

Woodye Smuinville, hello Sedgewickville

Small town celebrates its 125th birthday

Story by B. Ray Owen
Photos by Fred Lynch

SEDGEWICKVILLE — The village of Sedgewickville came into being in 1867 when a small, Southeast Missouri community applied for a U.S. Post Office.

"At that time, the name of the community was Smithville," said Sharon Smith. "It was found that a Smithville, Mo., already existed, and the name of the town had to be changed if it was to have a post office."

That was 125 years ago. This month, Sedgewickville, situated along Highway K about 15 miles west of Jackson, will observe its 125th birthday, and the community will hold a celebration that will include a birthday cake and the singing of "Happy Birthday, Sedgewickville," at 3 p.m. April 26.

"We have coordinated our anniversary plans around the annual Mississippi River Valley Scenic Drive to be held April 25-26," said Smith, who, with Tom Crites, is co-chairman of the anniversary observance. "We have planned several activities during the weekend."

Sedgewickville is one of 15 communities on the 130-mile, two-day driving tour.

Visitors to the community of 138 people will have an opportunity to see the Sedgewickville of old.

"We will set up a museum-type setting at City Hall," said Smith. "Included in the display will be a general store, a living room-bedroom combination and a kitchen, all from an earlier era."

Also available to visitors will be a pictorial stamp cancellation from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 25.

Many of the town's businesses will be open for four throughout the two days. A street dance will be held Saturday evening with music by the Conrad Band, and kiddie rides will be available for children both days. Arts and crafts will also be available.

The Bollinger-Dolle Mill will also be open for tours.

"This mill is located near Sedgewickville on the Whitewater River," said Smith. "It was in operation 138 years, from 1828 to 1958. The mill had been destroyed by fire during the Civil War but was rebuilt in 1867."

Inside the mill everything is like it was during its operation, including the old wooden pulleys, leather belts and a couple of 1880s turbines that provided power.

"No one really knows when Smithville was founded," said Smith, who has researched Sedgewickville's history. "It was probably during the mid-1800s, and was named in honor of Dr. H.J. Smith, who was the first doctor in the town."

Smithville was situated near the old St. Michaels Trading Trail, which ran from Cape Girardeau to Fredericktown during the French and Spanish occupation. The town sat on 320 acres of land, which was purchased from the U.S. government during the administration of Franklin Pierce, for 12½ cents per acre.

Smith built a large two-story building on some of the property. The first floor served as a drug store and the second floor was used as a town hall.

In 1867, Smithville officials applied for a post office. But there already was a Smithville post office in Missouri and the town name had

to be changed. The name Sedgewickville was adopted in honor of Maj. Gen. John Sedgewick, a Union officer who was killed during a Civil War battle on May 9, 1864.

"It is not really known why the town was named after Sedgewick, or why an 'e' was added, but here we are today with Sedgewickville," said Smith.

The post office was established as a fourth-class office in 1867. The city itself was incorporated in the 1890s; however, the charter was allowed to expire, and the town had to be reincorporated in the 1930s.

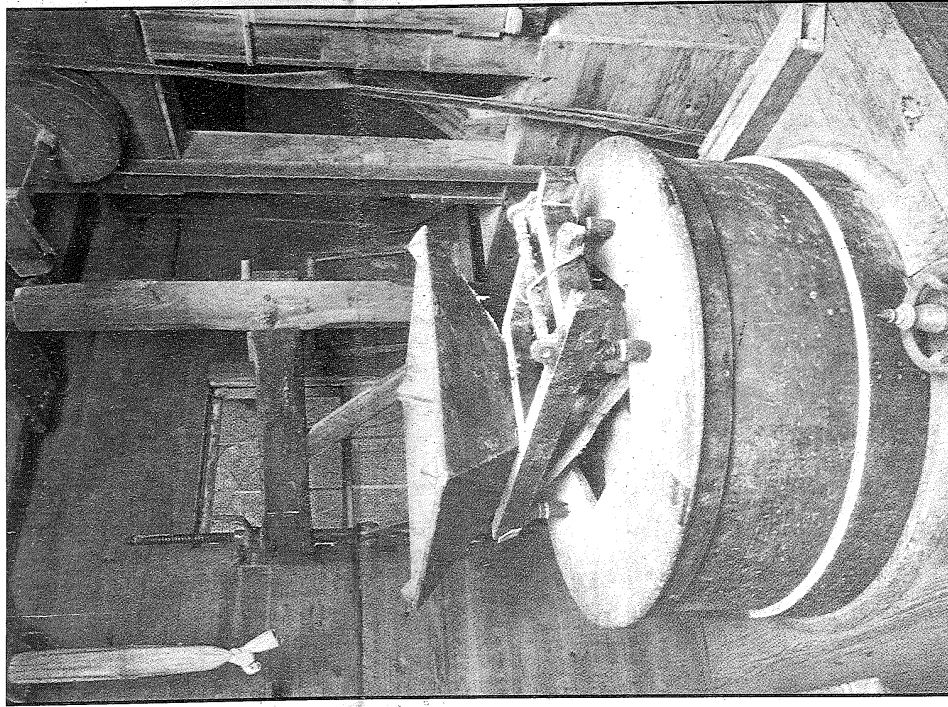
"Schools, churches and merchants have always played an important role in the lives of the people at Sedgewickville," said Smith.

