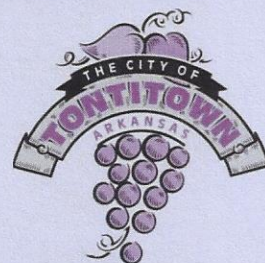


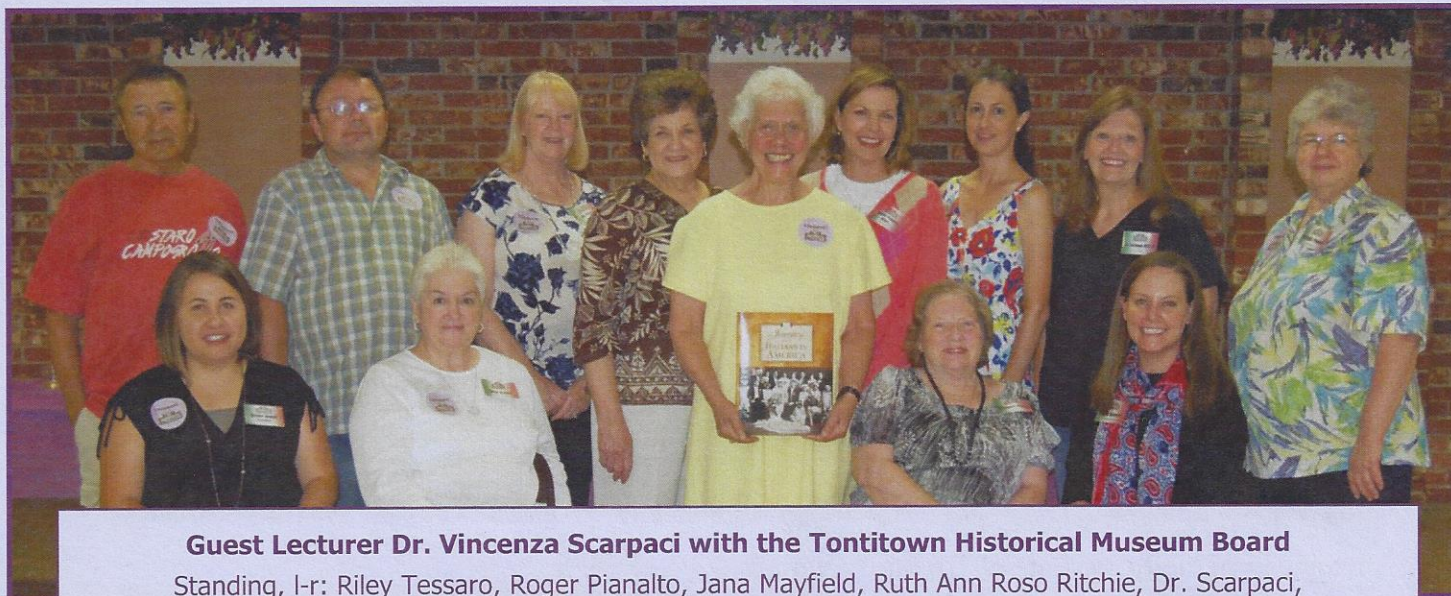
Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum

Fall 2013, Vol. 9, No. 2

Saluti from the Board



Guest Lecturer Dr. Vincenza Scarpaci with the Tontitown Historical Museum Board

Standing, l-r: Riley Tessaro, Roger Pianalto, Jana Mayfield, Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, Dr. Scarpaci, Annette Pianalto Drake, Jennifer DeMartino, Bev Cortiana-McEuen, Brenda Pianalto.
Seated, l-r: Heather Ranalli Peachee, Carol Walker, Charlotte Piazza, Becky Howard. Absent: Michael Hartman

The Tontitown Historical Museum is on the Move! In August, the Board approved a 5-year Strategic Plan developed under the expert leadership of Allyn Lord, Director of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History. This plan is our road map to improve and expand the Museum, its collections and its services.

