

Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2011, Vol. 7, Nos. 1 & 2

Saluti from the Board

On November 6th, the first Sunday of the month, the Tontitown Historical Museum Board of Directors invites you to join us in celebration of the **10th Anniversary of the Tontitown Old-Fashioned Reunion and Polenta Smear**. Enjoy good food, renew old friendships, and share your history. We are still collecting images and documents; and plans are underway to start interviewing the next generation of Tontitown families.

Boy, the Stories I Could Tell, by Christopher A. Dorer, is a narrative history of Little Italy, Arkansas, and includes a story of the Ranalli family when their maternal grandmother lived in Little Italy. Albina Ranalli Dalla Rosa shared the book with Nova Jean Fiori Watson. It was the seed that started intense research on Tontitown history in 2002.

After a few mis-directions, Nova Jean contacted Bob Besom, former Director of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, and Susan Young, Outreach Coordinator. They agreed to help with the documentation of Tontitown history and suggested that Tontitown hold a "Picture Day" to start collecting important photographs and documents. Shiloh offered to partner with Tontitown for the event.

On July 31, 2002, a meeting was called to form a group interested in collecting and preserving Tontitown history. Those in attendance were Bob Besom, Susan Young, Mary Maestri Vaughan, Frank Maestri, Charlotte Piazza, Nova Jean Fiori Watson, and Dan Watson. Bob Besom advised the group to form a committee of record in order to apply for and be eligible for grants in the future.



~ Just a Few Key Players Over the Years ~

Frank Maestri, former Tontitown Historical Museum President with Shiloh Museum staff Susan Young, Allyn Lord, Marie Demeroukas, and Carolyn Reno - November 5, 2006

photo by Brenda Pianalto

Shiloh would apply for a mini-grant and Tontitown would provide matching funds. Shiloh would furnish equipment and personnel, copy prints, process negatives, and make two sets of prints—one to be housed in Shiloh archives and the other at Tontitown Museum.

Tontitown would be responsible for contacting local residents, asking them to bring photographs and documents, provide a place for the event to take place, and serve Italian food. The decision was made to hold a Polenta Smear for the people of the community, who would bring their personal family history to the event.

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Curator's Choice

by Charlotte Piazza

For many years at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, one Sunday of each month would be set aside for members of different church organizations to sit together during Mass. At the beginning of Mass, a member would bring out their banner and display it. This practice was in place until the mid 1960's.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary banner, pictured here, was for the women's group, then called the Holy Rosary Society. The men's group was the St. Joseph's Club and the youth group was the St. Cecilia's Club.

The Holy Rosary Society banner is displayed in a special frame made by Andrew Franco using altar railings from the old St. Joseph's Church. The museum has another women's banner in storage.



Holy Rosary Society Banner

Saluti from the Board ... continued

by Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan

Tontitown Preservation Project - 2002 Mission Statement

The Tontitown Preservation Project was formed as an action group to begin a process of the following:

1. Finding all information from any available source that can relate to the history of Tontitown.
2. Researching the information.
3. Documenting the information.
4. Preserving the information.
5. Insuring the information has creditable value for any medium that is being used to tell the story of the history of Tontitown.
6. Using the information of recorded fact to preserve the heritage of this unique place.

On October 22, 2002, the **Tontitown Preservation Committee** was formed. The meeting was held at City Hall in Tontitown. Those present were Nova Jean Watson, Frank Maestri, Mary Frances Vaughan, Charlotte Piazza, and Andrew Franco.

With funds provided by a private donor, the first Polenta Smear in November of 2002 was a huge success. Shiloh Museum staff copied over 300 documents and photographs, and over 100 people enjoyed Polenta (cornmeal mush) and Umedo (tomato-based sauce).

As plans were underway for The Polenta Smear, Bob Besom and Nova Jean Watson conducted their first oral interview on Tuesday, August 13, 2002. They interviewed Irma Taldo Ardemagni. She had just celebrated her 90th birthday on August 8th and was the oldest resident of Tontitown.

