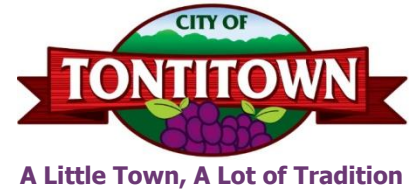


Tontitown Storia



The Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum (THM)

Fall 2017, Vol. 13, No. 2

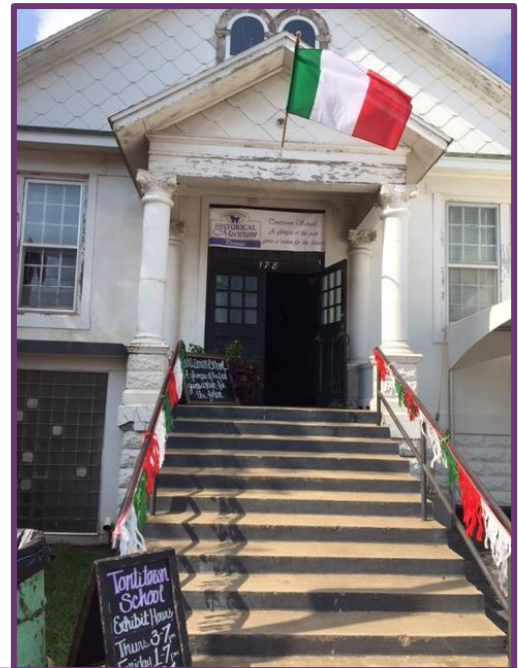
Saluti from the Board

Many visitors at the 119th Tontitown Grape Festival enjoyed learning about Tontitown's history not only at the Tontitown Historical Museum, but also at our special exhibit – *Tontitown School: A glimpse of the past gives a vision for the future*. The exhibit was in Mrs. Mabry's room, where her one-of-a-kind hand-painted educational art still remains and where she taught from 1969-1987. Mrs. Mabry was at the exhibit for a few hours on two days, which was extra special to many of her former students and to her. Grazie Mille, Mrs. Mabry, for helping us bring your room back to life! Check out exhibit photos on page 5 of this newsletter.

The "glimpse of the past" portion of the exhibit included posters of classroom photos and school activity photos from THM's collections. A *Help Plant the Seed to the Future of the School* grapevine bulletin board provided a "vision for the future." Visitors shared their ideas on future uses of the Tontitown School building to save and preserve its history. Here are a few of the many ideas:

- Administrative office for the new Ozark Catholic Academy.
 - A place for parents to stay with children in new Arkansas Children's Hospital.
 - Camp center for children with special needs.
 - Gathering place, small group events, showers, birthday parties, art, music and ballet lessons.
 - Upscale housing / Renovate the building to house locals. Example: Apartment building. Little Rock is doing this with old schools. It looks awesome.
 - Art school. Local artist coop. Community art gallery.
- We look forward to supporting St. Joseph's as the historic Tontitown School building finds its new use.

In other news, we send a special Happy Birthday to one of our favorite contributors, supporters, and cheerleaders – **Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan** – as she celebrates her 90th birthday! We love you, Mary, and are grateful that you share your multitude of talents, your time, and your knowledge and love of Tontitown history with us!



Tontitown School: A glimpse of the past gives a vision for the future
Special exhibit during the 119th Grape Festival

Be sure to mark your calendars for the *16th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear* on October 29, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and make a special note of the earlier time. New this year are special exhibits during the event, including posters from the Tontitown School exhibit. Gathering photos for that exhibit made us aware that many classes do not have student identifications, so we need your help. Check out the invitation inside for more details. We look forward to seeing you there!

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Collections Corner – Woodie's Violin

by Rachel Bellamy, Museum Assistant

In the midst of World War II, a young soldier rescued an abandoned object from a bombed farmhouse in rural Germany. Managing to keep it safe among his belongings, he carried it home with him to the U.S. and with it brought joy to others for the rest of his days.

That young man was Johnny Woodrow “Woodie” Stockton. The forgotten item? A dark-maple-toned violin, now displayed inside Tontitown Historical Museum.