The Strategic Plan has five major goal areas: Finance, Personnel, Marketing, Building, and Products, each with action steps and target dates. Year 1 of the Strategic Plan is on the back of the newsletter insert. We are very excited to begin to move the Museum forward guided by this plan.

We kicked off our new activity in September when we hosted a premier scholar on Italian Immigration, Dr. Vincenza Scarpaci. She presented a captivating lecture entitled *Roads Less Traveled: Immigrant Ties to the Land*. It was a very special evening. We look forward to more opportunities like this one.

Expanding our services includes year round open time. On November 7 we begin new hours – Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1-4 pm. We are fortunate to have volunteer Cathy Mantegani help staff for now. We hope to add more days in the near future and paid staff next year.

As we focus on improving our collections and services, please think about how you can help and let us know how we can better serve. We're a small Museum with big plans and an exciting future!

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Curator's Choice

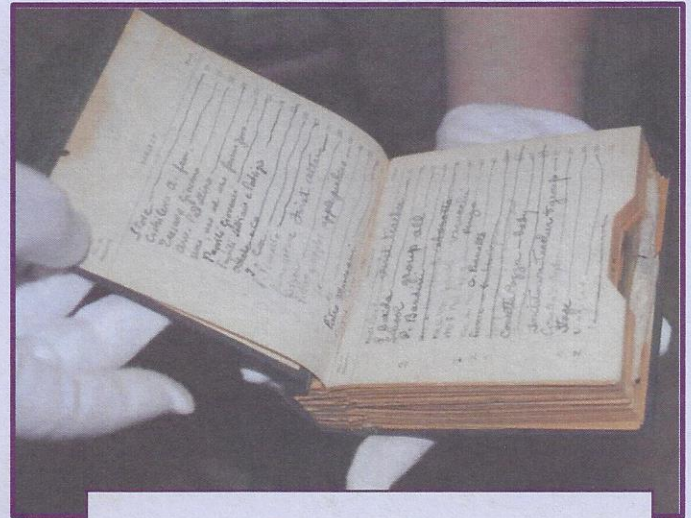
by Charlotte Piazza and Becky Howard

Over the years, Tontitown has attracted much attention because of its status as an immigrant community, and because of the efforts Father

Bandini made in promoting the town as an example of how best to turn immigrants into Americans. Sometimes that attention came in the form of scholarly inquiry. In the 1950s, a young priest by the name of Anthony Benz was working on a degree at the University of Arkansas and chose Tontitown as his research project. While Benz never finished his work, through the gallant efforts of Jan McQuade-Sturm, her mother Joyce Bean Norman, and her aunt Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, the Museum has been able to acquire some of his materials, and what a find it is!

It appears that Benz worked closely with Mary and Zelinda Bastianelli and they shared with him – and loaned to him – many artifacts from Tontitown's early years, including Father Bandini's papers and photographs, and his nephew Father Titus Bandini's personal scrapbook. The materials are amazing – pictures from the early years of Tontitown with the people identified, early maps of the Sunnyside plantation where the Italians originally settled, newspaper clippings about Tontitown from papers all over the United States and Italy, and even a personal account by Domenico Pianalto that chronicles the voyage from Italy.

