THE STATE OF JEFFERSON

A quick look in the Klamath Falls telephone directory will show no less than six businesses that have the words "Jefferson State" included in the name of their business. Such names as Jefferson State Pumping, Jefferson State Adjusters, Jefferson State Mortgage Company to name a few. A search of Medford and Grants Pass phone directories would undoubtedly add more names to the list. But where is this mystic state that we hear so much about? Where did it come from, and where did it go. Ask a dozen people about the State of Jefferson and you will more than likely get a dozen different answers.

This much most of us will agree on. When the people living in this remote section of southern Oregon and northern California grew tired of being ignored by their state governments in Sacramento and Salem, they decided it was high time they did something about it. All they needed was a leader. When Gilbert Gable appeared on the scene they had that leader. (See the article on page 3.)
Meetings are generally held the 4th Thursday of the month, however some changes have been made. See the schedule or call the museum at 883-4208. We meet at the Klamath County Museum meeting room, 1451 Main St., Klamath Falls, Spring Street entrance.

2008 Meetings

Sept 18 – 7 pm
Oct 23 – 7 pm
Nov – to be announced
Dec – No Meeting

Board Members
John Fortune, President
Vice President, vacant
Susan Rambo, Secretary
Avis Kielsmeier, Treasurer
Bob Baker, Carol Mattos

Membership Information

Individual Member
$10.00

Supporting Member
$25.00

Life Member
$100.00

Make your dues payable to:

KLAMATH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

and mail to or drop off at:

Klamath County Museum, 1451 Main Street, Klamath Falls, OR 97601

The Linkville Players
Presents

FunnY Money

A Hilarious Comical Farce
By Ray Cooney
Directed by Ray Montgomery

There will be a Museum Benefit Performance at 2 p.m. at Linkville Theatre, 201 Main St. on Sunday, September 28, 2008

Tickets are $15 and available at Klamath County Museum 1451 Main Street, 883-4208

Light refreshments will be served
GILBERT GABLE AND THE
STATE OF JEFFERSON

It all sounded like such a good idea. Take a small, unwanted part of Southern Oregon and a similar chunk of Northern California real estate, put the two together and form a new state. The State of Jefferson. Neither state really wanted these remote sections anyway. If they did they had certainly never let it show. The bulk of Oregon's population resided in the extreme northern part of the state, clustered around Portland and the Willamette Valley as did the governor and state legislature and the people of the southern part of the state felt that they were being ignored.

An almost identical situation existed south of the state line in California where people living in the extreme northern part of the state felt that they too were being ignored by law makers in the more populated centers of the state.

People in the area had often talked of seceding from their respective states but nothing had ever been done about it. At least not until a man by the name of Gilbert E. Gable came on the scene.

After retiring from the real estate business in the east, in 1935, Gable removed to the west coast, where he started a new life in the small coastal community of Port Orford, Oregon.

Above all else Gable was a promoter. Always pushing some new project. He succeeded in getting the people of Port Orford to incorporate after which he induced the voters of the new city to elect him mayor. While Port Orford was set in a beautiful location on the southern Oregon coast, a more inauspicious setting for the birth of a new state is hard to imagine. It was hardly more than a village at that time, no telegraph, no railroad, no public library. In fact it was little more than a wide spot in the road. And yet, what it lacked in the way of creature comforts was more than offset by the zeal of its new mayor.

One day when the county court was in session, Mayor Gable and several of his friends showed up in the courtroom demanding legal sanction to transfer the county from Oregon to California. The judge responded by appointing Gable to head a committee of three to pursue the matter. The committee was made up of Gable, a man from Brookings and another from Gold Beach.

One of Gable's first acts was to send a letter to California's governor, Culbert L. Olsen requesting an appointment to discuss the matter. The resulting publicity was every thing Gable could have wished for. Newspapers, radio, everyone heard about it. Governor Olsen replied that he was glad to know that people
liked his state so much that they would want to join it. As for Oregon, its Attorney General replied that if Curry county wished to secede from the state of Oregon it was a simple matter. All they had to do was to get the consent of the United States Congress, the Oregon state legislature, the California state legislature, and a majority vote of the citizens of the states involved.

Although the movement began in Oregon's Curry County it quickly spread to other counties. Jumping the state line into California's Del Norte County, before long other areas began to climb onto the bandwagon. In Josephine County a Grants Pass group calling themselves the Grants Pass Cavemen saw this as a splendid opportunity to publicize the nearby Oregon Caves. At Crescent City, in Del Norte County the board of supervisors used Gable's manifesto as a signal to create an interstate commission to promote the development of mineral resources, highways and bridges.

But it was in Yreka, the county seat of Siskiyou County that Gable's bid for attention was received with the greatest enthusiasm. For nearly a century this proud little mining town had suffered abuse from a cruel and widespread slander to the effect that the place didn't really exist but was merely a way of misspelling Eureka.

