



Working on the Sedalia Ragtime Archive has frequently led me out of the intoxicating realm of syncopation and into the other fascinating aspects of old “Sedville’s” saga.

We’ve all heard the story of Sedalia’s naming, but as I probe the accumulating depths of our magnificent cyber space archive, I find some blemishes on “that old chestnut” and have begun to seriously doubt the venerable founder’s story...

First, though to recount the tale...according to George R. Smith’s oldest daughter when the town was moved from Georgetown down to meet the railroad, the General decided to name the new community after his daughter Sarah (since he said he had already named a flatboat after his other daughter, Margaret.) Supposedly Sarah’s nickname was “Sed” so George settled on Sedville. However a St. Louis acquaintance suggested that was too pedestrian and proposed giving it more of a classical lilt by adding “alia”. Thus the new town was christened Sedalia as it rolled off the tongue with a great deal more conceit than Sedville.¹

Frankly, Sadie is a more common nickname for Sarah so I find it far more likely that the town was originally Sadieville. In fact that would be my preference today. However for now, the old Harding story will keep the city limit signs accurate...

We have also always been told that since the city name was so unique, that other Sedalias must have derived their names from the Missouri coinage.

As you will see in coming notes, that may not be the case.

¹Overlay, Fauna R.; “Place Names of Five Central Counties of Missouri;” M.A. thesis University of Missouri-Columbia; 1943.

²Harding, Samuel Banister; “Life of George R. Smith: Founder of Sedalia, Missouri;” Privately Printed; 1904; p. 291; on-line at <https://archive.org/stream/lifeofgeorgersmi00hard#page/290/mode/2up>