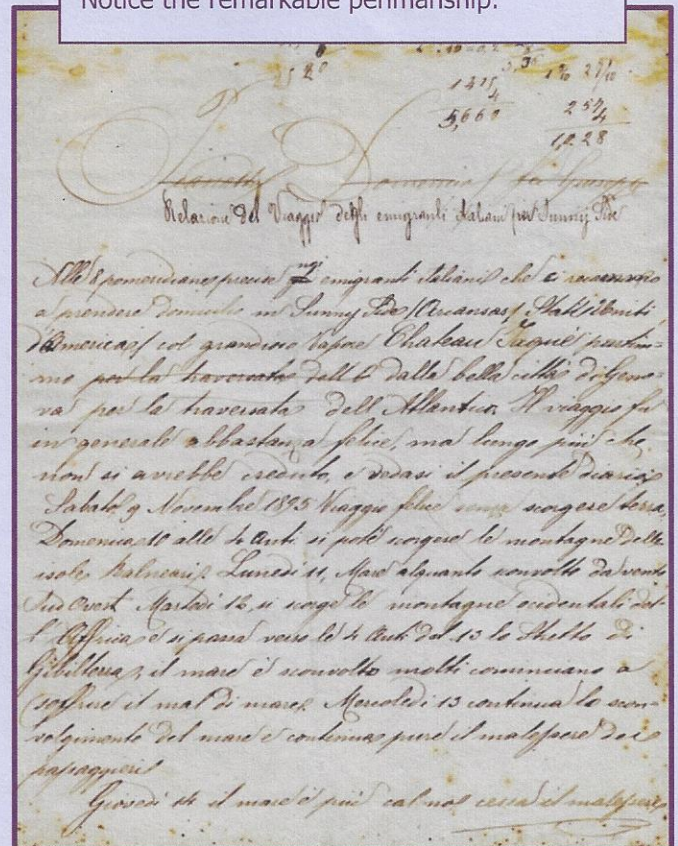
Aside from the sheer excitement of having such interesting items returned to Tontitown, and the emotional reaction many have to seeing pictures and letters thought long lost, the materials are also causing reassessment of some pieces of Tontitown history many thought were settled. Oral histories and family stories often get condensed to their essence as time goes on though, for example, the important fact about Sunnyside has mainly been that the Tontitown Italians left. The reasons for the departure – poor conditions, bad health, and questionable economic treatment – have taken center stage. However, the materials in the Benz collection may expand our understanding of the experience of our ancestors at Sunnyside from the more condensed version with which we all grew up.



Treasures from Anthony Benz Collection

Above: Museum Board members carefully examine Father Bandini's book of negatives. The photos are identified in Italian.

Below: A handwritten letter in Italian by Domenico Pianalto that chronicles the voyage from Italy. Shown is page 1 of 4. Notice the remarkable penmanship.



Curator's Choice ... cont.

While none of what we know appears to be completely untrue, the documents we now have from Mr. Benz seem to shift the timeline a bit; conditions may not have started off bad, Father Bandini may have been working with the plantation owner of Sunnyside before the Italians even arrived, and connections to Sunnyside may have lingered longer than many realized. Rose Bastianelli taught school there as late as 1910, more than a decade after Tontitown was founded. There is definitely more work to be done with these materials and we look forward to sharing with everyone what we learn from them!

Note: The Tontitown Historical Museum Board expresses deepest gratitude to Jan McQuade-Sturm for her above and beyond efforts to return these artifacts to their home. Jan ... we appreciate you beyond words!



Included in Anthony Benz Collection

La Voce Del Popolo or "The Voice of the People" was an Italian language newspaper published for the large Italian community in Detroit, Michigan. This issue is from 1917 and included an article about Tontitown.

