



SYNCOATED NOTES #12

A Sedalia Convention & Visitor's Bureau Blog

By L.C. Melton (May 11, 2016)

SEDALIA, West Virginia

I'm back in the states this week...West Virginia specifically and I'm winding my way through the Ohio River Valley in the northwestern part of the state next to the Allegheny Culberland Plateau. Eventually I come upon the tiny impoverished little burg of Sedalia, West Va. It is on Hiway 23, a state road that snakes its way through the foothills entwining with the meandering Robinson Folk river which eventually finds its way to the Ohio. Shanties, rusting mobile homes and picturesque footbridges line the road. Sedalia is in Dodderidge County¹.

The place was settled in 1837 but not incorporated until 1888 when it was named.² The Virginia Place Names Book indicates it was probably named for a local resident's given name but we can figure given the date that the name originally came from Missouri's Sedalia. I did locate a Sedalia Gambill who died in 1944 at the age of 70 in Tyler county, one county over...could be the one.³ The post office survived by the way until 1909. I have a postcard from June 7th in it's last year.

There are some shabby structures along the narrow road and the rather noble little Vermont Baptist Church but as I google along I'm soon out of town and back in the boonies again. It is interesting to note that this region was the nation's first "oil country". The combination of the black gold so near a major waterway meant for a brief period it was a wealthy region. That was all gone however by 1900.⁴

I tried and tried to find a pre-1860 map of Virginia that might show the Sedalia name but to no avail. In fact there is no indication that it had a pre-post office name at all.

¹ Sedalia, West VA; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sedalia,_West_Virginia

² Kenny, Hamill and Thomas; West Virginia Place Names; 1911;
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015009099824;view=1up;seq=587>

³ West Va. State Dept. of Health, Vital Records;
http://www.wvculture.org/vrr/va_view.aspx?Id=2624271&Type=Death

⁴ History of W. VA Mineral Industries;
<http://www.wvgs.wvnet.edu/www/geology/geoldvog.htm>