882, who traveled from his hometown of Orvinio, Perugia, Italy to the United States at just 25 years of age. He arrived in Ellis Island on December 23, 1907. We know that some of the Italians settled first in Little Italy or the Sunnyside Plantation. But Nazzareno somehow knew to come straight here to Tontitown.

He spent the next several years working on local farms and wineries, getting established in the community. On June 19, 1919, he married Catherine Fachesato (born 1880 in Italy). Just a couple years later, they welcomed their first and only child together, Joseph Phillip Ranalli, born March 9, 1921.

In 1923, with a family intact and a bit of savings, Nazzareno and Catherine purchased their very own piece of American land -- now known as Ranalli farms. They quickly discovered that their rocky new purchase would grow crops wonderfully. Planting grape vineyards and row crops were first on the list. Nazzareno must have worked very hard over the years teaching Joe the art of farming and hard work.

Days turned into years and Joe joined the Navy. Then shortly after, married Erma Christine Busato in 1945 and started a family of his own. Anthony was their first born, followed by Agatha, then Norbert, Albina, then a set of twins Paul and Pauline, and lastly Christopher (my dad).



Erma Ranalli and baby Anthony ~ 1948

All photos courtesy the Ranalli Family



Left Photo: Adults, l-r: Joe, Nazzareno & Erma ~ 1956
Children, l-r: Anthony, Pauline (held by Joe), Agatha, Norbert, Albina & Paul
Right Photo: Chris Ranalli ~ 1963



Tragedy struck while Erma was pregnant with what would have been their eighth child, taking mother and the unborn baby. This left Joe alone tending to the other children. With the help of the elder children, Joe continued to provide through farming and working at the Granata Winery.

In 1974, Joe had a heart attack and died while working in the garden behind the house. Again, the older siblings stepped in to help take care of Chris, who was only a teenager at the time.

Today, nearly a century later, three of the brothers – Norbert, Paul and my dad, Chris – are still working the original farm. Norbert runs the Equipment Sales, Paul runs the Feed and Tack Store, and Dad runs Ranalli Farms Produce Market, as well as tending to the vineyard and other crops. Agatha remains the family’s “rock” nurturing each and every one of us when needed, as well as running the bakery at the Produce Market.

As you can see, the Ranalli family has learned to stick together through the toughest of times. This is a family built on a strong work ethic and a high moral character, who remains a key piece of this town’s history.



Erma and Joe Ranalli ~ early 1940's



The Ranalli family ~ 1964

Back, l-r: Agatha, Albina, Anthony, Norbert, Joe
Front, l-r: Pauline, Chris, Paul

Coming Soon!

Back issues of the
Tontitown Storia
newsletter will be posted
on Tontitown city website.

Visit the
History link
on
www.tontitown.com.

Memorable Words

"Although these Italians of Sunnyside loved and admired the country of Italy because it produced them, it was their destiny, their choice and desire to come to America. They believed that America had the great capacity, intellect and resources, where they could be free to own their own land, to raise their own children according to their innate desires, to educate them to become the best they could possibly be, and to become American's strongest patriots.

We salute the ITALIANS OF SUNNYSIDE who, although proud of their Italian heritage, were prouder to become and be called AMERICAN."

by Libby Borgognoni

from *Italians of Sunnyside, 1895-1995*, page 120



Brenda Pianalto and Libby Borgognoni during the Museum Board visit to Lake Village, February 2010.

~ 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
Rudy Costa
Candida Morsani Crane
Lillian Cortiana Granata
Albina Ranalli Dalla Rosa
Pete & Mary Cortiana Fiori
Joseph Angelo "Andy" Franco
Chuck & Mary Fucci
Rita Taldo Gilliss
Russell Greenlee
Clementine Morsani Haney
Lee Wana Bariola Keck
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Gabriel & Elsie Mae Fiori Pianalto
Leo & Lucy Ceola Pianalto
Lillian Pianalto Smith
John Hugo "J.H." Pozza
Marie Tessaro
Daniel "Danny" Ray Watson

Tontitown Historical Museum 2010 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.