The scope of the movement soon spread over six counties, three in Oregon1, and three in California2, all of which felt that they had been ravaged by the

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1 Curry, Josephine and Jackson counties. 
2 Del Norte, Siskiyou and Modoc counties
neglect of the lawmakers in Sacramento and Salem. This lack of respect was evident in Sacramento where one legislator was reported to have said that many of the people in the Siskiyou still bartered in bear claws and eagle beaks.

Meanwhile, the Siskiyou Daily News reported that more people had heard of Curry County in the last month than in the previous 40 years. The newspaper got into the act by sponsoring a “Name the State Contest”. After a series of repulsive entries such as Orofino, Bonanza, Del Curiskiou, Siscurdelmo and New Hope, the judges selected the name of “Jefferson.”

Now and then a wave of chauvinism would sweep through the area and petitions would begin to circulate pleading the necessity of establishing a new state called Shasta, Klamath, Jackson, or some such thing. As recently as 1935, John Childs, a judge in Crescent City had headed a facetious secession movement, a chimerical, “State of Jefferson” with himself as governor. This was intended to dramatize the lack of good highways on the Redwood Coast. But that movement, like so many others began to flicker and then went out.

Meanwhile Mayor Gable had not only the zeal of a convert, but the skill of a professional opinion molder. Although he referred to himself as, “The hick mayor of the westernmost city in the United States,” he was actually an experienced salesman with a flair for drama and a gift of phrase. During WW-I he had been publicity chairman for several districts in the Liberty Bond drives. Later he had written scripts for motion pictures and radio broadcasts. Before coming to Port Orford he had worked for 11 years for a telephone company in Philadelphia.

By the standards of Port Orford, he was a “City slicker.” He was civilized, sophisticated, and well groomed. A good looking, clean shaven man just into his fifties with smooth brown hair and a pleasant smile. He talked the residents of Port Orford into incorporating their city and then into electing him mayor of the new city.

Not everyone was pleased by all of the hoopla. The whole affair began to rub the Portland Oregonian the wrong way. “Maybe its all an advertising stunt” they said, “but Mayor Gable is playing his side of the comicality to extremes. He has ceased to be funny.”

On the other hand, San Francisco newspapers took an entirely different view of things. To them it looked like the idea of secession was actually catching on. Near the end of November, 1941 the San Francisco Chronicle assigned its liveliest feature writer, Stanton Delaplane to go up to Yreka, wherever that might be, and do a series of articles on the, “Jeffersonians.”
When Delaplane arrived in Yreka he found members of the local 20-30 club, armed with their hunting rifles, target pistols and other weapons, preparing to set up road block on Highway 99. Drivers in both directions were handed a copy of the State of Jefferson Proclamation of Independence.

PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE
You are now entering Jefferson, the 49th state of the union.
Jefferson is now in patriotic rebellion against the states of Oregon and California.
This state has seceded from California and Oregon Thursday Nov 27, 1941.
Patriotic Jeffersonians intend to secede each Thursday until further notice.

Things all came to head during the first week in December 1941. On December 2nd at the age of 55, Gable died unexpectedly and five days later, on December 7th the Japanese made their attack on Pearl Harbor. Also unexpectedly. Suddenly the nation had more important things to think about and the state of Jefferson quietly came to an end.

Gable's State of Jefferson
NOTES FROM THE Klamath County Museum

By Museum Manager Todd Kepple

The following history briefs were originally written earlier this year for "As It Was," a history program featured weekdays on Jefferson Public Radio. "As It Was" can be heard at various times through the day on either of JPR's two broadcast frequencies in Klamath Falls, 88.1 or 90.9.

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A sucker for Klamath real estate

When longtime Klamath Falls resident Edmund Chilcote first took up his real estate practice in 1908, much of the Klamath Basin was still dominated by vast stretches of sagebrush scrub.

The few roads in existence wound their way through untamed lands that held much promise for livestock and farming operations. Much of the countryside near Klamath Falls was marked with stakes where irrigation ditches would soon be constructed.

In those early years, showing rural acreage to prospective buyers often required a considerable travel time.

On occasion, Chilcote would gather a party of clients, rent a two-seat wagon with a pair of good horses, and head east toward Langell Valley. One day's travel from Klamath Falls would bring them to the town of Bonanza, where they found lodging for the night. The second day was devoted to touring the expansive Langell Valley and returning to Bonanza.

The third day would bring the party back to Klamath Falls.

On one such trip, the Chilcote party stopped at a hotel in Dairy, where fish was being served for supper. When Mr. Chilcote inquired as to what type of fish they were eating, he was informed it was "mullet."

Only later did Mr. Chilcote learn that mullet were also known as suckers, a bottom-dwelling fish that is now protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Source: Transcription of Jan. 13, 1960, presentation by Edmund M. Chilcote to the Klamath County Historical Society.