A Saluti for the Completion of the Father Bandini Sculpture Project

Letter to the Editor

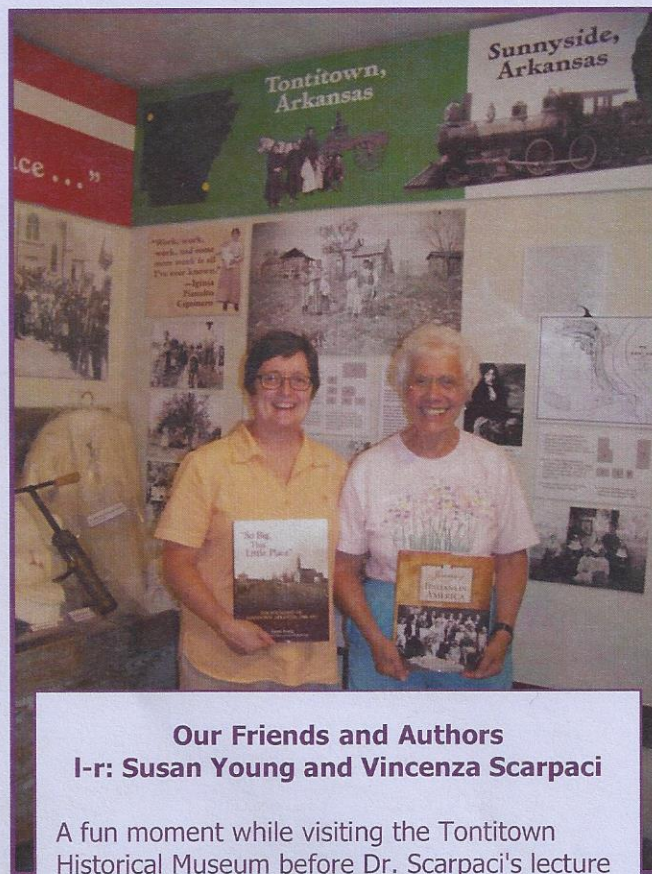
Dear President Heather Ranalli Peachee and Tontitown Board of Directors,

I am privileged to have played a role in preserving the image and story of the wonderful historical priest that created a future for the settlement of Tontitown.

I wish to commend and thank all those individuals that worked so hard to bring the Father Bandini Sculpture project to completion.

I know the Father Bandini Sculpture, stand and plaque could not have been cast and brought to completion, if it had not been for Frank Maestri. His dedication, commitment, and love for the Tontitown community, past, present and future should not go unnoticed. For the Tontitown community and myself, I express my deepest appreciation to Frank.

With respect, admiration, and appreciation,
Toni Maestri-Wirts & the Tontitown Community



Our Friends and Authors l-r: Susan Young and Vincenza Scarpaci

A fun moment while visiting the Tontitown Historical Museum before Dr. Scarpaci's lecture in September. Susan holds her book, *"So Big, This Little Place," the Founding of Tontitown, Arkansas, 1898-1917*. Vincenza holds her book, *The Journey of the Italians in America*.

e-Delivery Available for Facebook or Newsletter

We're excited that our Facebook project – *Tontitown Stories* – is gaining followers and allowing so many to enjoy our history, and to share in it with their comments. (This week's post is shown on the right.) But remember, you do not have to be on Facebook to receive *Tontitown Stories*. Just send us your email address and we'll email you the story each week.

And, in an effort to "go green" and to meet all of our readers' preferences, we're now offering the *Tontitown Storia* newsletter via email. If you prefer to receive your newsletter by **email only**, please email a note to:

TontitownHistoricalMuseum@gmail.com

Don't worry. If you prefer to have the newsletter sitting on your coffee table, we're by your side. We won't take you off the printed mailing list unless you request it. We love that you share our news with your friends.



For the record ... Board member Becky Howard tells most of our *Tontitown Stories*, and can ya tell? She's a real historian! Becky is a graduate student at the University of Arkansas working on her PhD in history. She hopes to defend her dissertation on the Civil War next summer. Becky's grandparents are Allen and Helen Pianalto McGinnis. Thanks for the great job you do Becky, helping us all learn more about Tontitown history and history in general!



Tontitown Historical Museum

17 hours ago • Edited

TONTITOWN STORIES - WEEK 29

If facebook posts are any indication, it seems as though we're in the midst of school picture day for everyone, so we thought we'd share one from our collection! The image is from the school at Tontitown in 1932. You may not recognize their young, innocent faces, but once you see the names, you'll be surprised some of them managed to look so sweet! Front row, L-R: Vincent Lazarri, Margaret Taldo Roso, Palmerina "Bebba" Mantegani, Liz Bariola, Grace Maestri, Catherine Taldo, Rita Bariola. Back row, L-R: Tom Franco, Grace Roso, Josephine Perona, Dorothy Louise Fiori Sbanotto, Harry J. Sbanotto. Ok, we'll admit, Harry Sbanotto looks like he has mischief on his mind even then.