Still, we knew we needed more help. On Thursday, August 22, 2002, a meeting was held at City Hall in Tontitown.

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Saluti from the Board ... continued

Present were Bob Besom, Susan Young, Dr. Mike Pierce, U. of A. Professor of Arkansas Oral and Visual History Dept., Frank Maestri, Mary Maestri Vaughan, Dan Watson, Nova Jean Watson, Marty Taldo, Deloris Ceola Moody, Francis Pianalto, Christine Pianalto Martinez, Felix Pozza, Andy Franco, Pete Pianalto, Kathy Pianalto Miller, and Margie Ceola.

Dr. Pierce discussed interviewing techniques and equipment. Plans were made for Bob and Susan to conduct an interview on August 29th at Tontitown City Hall while those present observed. Jim Finn was chosen as interviewee. He was 87 years of age. He enjoyed the process and after the interview said, "I could have told them a lot more off the record."

From 2002 to 2005 over 50 interviews were conducted. Over half of the people interviewed are now deceased. Susan Young is in the process of extracting passages from these interviews for future publication.

On February 4, 2003, Frank Maestri went before the Tontitown City Council asking for Tontitown to pass an ordinance that would make the Tontitown Preservation Committee an arm of the city.

On March 6, 2003, Ordinance No. 167—An Ordinance Establishing a Museum Commission for the City of Tontitown was approved. Mayor Dan Watson presented the following names for appointees to the Museum Board: Andy Franco, Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, Charlotte Piazza, Joyce Penzo, Patricia Pianalto, Kathy Pianalto Miller, and Ken Green.

Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, like so many others still serves on the Tontitown Museum Board. Recently asked how she became involved, laughing she replied, "I signed the volunteer sheet during the first Polenta Smear."

On October 23rd, 2003, the Tontitown Preservation Project Committee met at Tontitown City Hall to plan for the 2nd Polenta Smear. In attendance were Frank Maestri-Chairperson, Lynda Cross, Andy Franco, Kathy Pianalto Miller, Patricia Pianalto, Charlotte Piazza, Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, Mary Vaughan, Nova Jean Watson, and Susan Young. Frank Maestri suggested five more members needed to be added to the group. This led to the passage of City Ordinance No. 179 on May 4, 2004, which increased commission members to a maximum of fifteen, which is still in place.

We have many to thank over the years—Tontitown Mayors, City Council members, Shiloh Museum, St. Joseph Parish, Catholic Youth, Tontitown Genealogy, and all who continue to donate their time and talents to preserve the rich history of Tontitown. Mille Grazie to all!



2002-2003 Polenta Smear Photos
by Brenda Pianalto

Family Focus ... Memories from Dick Taldo family

by nieces Patsy Taldo Phillips-Graham and Ida Taldo Brady

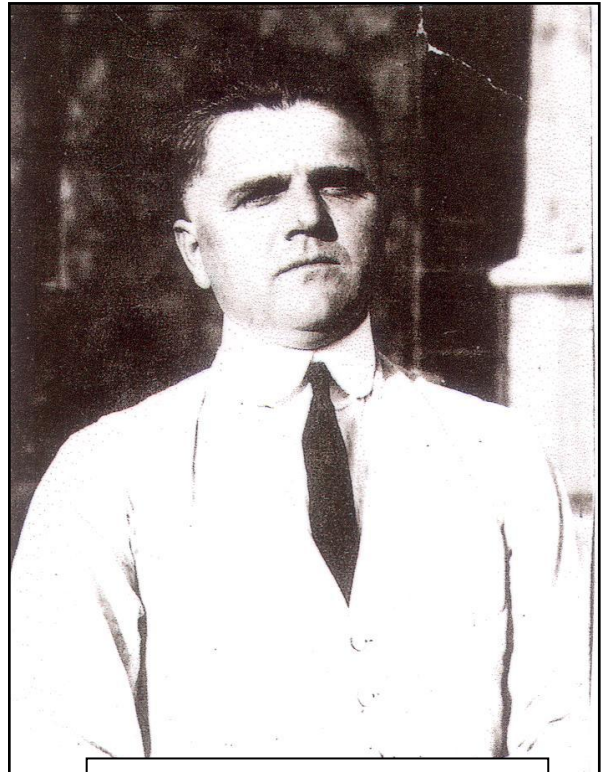
This story is about our Uncle Dick Taldo. Our parents were Joseph (Joe) and Dora Sbanotto Taldo. After our father passed away, Uncle Dick came to live with us and help Mother take care of the farm and family. There were eight children in our family: Katy, Raymond, Freddie, Beatrice, Patsy, Ida Mae, Sarah Ann, and J.T. (Joseph, Jr.).