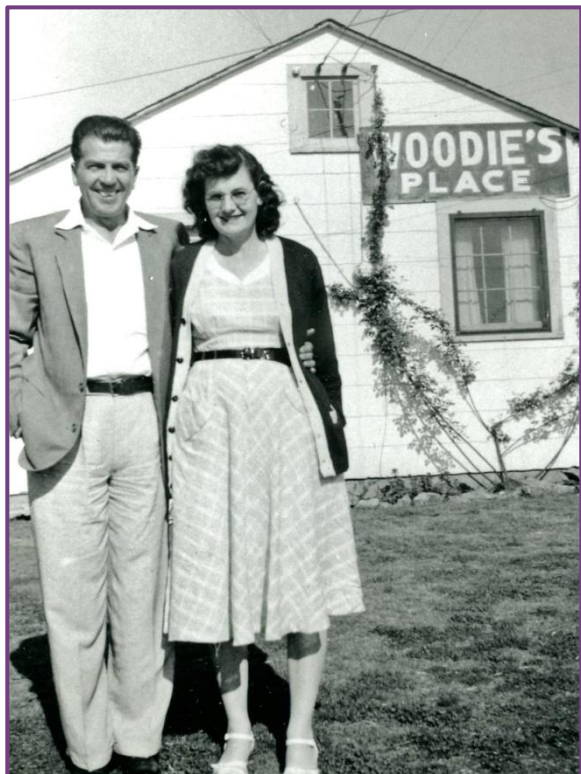


Johnny Woodrow "Woodie" Stockton's Violin

Donated by Ron Stockton

The journey back to the U.S. was the first of many the fiddler and his fiddle would make together, as Woodie would later travel, violin in tow, to compete in fiddling contests across the Northwest Arkansas region. Ron Stockton, Woodie's son and kind donor of his father's violin, has vivid memories of attending competitions with his dad.

Ron recalls, “He went all over the area – Siloam Springs, Winslow, Huntsville. He almost always won first place and never less than second.” Woodie's musical talent was not confined to the violin. Ron adds, “he also played the banjo, guitar and piano, all by ear.”



"Woodie" and Lena Mantegani Stockton, 1947

*Donated by Janet Stockton-Taylor
Tontitown Historical Museum, S-2008-105-13*

Like many good things, the word "violin" can boast Italian roots, as it comes from the Italian word "violino."

Although logical to conclude Woodie's violin was of Germanic origin, little is known with regard to the maker and manufacture date of his fiddle as its inner cavity, when lit, reveals no production information. “The tag came off and was lost years ago,” explains Ron. Although a bit weathered from age and numerous performances, still intact are the violin's lovely neck, scroll and classic hourglass shape dressed with elegantly slanted sound-holes resting either side of its bridge area. The chin rest, now detached, lies alongside of its host cushioned against the soft red felt lining of the original wooden case.

Born in Coffeyville, Kansas, Woodie moved to Northwest Arkansas with his family while still a youngster. It was while playing at a VFW dance in Springdale that he met his wife, Lena Mantegani Stockton, second-generation descendant of Tontitown's original settlers. Mrs. Stockton shared her account of their first meeting and courtship in Tontitown's *Memories I Can't Let Go Of*, in which she recalled that Woodie often walked from Springdale to Tontitown to visit her. The couple married and raised four children: Ronald, Donald, Janet, and Glenda.

Collections Corner ... continued

Woodie had other endeavors in addition to those of a musical kind. Now vacant and quiet, a small tavern still stands on the northwest side of Highway 412 in Tontitown. On its front is a tiny serving window, once intended for the convenience of the walk-up customer of long ago. Above this opening are only slightly faded, white-washed letters still bearing its entrepreneur's namesake, Woodie's Place. Out of this little business, in operation for over fifty years, Woodie and Lena sold local wine, and served up hamburgers, sweet treats, and beer. Long-time Tontitown resident, Elizabeth Pianalto, smiles as she remembers that her young son liked to visit Woodie's Place with friends. "They liked to go there for ice cream. I remember a story told to me about a customer who especially enjoyed a nice banana split. After they'd finished and left, Woodie realized he'd forgotten to put the banana into the dish. Everyone had a good laugh. He was a nice man. He delivered mail for awhile, too." Often on weekends Woodie's talent found a platform inside the tavern. Ron explains, "friends would bring in their guitars and he would get the fiddle out and they'd play all evening."