As usual, clothing is a great starting point for examining a picture. Most kids in the 1930s in Arkansas wore clothes made at home, but some of the girls' dresses may have been store bought, which you would expect for a day as important as picture day. The hair styles for the girls are still short, which was a trend in the 1920s. The boys are in collared shirts, but the day must have been warm as Tom Franco and Harry Sbanotto have rolled up their sleeves. Feel free to share stories you may have about the people in the photo in the comments!

This picture is from Pete Sbanotto and was scanned for the Museum at last year's Polenta Smear. This year, the Polenta Smear will be on November 3rd, from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm at the Parish Hall, so start gathering up your pictures and stories! We would love to have some new photos to feature!



The Inspiration to Create the Father Bandini Bust

by Toni Maestri-Wirts

In this year August 6, 2013 when we attended the Tontitown Grape Festival, I was anxious to see the stage of completion of the Father Bandini Bust cast in bronze, with beautiful wooden stand and surrounded with names on grapes of gold. Now the newly placed plaque was the final touch, with the wonderful story of the founding Father of Tontitown. I created the bust some forty years ago, cast it in plaster myself, and was grateful to have it accepted to be placed in the Tontitown Museum. At the time, I could only dream that it would be cast in bronze in my lifetime.

I always felt a strong tie to Italy and the Tontitown story about Father Bandini. When we were young we paid visits to elders that had direct contact with the priest, like the Bastianelli sisters, Rose and Memo Morsani, and my nona and nono, Aldo and Mary Maestri. Although I only knew Father Bandini second hand, these elders brought him to life in my mind.

My sisters and I loved the Tontitown church and our father Ed would honor our request to attend. I felt a strong church tie to Clara Pianalto who welcomed me in her pew and sang out her heart. After church we would visit the organ players store, sweet Johnny Mollar, who never let us pay for candy he gave us. Some of the teenage girls from Tontitown would stay with us on occasion, and these girls we came to love like older sisters. They were from the families of Zulpo, Pianalto, Fiori, and Verucchi.

As teenagers all the Springdale girls had crushes on those handsome Italian boys in Tontitown, and wished to be a dance partner with one at the Grape Festival dances. My older sister Dolores, became successful and married Bruno Stolfi.



Visiting the Father Pietro Bandini Parish Education Center during the 115th Tontitown Grape Festival ~ 2013

l-r: Dolores Maestri Stolfi Dicks, Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan, and sculptor Toni Maestri-Wirts

photo courtesy Brenda Pianalto

In 1963 I left Arkansas for a job in St. Louis. Tontitown folk living in St. Louis at the time, Nova Jean Fiori Watson, husband Danny and girls Danette and Lesley, gave comfort in my adaptation to the new large city environment. In 1968, I met and married Ron Wirts. We had two children, Kristine and Steven. When they went to school so did mom, off to college. To study sculpture in Italy was not economically feasible. I was pleased to find my Italian sculpture instructor Rudy Torrini, at Fontbonne College, right here in St. Louis. I became Rudy's Teaching Assistant and earned my MA degree in 1984.

After graduation Rudy allowed me to stay at Fontbonne and create the Father Bandini Bust. I felt as if my whole life had led me to that moment in time. I had the copy I made of the Father Bandini picture my father Ed borrowed for me years earlier from the Bastianelli sisters. I always wanted to give back something to Tontitown. I wanted to say "thank you" to the depth that I could. I had an ache and a passion to create the bust. To me the story of Father Bandini was larger than life, so the size the bust became was the size it needed to be for me.