Uncle Richard (Dick) Taldo was born in Vicenza, Italy in a small town called Laguardia in 1886. He was one of the eight children of our grandparents, John and Mary Fartunita Taldo. The children were: Amalia, Luigia, Margaret, Peter, Benedetta, Domenico Richard (Dick), Joseph, and Anna. All of the family came to America in 1898 and made their way to Tontitown with Father Bandini. Margaret later returned to Italy.

Dick completed all grades at the Tontitown School. He was a member of the Tontitown Band, played trumpet, and belonged to the choir. He was self-taught for higher education. At the age of 15, Dick lost a leg in a hunting accident. He never let his handicap stop him. Dick was employed as a cashier at a bank in St. Louis, Missouri for a few years.

In 1936, after the death of our father Joe, Dick moved back to the family home to help run the farm, which mostly consisted of vineyards and apple orchards. Despite his handicap, he could prune, tie, and spray the grape vineyards. The South farm is now owned by Sarah Taldo Russell, and the North farm is now the Tontitown Winery.

Dick was a local businessman, a politician, a Democrat. During the years that U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright represented Arkansas, he would make his area campaign visit and stop to see Uncle Dick. They became political friends, and would sit on the front steps and go on and on about the politics in Washington. The Senator knew that if he could convince Uncle Dick to support his campaign, that he could capture the majority, if not all, of the Tontitown vote. Ida Mae particularly remembered Senator Fulbright's visits as she thought he was so handsome and dignified.



Richard (Dick) Taldo ~ ca 1930's

Dick served on the Election Board, Tontitown School Board, and was a self-taught barber. Haircuts were 5 to 10 cents each. He also took pictures of special occasions, but sadly most are lost.

Dick's office or library consisted of a desk, typewriter, and adding machine. Book cases surrounded the office full of encyclopedias and all types of book -- educational, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, agricultural yearbooks, dictionaries, a large Bible, and more. He was generous lending his books. Some were not returned. People from surrounding areas came to him to write letters—business, political, even marriage proposals, and many other documents that were of an official capacity. He used his two index fingers to do all the typing. All was confidential. We understood Uncle Dick as the Tontitown barrister, and believe he never received the respect he deserved.

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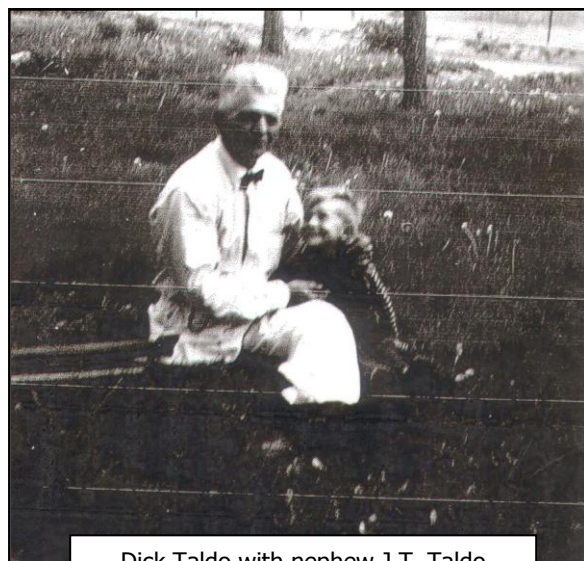
Family Focus, Dick Taldo ... continued

In the early 1940's, Dick started the Taldo Winery in the family basement. It was Bonded Winery #40, with the label "Dixie Pride." There was an outside door entrance at the back of the house for the winery. The family all helped with the harvesting, grinding, pressing, sterilizing bottles, labeling, and sealing. All purchases were made from the house. Dick also liked to "sample" now and then ... "to make sure it was good."