Many things can mark one's character. When Woodie Stockton rescued a forgotten violin from a pile of rubble, he stamped "fiddler" onto his. A bit weary, but not completely played out, Woodie's fiddle now rests quietly, yet proudly, propped upon its side in Tontitown Historical Museum as if awaiting its longtime traveling companion and one more round of applause.

2nd Annual Tontitown City Bocce Tournament and Car Show

The 2nd Annual Tontitown City Bocce Ball Tournament and Car Show was on September 16th and it was a fantastic day! Tontitown Mayor Paul Colvin, Jr. and the city leaders had a vision to bring the community together again with a pastime that many of the Tontitown Italian settler families played often – Bocce! On your next visit to the Tontitown Historical Museum be sure to check out the bocce balls handcrafted by Peter V. Fiori on display in the Wood Room. An anonymous donor shared these gems, and Lawrence Pianalto made the display box. Congrats to the tourney winners pictured below with Mayor Paul. Grazie Mille to all the planners, sponsors and participants who made the day special!



Above left, 1st Place Winners of \$600 and trophy (l-r), Kenny Pianalto and Zac Pianalto
Above right, 2nd Place Winners of \$300 and trophy (l-r), Clint Pianalto and Justin Pianalto

Photos courtesy Rhonda Doudna

A Full Life: George & Clara Barenberg Pianalto

by Rachel Bellamy, Museum Assistant

First-time visitors to Tontitown are likely to note three things, early 20th century structures, tasty Italian eateries and lyrical-sounding street names. Among the latter of these, whether winding paths that lead to lush vineyards or short cul-de-sacs lined by modern homes, the majority of Tontitown's roads are named after the town's first families, a prominent one of which is Pianalto Road.

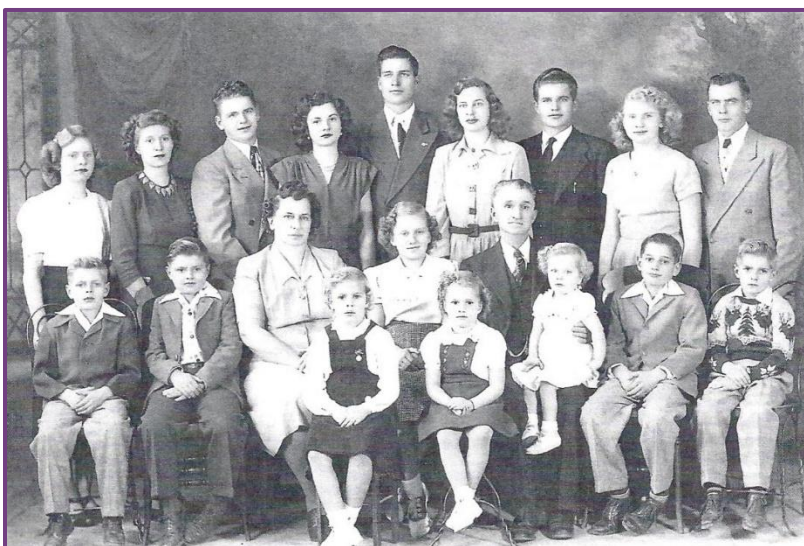
While difficult to place an actual figure on the number of Pianaltos in the more-than-a-century-old community, a good wager would be "*un mazzo*," or in English, "*a bunch*!"

Among the Pianalto family members to first settle in Tontitown was young George Pianalto. Quite a bit is known about this fellow, who along with his siblings and father Domenico, traveled to Tontitown from Sunnyside Cotton Plantation after the sad passing of his mother, Catterina Penzo Pianalto. It is his history that will be a highlight of a special exhibit at this year's annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear on October 29th.

