



Tontitown Storia

Newsletter of the Tontitown Historical Museum (THM)

A Department of the City of Tontitown
Fall 2020, Vol. 15, No. 1



Saluti from the Board

Ciao from the Tontitown Historical Museum board members. Unfortunately, our museum is still closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the safety of our visitors and staff, however we are monitoring our local situation to make decisions about reopening our space. We know that these can be trying and uncertain times and we hope that everyone is staying safe. We thank you all for your patience and understanding.

Though 2020 has thrown us a curveball, we have still been able to work on some wonderful projects during our closure. Additionally, the board welcomed Misty Piazza as a new member in April and we are so pleased and excited to have her as part of the THM family.

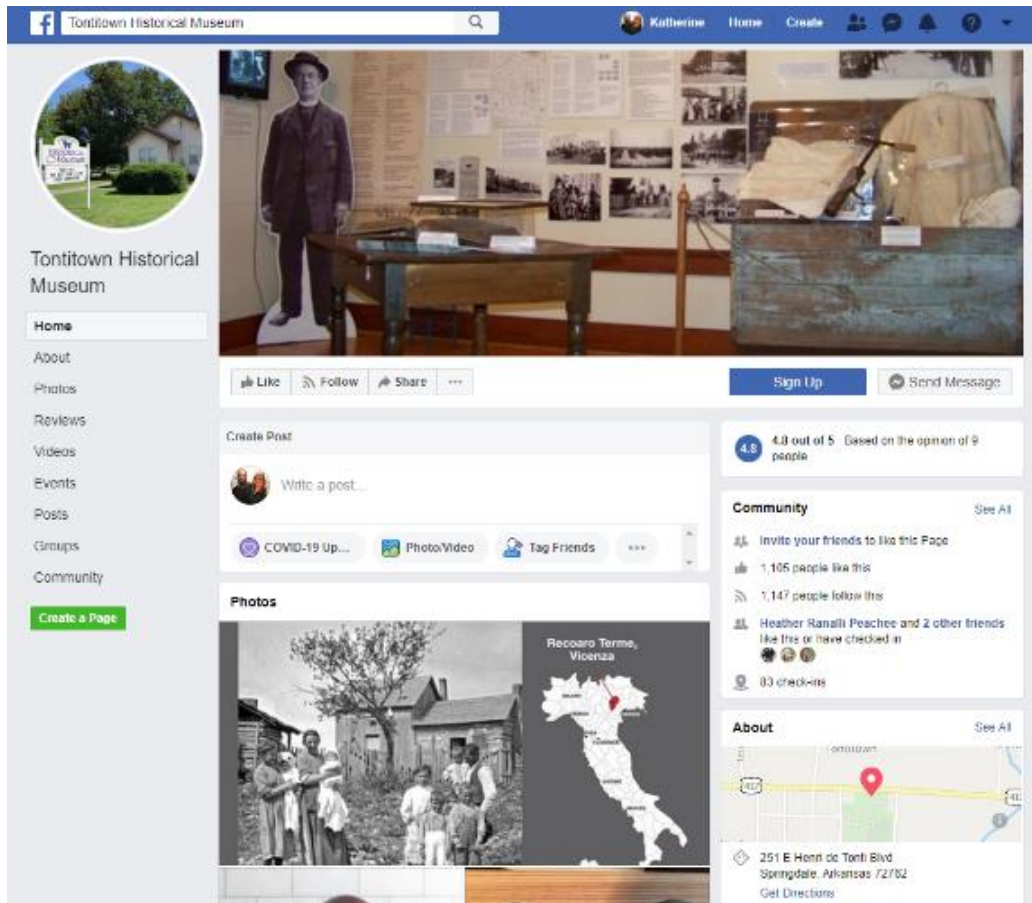
You might have noticed that our newsletter, *Tontitown Storia*, has a new look and feel. We are shifting to a largely digital format moving forward in order to be more environmentally friendly. As board members, we really enjoyed putting this together. If you prefer a printed newsletter, we are happy to mail you one. Please call us at (479) 361-9800 or email us at tontitownhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com. Grazie Mille, many thanks for your continued support!