In Italy, Dick had a cousin who was a General in Mussolini's Army, a cousin who was a Bishop, and a nephew who was a Priest. He never returned to Italy to see them.

Few people knew that Dick had a "lady friend" and she would visit him occasionally. She called him R.D. She was a divorcee, and he was Catholic. He never married.

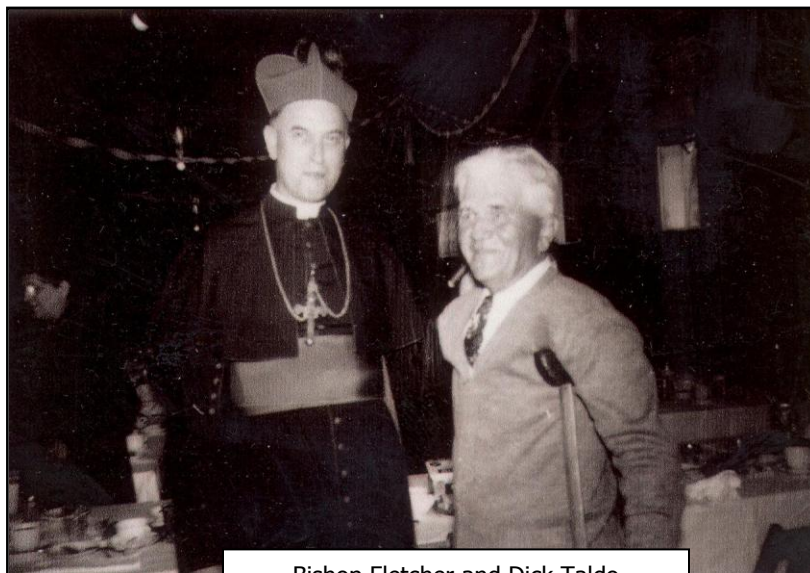
We remember the fishing trips that Uncle Dick took every year after the grape harvest with Uncle Aristide Sabatini, who we called Uncle Risti. Their trips were to the Osage River. They usually carried cans of sardines and a hunk of cheese, along with crackers and a hefty supply of wine. They would be gone most of the week, and Mother used to rib them about not bringing any fish home. Of course, they claimed they cooked them on the river bank.



Dick Taldo with nephew J.T. Taldo
~ ca 1939

Uncle Dick always enjoyed the Grape Festival. Every year, he would go to the Weight Guessing Booth. Since he only had one leg, no one ever guessed his weight and he always won some kind of prize. He got a charge out of beating the system. ☺

Uncle Dick died in 1951 and is buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery. He was loved and highly respected by all our family.



Bishop Fletcher and Dick Taldo
~ ca 1950

~ *Donations in Memory and in Honor* ~

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

Cathy Ardemagni
Cecil Ardemagni
Gene & Irma Taldo Ardemagni
Leo Baudino
Kathleen Brock
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

Lynn Maestri
Paul & Judy Maestri's 50th Wedding Anniversary
Amerigo Morsani
Frank & Carol Morsani
Helen Crane Morsani
Arthur Penzo
Ed & Adele Bariola Penzo
Gabriel & Elsie Mae Fiori Pianalto
George (Giacinto) & Clara Pianalto
Leo & Lucy Ceola Pianalto
Henry Piazza
Lillian Pianalto Smith
John Hugo "J.H." Pozza
Marie Tessaro
Daniel "Danny" Ray Watson

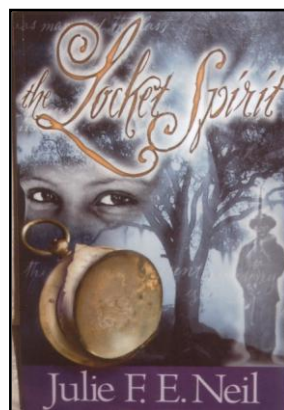
Tontitown Historical Museum 2011 Board of Directors