Born on August 22, 1895 in Valli dei Signori in Vicenza province of Italy, as a young adult George stood 5' 4 1/2" tall, had brown hair and eyes and a ruddy complexion. How are such precise physical traits known about him? Through his family's generous donation of his history in the form of original portraits, documents, and other personal items to the museum. While George's given name is Giacinto Pio, his military records list him as Hyacinth Pius (an English version of his name), and it is certain that Giacinto and Hyacinth are one and the same. This fact is shared in the detailed family history account in *The Gift: A Tribute to Domenico and Catterina-Penzo Pianalto* by Celia Stigall, with cross reference and lineage compiled by Joyce Guptill.

George wears a peaceful, contented expression as he poses in his WWI uniform, the shoulder of which bears the same symbol as his WWI helmet. In addition, George's collection includes his WWI gas mask and honorable discharge paper still tri-folded within its leather pouch, dated June 11, 1919.

His children's biographical account of their family history, *Our Memories*, tells of George's search for a permanent home. While his father, Domenico, remained in Tontitown for the rest of his days, George moved about, his journey taking him to different areas, from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after which he considered buying land in Wyoming. Finally, George moved to Herndon, Kansas, where he met his wife of over fifty years, Clara Barenberg, and they eventually purchased a 360-acre farm west of Atwood, Kansas. In keeping with Pianalto tradition, together they produced a large family comprised of seventeen children, all of whom appear healthy and happy in the family photo shown below, taken around the time of their father's achievement of "Master Farmer" of Topeka, Kansas in 1952.



Giacinto "George" and Clara Barenberg Pianalto Family ~ ca 1951

Back row, l-r: Marjorie, Lorine, Eugene "Gene", Agnes, Elmer, Rita, Charles "Charlie", Georgene, Lester

Middle row, l-r: Francis "Frank", Albert "Al", Clara, Patricia "Pat", Giacinto "George" holding Linda, Denis "John", Fredrick "Fred"

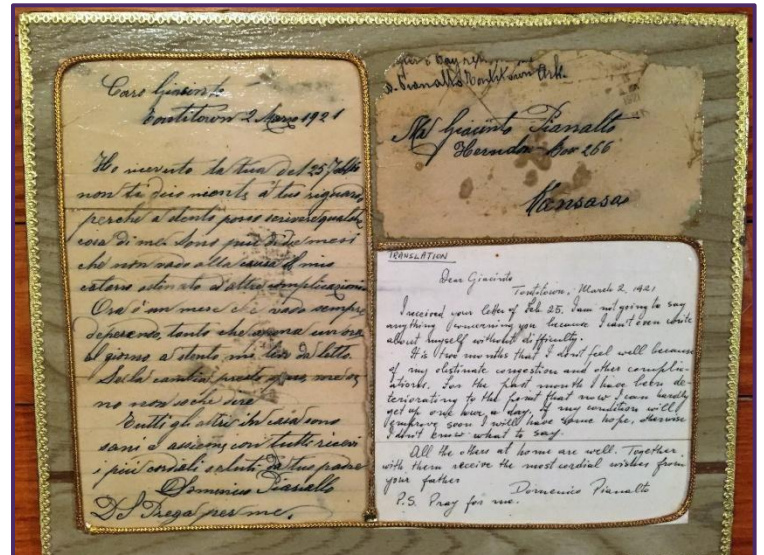
Front row, l-r: Elizabeth "Betty" and Shirley

Courtesy Marjorie Pianalto-Horinek

A Full Life ... continued

A special highlight of George's exhibit is an original letter dated March 2, 1921 written to him by his father, Domenico. Penned in Italian, this moving letter never ceases to amaze museum visitors who often comment that something of the heart of our loved ones is lost in today's electronic communication, and that the loops and curves of personal handwriting convey much more of the individual personality than any typed text or emoji ever could.

Come out to this year's Polenta Smear on October 29, 2017 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and enjoy this special museum exhibit!



George's letter from his father, Domenico ~ March 2, 1921

Tontitown School: A glimpse of the past gives a vision for the future

Tontitown Historical Museum Exhibit during 119th Tontitown Grape Festival - August 3-5, 2017



Above: Roger Pianta with Mrs. Mabry, who taught in this classroom from 1969-1987 and painted the wall artwork
Top right: Visitor shares a suggestion for the School





History in the making! The Gabe Pianalto family showed this tractor, home made by their father, at the City Antique Car Show. It has a 1954 Jeep Willys Engine, unknown steering welded together, a big truck rear differential, and lots more ingenious parts. Gabe was a master mechanic! Bravo!