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Rules for hair care

Klamath Falls was one of the state's fastest-growing cities in the 1930s, bringing rapid transformation to the way business was done around town. Among the industries called upon to change with the times was hair care.

In February 1930, eleven beauty salons in Klamath Falls came together to set standards for service, sanitation, and prices. The group agreed that customers seeking a permanent wave should be charged $5.50, no matter which salon they patronized.
Similar changes were adopted in men's barbershops around town, according to the Evening Herald newspaper of February 6, 1930. The Klamath Falls Master Barber Local No. 121 agreed to require local shops to post a code of ethics for the benefit of customers.

The code recognized the customer's right to expect safeguards against "infection and contagion," and to receive courteous and careful treatment.

Customers were advised they were under no pressure to tip, and that the same treatment would be provided to non-tipping customers as to those who gave tips.

Products sold in barber shops were guaranteed to be the original products, undiluted and with the original labels on the bottles.

Barbers promised to offer only suggestions and recommendations for treatments, without being "offensive, overbearing or insistent."

Finally, the barbers' code of ethics stated that hair tonics were not to be regarded as "hair-growers or baldness cures."

Source: Evening Herald newspaper, Feb. 5, 6, 1930.

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Klamath semi-pro baseball

Semi-professional baseball enjoyed a four-year run in Klamath Falls, but local investors who laid out thousands of dollars to launch a farm club for the Philadelphia Phillies in the 1940s were left holding the bag after the Klamath Falls Gems baseball team folded in 1952.

The community beamed with pride when the Gems played their first home game in a brand new on May 6, 1948. About 2,400 people turned out to see the Gems defeat the Medford Dodgers 10-8.

The Gems finished their first season with a 67-58 record, good enough to place third among eight teams in the newly formed Far West League. The team followed up with three more winning seasons.

But the crowds simply weren't large enough to keep the team out of financial trouble. By the end of the 1951 season, Klamath Baseball Inc., the team's owner, owed the Internal Revenue Service a little over $7,000. Team supporters chipped in to satisfy the debt to Uncle Sam, but the Gems were still an estimated $35,000 in debt. As a result, Gem Stadium stood empty in 1952. In fact, the entire Far West league folded the same year.

Semi-pro ball never made a comeback in Klamath Falls.

Gem Stadium was given over to the community's American Legion baseball team, and in 1964 was renamed Kiger Stadium in honor of local youth supporter Estin Kiger. Today it's managed by youth baseball supporters with help from the city of Klamath Falls.

Source: Herald and News newspapers, May 6, 1948; March 9, 1950; July 12, 1951; Dec. 5, 1951; May 29, 1952.
New Members 2008

Jerry & Liz Budy
Chuck Edson
Ann S. Fairclo
Charles Glidden
Sam Henzel
Donna Hill
Dwight & Paula Long
Jill Lopez
Bruce & Constance McCormack
Riann Parker
Ralph Edward Ropp
Miriam Rutherford
Marcine Vanderhoff
Carl & Patty Youngdahl

In Memoriam

Dorothy Ager
Al Culver
Vivian Foley
Allison Garriott
Joan Glasspool
Murel Long
Christine Murray
Betty Rogers
Betty Lou Shirley
Mary Smith
Leo Smothers
Betty Trowbridge
UPCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS

Malin Centennial preview – Malin Historical Society President Ryan Bartholomew will make a presentation on that community’s upcoming centennial at the monthly meeting of the Klamath County Historical Society at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 18. Open to anyone interested. Presentation will be in the meeting room of the Klamath County Museum.

Volunteer Recognition Dinner – All volunteers at any of our Klamath County Museums are invited to join us for a hamburger cookout at the Baldwin Hotel Museum, 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 21. Free!

“Funny Money” – A benefit performance of a comedy at the Linkville Playhouse to benefit the Klamath County Museum Foundation. Tickets for this 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 28, matinee are $15 per person, available now at the Klamath County Museum.

“Simon & Garfunkel Night” – Robin Schwartz and Greg Dunton return to the stage at the Baldwin for an evening of music, Oct. 3-4. Dinner catered by Above & Beyond. Tickets $40, available now at the Klamath County Museum.

“Night at the Cemetery” – Pioneers long laid to rest at the Linkville Cemetery will come to life Oct. 10-11. Admission $5 per person. Tickets available soon.

Oak Woodlands Walk – Our annual foray into the oak-covered hillsides of the Running Y Ranch will be Saturday, Oct. 11. Time is tentatively set for 10 a.m. Bring a bucket to gather some acorns, and help propagate this important native tree species.

Fashion Show – A style show coordinated by Perlwickie is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25, at the Baldwin Hotel Museum. Details to follow.

Breakfast with Santa – Annual pancake feed with St. Nick is scheduled for 8 to 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 6 at the Klamath County Museum.

Tea and Doll Show – A high tea and show is set for Saturday, Dec. 6, at the Baldwin Hotel Museum. Anyone with antique or fancy dolls is welcome to participate in the show.