~ Donations in Memory and in Honor ~

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

Beato & Violet Haney Ardemagni
Cathy Ardemagni
Cecil Ardemagni
Gene & Irma Taldo Ardemagni
Leo Baudino
Kathleen Brock
Cel & Mary Ceola Cortiana
Gilbert & Shortie Fuqua Cortiana
Gordon & Imogene Ardemagni Cortiana
Rudy Costa
Candida Morsani Crane
Lynda Cross
Albina Ranalli Dalla Rosa
Angelo & Irene Dalla Rosa
James & Domenica Dalla Rosa
Pete & Mary Cortiana Fiori
Joseph Angelo "Andy" Franco
Chuck & Mary Fucci
Emelio & Caterina Gaiche
Rita Taldo Gilliss
Lillian Cortiana Granata
Russell Greenlee
Clementine Morsani Haney
Lee Wana Bariola Keck
Anna Morsani Kitchell
Dawn Latham & Michael Latham Family
Lynn Maestri
Paul & Judy Maestri's 50th Anniversary
Amerigo Morsani
Frank & Carol Morsani
Helen Crane Morsani
Denise Pellin
Arthur Penzo
Ed & Adele Bariola Penzo
Frank & Clara Fiori Pianalto
Gabriel & Elsie Mae Fiori Pianalto
George (Giacinto) & Clara Pianalto
Leo & Lucy Ceola Pianalto
Henry Piazza
John Hugo "J.H." Pozza
Harry & Dorothy Fiori Sbanotto
Agatha Morsani Smith
Lillian Pianalto Smith
Marie Tessaro
Bruce Vaughan
Daniel "Danny" Ray Watson
Elizabeth Morsani Williams
Leon & Sally Verucchi Zulpo

Tontitown Historical Museum 2013 Board of Directors

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Heather Ranalli Peachee, President, 479-685-4793
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Becky Howard, 479-445-7778
Brenda Pianalto, 479-756-5221
Roger Pianalto, 479-361-2207
Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie, 479-751-6347
Riley Tessaro, 479-361-2607

*We were deeply saddened by the loss of two
former Board members in 2013. First, our past
President Denise Pellin, dear friend and pillar
of leadership leaves a void that cannot be filled.
And, Lynda Cross, was always ready to lend a
hand, support our cause, and be our friend.
We'll miss you both forever.*

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.



*Thanks to our friends
from afar for visiting
during this year's
Grape Festival!*

Waxahachie, Texas	Anaheim Hills, California
Los Angeles, California	Melbourne, Florida
Stillwell, Oklahoma	San Diego, California
Benton, Arkansas	Owasso, Oklahoma
Little Rock, Arkansas	Orange, California
Tulsa, Oklahoma	Yorba Linda, California
Prague, Oklahoma	Van Buren, Arkansas
	Gilroy, California
	Huntington Beach, California

We hope to see you again real soon!

✓ **Mark Your Calendar ...**

2013-2014 Museum Events

Date	Event
November 3, 2013	12th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear Co-sponsored by Shiloh Museum of Ozark History St. Joseph's Parish Hall 1:30 – 4 p.m.
To be announced	2014 Arkansas Heritage Month May Event <i>Celebrating the Flavors of Arkansas: Come to the Table</i> 
Starting Thursday, November 7, 2013	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Hours -- NEW!! Open Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays 1 – 4 p.m. <i>Watch for additional open days coming soon!</i> or by special appointment, call 479-361-2498 or 479-361-2607
August 5-9, 2014	116th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Tontitown Historical Museum, Special Hours Thursday, August 7 1 – 4 p.m. Friday, August 8 1 – 7 p.m. Saturday, August 9 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 Tontitown history books: *"So Big, This Little Place"* and *Memories I Can't Let Go Of*
- ✓ Receive special invitations to museum events.

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

~ Tontitown Historical Museum is on the Move! ~

The Tontitown Historical Museum is on the Move! We have new regular hours starting November 7 — Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00 pm — and we hope to expand our hours even more very soon. We have jumped head first into implementing a 5-year Strategic Plan. We have lots of projects to help improve our collections and services, and we are gearing up for more volunteers to help. Be thinking about how you would like to contribute. But first, don't miss our **12th Annual Tontitown Reunion & Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear** on Sunday, November 3 from 1:30 to 4:00 pm! Hope to see you there!