In 1879, Dr. William Mayfield purchased five acres to establish a Baptist college. But due to lack of financing and a series of weather difficulties, Mayfield gave up his dream at Sedgewickville. Residents of Marble Hill offered financial assistance, and the Will Mayfield College was built at Marble Hill. The first church was built in Sedgewickville in 1876. The church was used by Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. Today, Lutheran and Methodist churches are here.

The general store, now owned by Kenneth and Sharon Smith, was one of the earliest stores on record at Sedgewickville.

Much of the merchandise that was not produced locally was hauled in by freight wagons from Neelys Landing on the Mississippi River. The goods included bolts of gingham, pots, pans, and various

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The old Bollinger-Dolle Mill, located about four miles northwest of Sedgewickville off Route EE, will be open for tours when Sedgewickville celebrates its 125th anniversary. The mill, inside the mill, the old commeral grist stone stands silent. Power was supplied by water flowing down a mill race from a dam a mile away.

'Lilies of the Field' bloom forever and ever

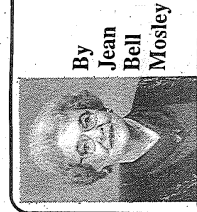
Dear sister Anna:
I have saved all your letters to me since you moved south to Bethlehem so long ago. They have been so precious to me. I know that writing materials do not come easy. But far more precious are the words you put upon the papyrus. They are like jewels in a crown. In reading the letters, from time to time, I can detect a central theme that ties them all together. It is not

right in order and everlasting. His words fell upon my ears like raindrops from the Negev. "Happy are you if you long to be just and good," he said, and from my position up there in that intangible, seemingly celestial level, an indescribable peace caught and tangled in my mind and heart. "Happy are those who strive for peace." "I came to fulfill the prophets." "You are fortunate if

and see not only their waxen beauty but the provisions made for their everlasting.

He repeated a phrase over and over, "The Kingdom of Heaven, and it came to me that that was where I was, in another Kingdom superimposed on the world, and it was the real place. I was, of course, sitting on the ground as were others, shading my eyes the better to see as the sunbeams reflected

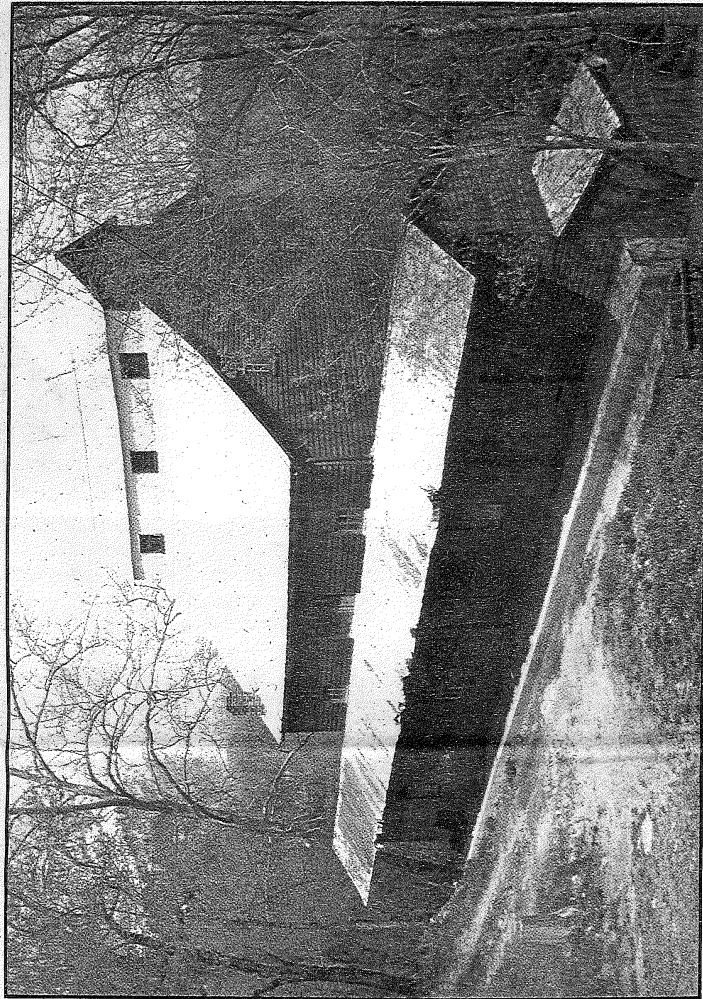
you hear ominous tales of what is going to happen to this Jesus and you drop down to Caesar's world to wonder if there is anything you can do to stop it. I know that could I ascend to this upper level at will I would not worry. There is no worry there. Did I mention that?
I shall not be able to come to Passover this year, but my neighbors, James and John, sons of Zebedee, will be there. I hope that if you get



By Jean Bell Mosley

events in Bethlehem, almost 33 years ago, when all those strange happenings occurred there — the shepherds and their stories and the Magi. That was the beginning of the thread that has bound our letters together whether we've been aware of it or not.
You told me of the time when, in Jerusalem for another Passover, you spoke to a couple who was destitutely seeking for their son

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