Misty and her husband, Dean

In This Issue

Tontitown Then and Now
Artifact Spotlight
Learn How to...Make Apple Cider Vinegar
Staff/Board Spotlight
Amici Members
Open Hours and Contact Information
Museum and Community Events
Tontitown Historical Museum Board Members
Amici Membership Form



Do you want to stay updated on what's going on at the Tontitown Historical Museum? Follow us on Facebook for the latest and learn about our collection.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE TONTITOWN HISTORICAL MUSEUM? BECOME AN AMICI MEMBER AND HELP PROTECT THE HERITAGE AND HISTORY OF TONTITOWN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. SIMPLY FILL OUT AND MAIL IN THE FORM ON THE LAST PAGE OR GO TO OUR WEBSITE, TONTITOWN.COM/TONTITOWN/MUSEUM, TO SIGN UP ONLINE.



Tontitown Then and Now

by Emily Pianalto-Beshears

When people first settled in Tontitown, many residents set about creating the space that would be their home, their place of worship, and their farmlands to tend cows. Many thought outside the scope of their homes and saw the need to bring everyday needs closer to home and bring outsiders to their dinner tables. The group of Italian immigrants worked hard within the community and at times left the state to send money home to Tontitown to help their town flourish during the off seasons of farming. They invested time into the land by farming cattle, chickens, grapes, and various fruits and vegetables. They worked to build a strong church that was their town hall and school in the beginning years. And they invested money and risked opening businesses or buying businesses. Their businesses not only flourished from local Tontitowner support but also those within neighboring towns and eventually across the country.

In 1910, the great attraction to come to Tontitown was the railroad. Tontitown would become connected to not just its neighboring towns but also the rest of the country. At the far end of Tontitown the depot was built as well as a hotel for passengers to utilize while traveling; it was named Leon d'Oro or Golden Lion first owned and operated by Mary V. Cannon. There was a pull to travelers and locals to support this business. This hotspot would become the first of many favorite spots that would draw people to Tontitown to see what that small town was up to.



For many of the immigrants the journey into nearby Springdale could prove a challenge as most of the adults had little to no English and, though the children were learning, they could not always translate the needs of their parents. When digging a well, dynamite was called for and many would gesture with their hand and create explosion

noises to communicate their need for the explosive. A businessman in Wisconsin named Frank Baudino had heard of Tontitown and its little Italian community and decided in 1911 (thirteen years after Tontitown was settled) to relocate and open a general store to serve his new community. John Mollar, Frank Baudino's brother-in-law, took over this shop and became a longstanding fixture in the area for being one of the children's favorite adults; always having candy at the ready to bring a smile.



Two years after Tontitown saw several of their sons return from serving in World War II, a local staple, The Venesian Inn, opened its doors to serve home cooked meals that made everything in-house from the noodles to the rolls. It was originally opened by Germano Gasparotto in 1947 as a motel, restaurant, and gas station. A location right on the main road gave it easy marketing as a quick

stop before going to town. It passed through many hands all local to Tontitown, while closing the gas station and the motel to focus on the meals hoping to keep these traditional meals accessible to those local and to those out of state.

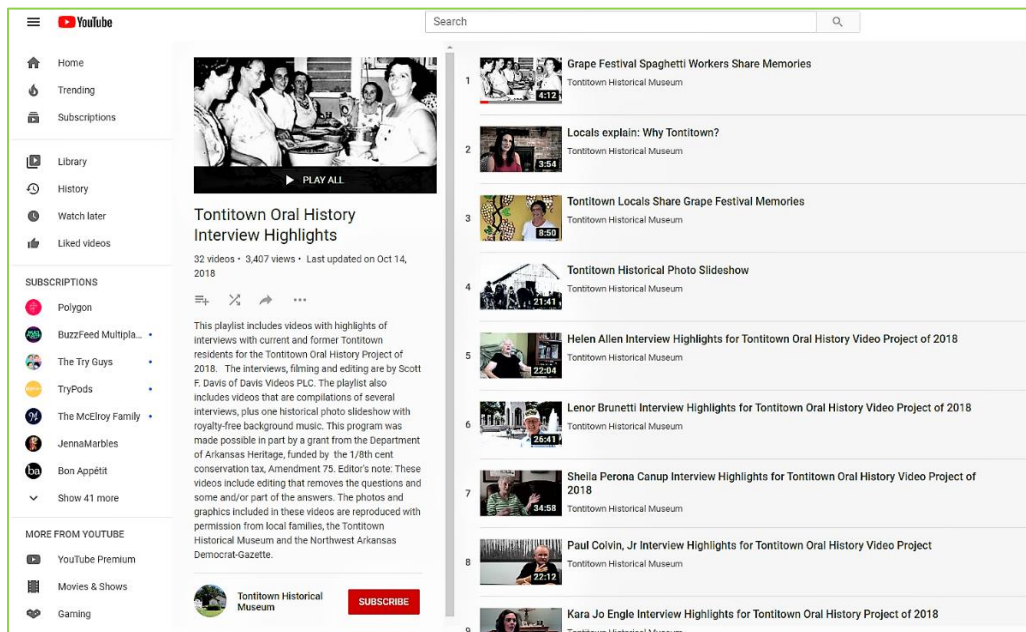
In the decades since, many local favorites have opened and closed, making way for the newer Tontitown that now sees new businesses settling in. Anyone driving through Tontitown would think they were in any typical suburb town with options for your favorite coffee, fast food, and several pizza places. Businesses have seen the benefits of settling in a fast-growing town like Tontitown. Although still a small town, it sits between Fayetteville, Springdale, and Bentonville, at the intersection of two main roads (412 and 112), and has led many to see the perks of small town living as the bigger cities are not far away. As families move out to the country, the restaurants and businesses have settled closer to where the customers are bringing Jose's Bar and Grill as well as Domino's just a few minutes from many people's front door.