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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.

✓ *Mark Your Calendar ...*

2010-2011 Museum Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
November 7, 2010	9th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear Co-sponsored by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 1 – 4 p.m. Speaker: Libby Borgognoni , Lake Village, Arkansas
To be announced	2011 Arkansas Heritage Month Event
June – September 2011	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Season Hours Open Saturdays and Sundays, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 361-2498 or 361-2607
August 9-13, 2011	113th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Tontitown Historical Museum, Special Hours Thursday, August 11 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 12 1 – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 13 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.



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 10% discount on the museum book: *"So Big, This Little Place" The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas 1898-1917.*
- ✓ 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!***

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

Tontitown Winery in former Taldo/Brunetti home

"I visited the Winery a week ago and it took my breath away. What a wonderful way to complete Tontitown history for the future. This was my Uncle Lenor and Aunt Betty Brunetti's house and I spent a lot of time there in the 50's. The Ranalli's did a great job keeping the history of this old house alive. Hats off to them."

Loretta Brunetti



335 N Barrington Road, Tontitown

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insert follows

9th Annual Tontitown Reunion & Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7 – 1:00 TO 4:00 P.M.
ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH HALL

*THE TONTITOWN HISTORICAL MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN FROM 12:00 - 1:00 P.M.
STOP BY BEFORE THE POLENTA SMEAR!*

- 1:00 – 4:00 COPY PHOTOS, LOOK AT PHOTO DISPLAYS, VISIT & LAUGH! :-)
WIN DOOR PRIZES AND HAVE FUN!
- 2:00 **GUEST SPEAKER – LIBBY BORGOGNONI, LAKE VILLAGE, ARKANSAS**
"ITALIANS OF SUNNYSIDE ~ ITALIANS OF TONTITOWN"
- 1:30 – 3:00 POLENTA & UMEDO, DESSERT SERVED

Books Available for Purchase:

"So Big, This Little Place" The Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917, by Susan Young - \$30
"Old World" Cookery: Italian and European Favorites, compiled by Libby Borgognoni - \$15



A People Set Apart

They traveled to America to a place called Sunnyside.
Upon leaving home and family they laughed and then they cried.
They cried for they might never see the loved ones left behind,
And the laughter rang out for the thrill of what they were yet to find.

Exuberance was evident, in America they'd be,
Where opportunities awaited in the land of the brave and free.
They sold belongings and their homes to pay for passage there,
And sailed the ocean, board merchant ships, to a place they knew not where.

For 30 days amidst the cargo and the animals they sailed,
And in their fear of the unknown their faith was what prevailed.
They embarked at New Orleans, by steamship went to Greenville,
And by ferry crossed to Sunnyside, whereupon they made 'the deal'.

There were no fancy houses, and the climate was not sublime.
The work was hard, the hours long, but they'd own the land in time.
Soon yellow fever ravaged them and they died just left and right,
And the cry arose among them as they wailed throughout the night.

Some then left for Tontitown and other places far away.
But the fight had just begun for those who chose to stay.
Oppression soon became their lot, they were held against their will
To a contract long dishonored by Corbin's heirs, and still

As they prayed their hope remained, and they worked the cotton crop.
Men and women, children too, until they'd nearly drop.
And as they worked they prayed for deliverance from plight.
The love of family and hope made worthwhile the awesome fight.

A people of faith, of hope, of valor, who trusted in their God,
Oppression, and the odds were braved for a little piece of sod.
In America at Sunnyside, the final end would come,
For they would survive, endure, and prosper until their goals were done.

Perseverance was their mainstay and they saved just every dime
to clear their debts, to leave that place, for others they would find.
They'd become models to be followed, successful, envied, praised, applauded.
And they'd owe it all with love and pride to those forefathers whom they lauded.

They'll go down in history as a people set apart.
For in everything they did, they put their soul and heart.
With faith in God, unending hope, and their love of family,
Great lessons we have learned to last until eternity.

by Libby Borgognoni, 1995