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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.

~ Donations in Memory and in Honor ~

It is with gratitude and pride that we display Memorial and Honorarium (H) donation plaques in the Tontitown Historical Museum.

Beato & Violet Haney Ardemagni
 Cathy Ardemagni
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 Elizabeth Morsani Williams
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✓ Mark Your Calendar ...

2017-2018 Museum Events

Date	Event
Ongoing	Tontitown Historical Museum, Regular Hours Open Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 1 – 4 pm For special appointment, call 479-361-9800 or 479-685-4793 Email – tontitownhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com
October 29, 2017 * Note earlier date & time*	16th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear St. Joseph's Parish Hall 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
May 2018 Date to be announced	2018 Tontitown Heritage Day Supporting Arkansas Heritage Month <i>Focus: Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission</i> 
August 2018 Dates to be announced	120th Tontitown Grape Festival, It's About Tradition Tontitown Historical Museum, Special Hours Thursday 3 pm – 7 pm Friday 1 pm – 7 pm Saturday 10 am – 7 pm 



*"So Big,
This Little
Museum"*

Benefits

- Satisfaction in supporting the growth of the Tontitown Historical Museum to preserve and protect the heritage of Tontitown.
- 10% discount on Museum purchases
- Amici window cling

Mail your tax-deductible check to:

Tontitown Historical Museum
 P.O. Box 144
 Tontitown, AR 72770

(or give to any Museum Board member)

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- ☐ Individual – \$15
- ☐ Family – \$20
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- ☐ Amici – \$50 to \$249
- ☐ Concordia – \$250 to \$499
- ☐ Heritage – \$500+

**Renew
or Join
Today!**

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ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

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Volunteers are the backbone of Tontitown Historical Museum. May we call on you to volunteer? ☐ Yes!



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

***16th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear
Sunday ~ October 29, 2017 ~ 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.***



The Tontitown Historical Museum Board cordially invites you to the **16th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-fashioned Polenta Smear**. It will be a fun afternoon of friendship, food, and history at St. Joseph's Parish Hall! Come join us for delicious polenta and umedo, plus desserts. You can join or renew your Amici membership, and bring photos for us to scan and add to our photo collection. In addition to poster displays, this year we will have two small museum exhibits to enjoy. See the insert for more details. We look forward to seeing you!



2016 Polenta Smear photos by Brenda Pianalto

Tontitown Storia
Fall 2017, Vol. 13, No. 2
insert follows

You're Invited to the
**16th Annual Tontitown Reunion &
Old-fashioned Polenta Smear**

SUNDAY – OCTOBER 29, 2017

11:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH HALL

Polenta & Umedo, Dessert served ~ Donations accepted
Copy photos, Enjoy photo displays & exhibits, Visit & Laugh!

Win great door prizes and have FUN!!

New parish cookbook available for purchase ~ just in time for holidays!

New this year! Special exhibits on display during the event

- Hand-carved crucifix by Giovanni Batista Cigainero, loaned by John Pianalto
- A Full Life: George & Clara Barenberg Pianalto, family donations
- *Tontitown School: A glimpse of the past gives a vision for the future* — classroom posters and visitor suggestions from Grape Festival exhibit

And, help us identify students in classroom photos from the Tontitown School. Many of the photos were displayed at the exhibit during the 119th Tontitown Grape Festival. Bring your class photos for us to scan if they are not already in our collection.

Also, you can join or renew your membership to Tontitown Historical Museum Amici (Friends) during the event, and save time and postage. Grazie Mille to all our members!



2016 Polenta Smear photos by Brenda Pianalto

Event sponsored by Tontitown Historical Museum



Grazie Mille to Amici (Friends) Members



Thank you, Amici members! Your support means the world to us, and your tax-deductible memberships continue to grow our Building Fund for future expansion. Please use the membership form on page 7 to renew your membership or to become a new member. ***Grazie Mille, Amici!***

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