While the tests of time have seen some of these doors close, it has also seen new industry grow in this once quiet country town. Today you can find 7Brew not far from Smoothie King. If you are craving those classic Italian flavors Venesian Inn has been open since 1947 or Guido's Pizza and Mama Z's Cafe are more recent additions. There is still that small-town traditional feel when you enter the heart of Tontitown, but you can also feel the march of time as new businesses crop up. The Italian industrious lifestyle still flourishes within a town built by immigrants wanting a better life for themselves and their families.

All photos courtesy of the Tontitown Historical Museum unless otherwise noted.

First photo caption: Leo Maestri General Merchandise, Tontitown, about 1907. With Leo Maestri (hand on door), Dick Taldo (on crutches), and in window Josephine Maestri (left) & Mary Quinn Ritter Maestri (right).

Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History / Jada Maestri Collection (S-93-96A)



Have you visited the YouTube page for the Tontitown Oral History Project? Visit Youtube.com and search "Tontitown Oral History Highlights" to watch interviews highlighting the experiences of Tontitown citizens.

Artifact Spotlight

by Katherine McDaniel

A newer artifact to our collection, Guisepppe Joseph Lazzari made this unique shaving mirror. Born in Valli dei Signori, Italy in 1872, Lazzari settled in Tontitown in 1909 and died in 1951. During the 2018 Polenta Smear, Sandra Pianalto donated the mirror.

Italians have long been known for their glasswork. Beginning in the 11th century Italian glass, especially from Murano near Venice, was renowned for its quality. By the 16th century, Venice had become the mirror production center of the world. Venetian glass maintained a volatile spot in the limelight as its popularity rose and fell until the early 1900s when Murano glassmakers started to pull away from classic Venetian mosaic styles to more modern styles like art nouveau and art deco. Now, Murano glassmakers are known for their innovations as they strive to marry technical precision with artistic vision. Though we are not sure of where or when Joseph Lazzari's mirror was made, Italian glass has a strong reputation seen through Joseph's quality craftsmanship.



Learn How to Make Apple Cider Vinegar

by Caroline Franco-Ceola



Which of the following fruits were heavily farmed in Tontitown by the Italian immigrants in the early 1900s?

- A. Grapes
- B. Strawberries
- C. Apples
- D. All of the above

If you answered, D, you are correct! Although, farming small fruits and vegetables were their passion and what they knew best, most Italian immigrants wore many hats in order to support their families. The men worked in the community as coal miners, railroad workers, and masons as the women tended the farms and raised the children.

To this day, you can still drive through Tontitown and see grape vineyards lining the rolling fields and small produce stands owned and operated by local families selling their fruits and vegetables.

Since autumn is here, we encourage you to support your local farmers by shopping for produce at your closest fruit and vegetable stands. Ranalli Farms Produce, located on West Highway 412, has been owned and operated by the Ranalli family in Tontitown for more than 100 years.

In my family, everything is better with a little apple cider vinegar! Pick up your favorite locally grown tomatoes, cucumbers and onions. Slice, mix, and toss in pepper, salt, a little bit of oil, and a whole lot of vinegar.

Recipe for homemade Apple Cider Vinegar found in *An Ozark Culinary History* written by Erin Rowe.

Simply save the parings from apples and put them all in a big jar with water and sweetening (honey or sorghum will do). When this turns sour (to vinegar), it is ready to use!