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
Riley Tessaro, Vice President, 479-361-2607
Ernie Deines, Secretary, 479-751-1425
Bev Cortiana-McEuen, Treasurer, 479-361-2609
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Michael Hartman, 479-595-3299
Jana Mayfield, 479-361-2358
Heather Ranalli Peachee, 479-685-4793
Brenda Pianalto, 479-756-5221
Roger Pianalto, 479-361-2207
Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, 479-751-6347

Tontitown Storia is published by the Tontitown Historical Museum Board, usually in the Spring and Fall. Please submit story ideas or other comments to Bev Cortiana-McEuen at 479-361-2609, or email bcortiana@cox.net.

***The Locket Spirit* by Julie F. E. Neil**



We enjoy sharing success from one of our own. Julie F. E. Neil recently had her first novel, *The Locket Spirit*, published. The historical romantic suspense novel has received rave reviews! Get yours from amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com.

Julie is the daughter of Vaughn and Mary Catherine Fiori Neil. Congratulations, Julie!



Julie Neil and Mary Catherine Fiori Neil

✓ **Mark Your Calendar ...**

2011-2012 Museum Events

Date	Event						
November 6, 2011	10th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear Co-sponsored by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 1:30 – 4 p.m.						
May 2012	Arkansas Heritage Month Celebration ~ <i>"Dreams and Determination: Arkansans at Work"</i> Event date and time to be announced						
June – September 2012	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Season Hours Open Saturdays and Sundays, 1 – 4 p.m. or by special appointment, call 479-361-2498 or 479-361-2607						
August 2012 Dates to be Announced	114th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Tontitown Historical Museum, Special Hours <table> <tr> <td>Thursday</td><td>1 p.m. – 4 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Friday</td><td>1 p.m. – 7 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Saturday</td><td>10 a.m. – 7 p.m.</td></tr> </table>	Thursday	1 p.m. – 4 p.m.	Friday	1 p.m. – 7 p.m.	Saturday	10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
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Saturday	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.

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

Annual Membership Levels

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



Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____



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

***10th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear
~ Sunday - November 6, 2011 ~ 1:30 - 4:00 p.m. ~***

As we look forward to celebrating the 10th Annual Polenta Smear, many thanks go out to photographer Brenda Pianalto who is at every Tontitown event documenting our *history in the making*. The Tontitown Historical Museum has special albums of photos taken by Brenda ~ Tontitown Grape Festivals, Bocce Tournaments, May Events, Polenta Smears, and more. We appreciate you, Brenda! Don't forget to look for your family and friends in our photos albums.



Brenda Pianalto and special guest Libby Borgognoni at the Tontitown Winery after the 9th Annual Polenta Smear.

Tontitown Stora

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insert follows

10th Annual Tontitown Reunion & Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear

SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 6, 2011 – 1:30 TO 4:00 P.M.
ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH HALL

*THE TONTITOWN HISTORICAL MUSEUM WILL BE OPEN FROM 12:30 - 1:30 P.M.
STOP BY BEFORE THE POLENTA SMEAR!*

- 1:30 – 4:00 COPY PHOTOS, ENJOY PHOTO DISPLAYS, VISIT & LAUGH! :)
WIN DOOR PRIZES AND HAVE FUN!
- 2:30 **SPECIAL PROGRAM – VIDEO & MUSICAL GUESTS**
10-MINUTE AWARD-WINNING VIDEO ON TONTITOWN HISTORY
Controversy in the Ozarks: The Success Story of 19th Century Immigrants
by Chris Lastra, Tanner Parker, and Evan Hopman
Regional & State Winner; National Competitor for National History Day
CLINT PIANALTO & FRIENDS; LORETTA BRUNETTI
- 2:00 – 3:15 POLENTA & UMEDO, DESSERT SERVED



2010 Polenta Smear ~ Photos by Brenda Pianalto