*Volunteer Cathy Mantegani prepares for visitors.
New Hours – Thursdays, Saturdays & Sundays – 1-4 pm*

Tontitown Storia
Fall 2013, Vol. 9, No. 2
insert follows

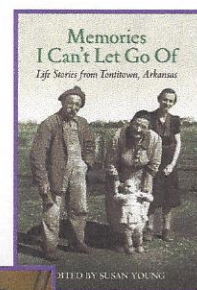
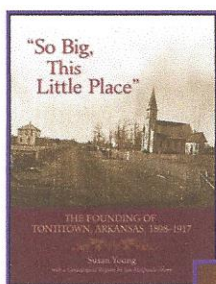
12th Annual Tontitown Reunion & Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear

SUNDAY – NOVEMBER 3, 2013 – 1:30 TO 4:00 P.M.
ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH HALL

1:30 – 4:00 Copy photos, Enjoy photo displays, Visit & Laugh! ☺
Enjoy Loretta Brunetti's "That's Amore" – Tontitown Style!
Win great door prizes and have FUN!!

This year we are seeking photos of **activities or places** -- like sports games, hobbies, business buildings or events, farms or farm work, houses, etc. To save time at Shiloh's photo copying table, you might write up the **Who, What, When, Where, Why** on a piece of paper ahead of time ... then, you'll have more chatting time!

2:00 – 3:15 Polenta & Umedo, Dessert served – No Charge
Tontitown Winery wine by the glass – \$5
(Proceeds benefit the Tontitown Historical Museum)



Polenta



Umedo

2012 Polenta Smear
Photos by Brenda Pianalto

Mille Grazie!!

To our sponsors ...
Tyson Foods and Arvest Bank of Tontitown
and for our door prize donations ...
Guido's, Mama Z's, and Venesian Inn ... and more!

Hosted by Tontitown Historical Museum and Shiloh Museum of Ozark History

Tontitown Historical Museum

Strategic Plan, Year 1 of 5 — 2013-2014

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>
GOAL AREA: Finance	
Increase memberships	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish membership procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Determine membership benefits & levels
Address City funding	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop annual budget request procedures
Consider establishing an endowment	<input type="checkbox"/> Investigate various endowment vehicles & impact on Museum
Investigate grant funding	<input type="checkbox"/> Investigate grant possibilities
GOAL AREA: Personnel	
Increase board competencies	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop list of skills & connections needed for board members <input type="checkbox"/> Develop working board committees with job descriptions & assignments
Begin staffing the Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Create one part-time paid staff position <input type="checkbox"/> Establish staff job description, policies, etc., for position <input type="checkbox"/> Hire new staff member <input type="checkbox"/> Provide orientation and training for staff position
Increase number of volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop volunteer training procedures & job descriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Find new volunteers
Consider expansion of Museum hours	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss expansion of hours <input type="checkbox"/> Increase open hours as possible
GOAL AREA: Marketing	
Upgrade website	<input type="checkbox"/> Define website needs, including content provider
Expand social media	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Facebook-related projects
Increase & diversify advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider new logo
GOAL AREA: Building	
Improve accessibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Review Americans with Disabilities Act regulations <input type="checkbox"/> Build ramp
Improve environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct energy audit and respond to results <input type="checkbox"/> Create routine housekeeping plan
Upgrade collections storage	<input type="checkbox"/> Organize collections storage
GOAL AREA: Products	
Develop publications	<input type="checkbox"/> Transition newsletter to at least partially digital <input type="checkbox"/> Put newsletter back issues on website
Strengthen events	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop Before-During-After checklist for events
Increase collection & photo accessibility in Museum & online	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete spreadsheets of Polenta Smear photos <input type="checkbox"/> Create database for books, videos, audio tapes & organize them for research use
Recordkeeping	<input type="checkbox"/> Review and update Museum files to ensure appropriate documentation of collection objects, loans, policies and procedures, and other Museum business
Develop Collections Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Purchase software and develop data entry procedures to begin cataloging collection