Buon appetito!

Staff/Board Member Spotlight

with Pam Herron, Museum Assistant

- Where is your hometown?
 - I was born in Oakland, California - currently living in West Fork but I have lived in Fayetteville mostly.
- How long have you lived in NWA?
 - 35 years
- What is your role at the Tontitown Historical Museum?
 - I am the Museum Assistant which includes customer service, research, organizing, documentation, special projects, caretaker of the museum, and anything asked of me that I can do.
- What are your hobbies?
 - Strolling through flea markets and antique shops. I love nature and animals, some painting of furniture. I recently started working with paper clay, moulds, and chalk paint to decorate and paint flower pots and other small items.
- What is your favorite quote/line from a movie?
 - "There's no crying in baseball!!" comes to mind from a League of Their Own (Tom Hanks)
- What makes you the happiest?
 - Spending time with my 3-year-old granddaughter, family, and friends. A trip to the beach, river, or lake.
- What made you interested in getting involved in the THM?
 - I already had connections with Tontitotwn for many years, love the history of Tontitown, my love of museums, and love of vintage and antiques. The hours were perfect for me and it is an opportunity to learn new skills.
- What aspect of your role do you enjoy the most?
 - Seeing how happy visitors are when they come to the museum and how they enjoy memories of their childhood through the artifacts and photographs we have. The connection this helps them feel to the past. It feels good to have a part in helping to continue the preservation of this museum. The importance of the museum and what it means to the descendants of the early settlers and the growing community. I really enjoy learning about artifacts that I have never seen before and the connections they have to generations of families. I love the early 1900's photographs and seeing the clothing and accessories of the 1920's and '30's. Learning about the strong, hardworking men and women (especially the role many women played in developing this town) of Tontitown and how happy they were having a simple life even with struggles. The bravery and hardship it took to come to this country.



- What do you hope to learn from your involvement?
 - Learning about new subjects, things I've never done before in an area I have never worked in. (I have always loved museums.) The challenge of preservation and documentation for future generations.
 - In three words, how would you describe the mission and work of THM?
 - Important, valuable, and educational
-



Would you like a digital version of *Tontitown Storie*? Send an email to tontitownhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com to sign up for our email newsletter. It is all the same great articles in a convenient format!



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. A membership form to renew your membership or to become a new member is on the back cover. ***Grazie Mille!***

Heritage

Family of Frank Maestri
Family of Dick & Bernice Ardemagni McCauley

Concordia

Jeff & Kay Franco
Pete & Elaine Sbanotto

Amici

Bill Ardemagni
Frank & Sharon Ardemagni
Richard & Bernadette Ardemagni
Dennis & Billie Bariola
Barbara Begnel Buckley
Jim & Sheila Perona Canup
Blake & Caroline Ceola
Holly Childs
Bryan & Bev Cortiana-McEuen
Eric & Julie den Boer
Rep. Charlotte Fite
Mark & Melissa Franco
Craig & Carla Gourley
Adrienne Morsani Graham
Ken & Deloris Pianalto Green
Betty Hinshaw
Becky Howard
Leland & Mary Cortiana Lawrenz

Allyn Lord
Leslie "Red" Maestri
James McConnell
Bill & Marilyn Mussino
David & Rebecca Oskey
Carolyn Page
Ben & Loretta Pianalto Pappani
Evelyn Pellin
Ralph & Nancy Pendergraft
Andrew & Peggy Penzo
Chris & Annette Pianalto
Cindy Pianalto
Vince & Sandy Pianalto
Janette Ceola Rogers
Shiloh Museum of Ozark History
Philip & Mary Ann Taldo
Tim & Melissa Tessaro
Tontitown Flea Market

Family

Kurt & Penny Anderson
Loyce & Mary Ardemagni
Pauline Bariola
Rachelle Bariola
Bob & Patty Besom
Robert & Ida Taldo Brady
Preston & Summer Ranalli Carter
Jennifer De Martino
Mark & Annette Pianalto Drake
Clint & Kara Jo Engle
D. Claud Fields, Jr.
Bary & Jennifer Pianalto Gills
Eugenia Hartman
Jason & Susan Kerr

James & Xyta Lucas
Robert & Cheryl Ardemagni Martin
Karla Ardemagni McKinley
Jim & Kathy Pianalto Miller
Stephanie Begnel Mullane
Larry & Carmelita Newquist
David & Heather Ranalli Peachee
Mike & Denise Pearce
Bernard & Sherry Pianalto
Sheryl Shores
Deborah J. Smith
Celia Cigainero Stigall
Jim & Janice Pianalto Swearingen
Marty Taldo

Amici Members

Individual

Sandy Christopherson
Andrea Penzo Hale
Sharon Maestri
Brenda Pianalto

Roger Pianalto
Betty Sabatini
Patricia Simoni

Senior Family

Ken & Deborah Bailey
Ahmad H. Bayyari
Forest & Carolyn Bowen, Jr.
Rick & Kathy Brunetti
Denis & Margie Ceola
Ernie & Norma Deines
Larry & Betty Dutton
Robert & Linda Elia
Vic & Barbara Verucchi Faraci
Raymond & Pauline Franco
Roy & Jettie Franco
Bill Gaiche
Bill & Martha Green
Tommy & Zita Greenlee
Eddie & Nancy Guinn
Marjorie A. Pianalto Horinek
Dale & Darlene Johnston
Jerry & Dorothy Kever
Gina Criman Lankston (Bruno Stolfi family)

Phill & Kathy Bariola Laursen
Danny & Pat Pellin
Mike & Rhonda Pellin
Claude & Agatha Penzo
Husk & Rita Penzo
Patricia Perona
Leonard & Evelyn Pianalto
Richard & Antoinette Pianalto
Phillip & Margaret Piazza
Ron & Ruth Fiori Poynor
Norbert & Judy Ranalli
Fred & Ruth Ann Roso Ritchie
Gary & Deanna Shackelford
Deborah Shouse & Ron Zoglin
Max & Kay Taldo
Frank & Dolores Verucchi
Norman & Carol Walker
Nova Jean Fiori Watson
Ron & Toni Maestri Wirts

Senior Individual

Paul A. Bariola
Loretta Brunetti
Jeanette Burditt
Jim Cortiana
Helen George
Ellen Verucchi Goff
Patsy Taldo Phillips Graham

John P. McGlone
Mary Catherine Neil
Elizabeth Pianalto
Martha Pianalto
Lou Sharp
Mary Frances Maestri Vaughan
Dolores J. Wilson

Lifetime (Level Retired in 2014)

Loyce & Mary Ardemagni
Richard & Bernadette Ardemagni
Kenneth Brock
Mike & Bernadette Pianalto Collins
Genevieve (Genny) Della Rosa Deutsch
Paul & Dolores Maestri Stolfi Dicks
Leona Della Rosa Kasting
Allyn Lord
Frank & Evelyn Maestri
Lawrence McGlone

Frank & Carol Morsani
Art & Joyce Penzo
Clint Penzo
Shawn & Letty Penzo
Henry & Charlotte Piazza
Robert Serio
Dennis & Evelyn Shaw
Mary Costa Wersky-Colombero
Mike & Toni Zulpo

Notice: Temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

**251 E. Henri De Tonti Boulevard
Tontitown, AR 72770**

Contact us:

(479) 361-9800

tontitownhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com

2020 Museum and Community Events

Date	Event
Event Canceled	122 nd Tontitown Grape Festival, <u>It's About Tradition</u>
Event Canceled	5 th Annual Bocce Tournament, sponsored by the City of Tontitown Harry Sbanotto Park, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Event Canceled	19 th Annual Tontitown Reunion and Old-Fashioned Polenta Smear St. Joseph's Parish Hall, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
The COVID-19 pandemic may affect these scheduled event dates.	

Tontitown Historical Museum Board Members, 2020

Tontitown Storia is published by the Tontitown Historical Museum Board. Please submit story ideas or comments to Katherine McDaniel at tontitownhistoricalmuseum@gmail.com.

Caroline Franco-Ceola, President
Jennifer De Martino, Vice President
Katherine McDaniel, Secretary
Bev Cortiana-McEuen, Treasurer

Misty Piazza
Heather Ranalli-Peachee
Emily Pianalto-Beshears
Riley Tessaro



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



*"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 magnet

Mail your tax-deductible check to:

Tontitown Historical Museum
P.O. Box 144
Tontitown, AR 72770
(or give to any Museum Board member)

Annual *Amici* Membership Levels

- ☐ Individual – \$15
- ☐ Family – \$20
- ☐ Senior Individual – \$10
- ☐ Senior Family – \$15
- ☐ Amici – \$50 to \$249
- ☐ Concordia – \$250 to \$499
- ☐ Heritage – \$500+

**Renew
or Join
Today!**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

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