

The State of Jefferson is so interesting there are at least two books about it. Stanton Delaplane, a newspaper reporter from the SF Chronicle, followed it all, wrote a series of colorful articles on the rebellion, and earned the Pulitzer Prize that year for his reporting. An active organization continues though a bit tongue-in-cheek.

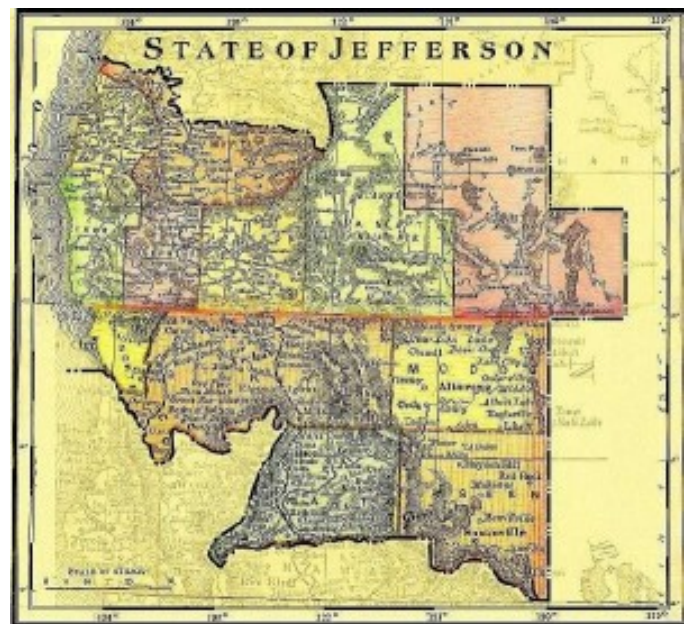
In October 1941, the mayor of Port Orford, Oregon, Gilbert Gable, announced that the Oregon counties of Curry, Josephine, Jackson, and Klamath should join with the California counties of Del Norte, Siskiyou, and Modoc to form a new state, later named Jefferson. Gable proposed creating this new state to draw attention to the condition of the state roads along the Oregon-California border. At the time they were oiled dirt roads that became impassable in rain or snow and handicapped economic development. As local historian Jim Rock explains, "It was more publicity stunt than serious secession movement at that point. After all, under the U.S. Constitution, they had to get the approval of Congress as well as the legislatures of both states."

Gable's act found sympathy throughout the region, whose citizens perceived their state legislatures as indifferent to their needs. Siskiyou County especially embraced the cause and the county seat, Yreka, became the provisional capital. A naming contest held by the Siskiyou Daily News in November 1941 considered the possibilities for the would-be state: Orofino, Bonanza, Discontent, Jefferson, Del Curiskiyou, and Siscurdelmo. Subsequently county representatives met and selected the name Jefferson for their state, in commemoration of Thomas Jefferson, the nation's third president.

While inhabitants in Lassen and Shasta counties in northern California flirted with joining the secession movement, only the counties of Curry, Siskiyou, Trinity, and Del Norte



Possibly the most grandiose vision of the realm



Another vision but even fewer counties endorsed secession

actually endorsed the idea. On November 27, 1941, a group of young men gained national media attention when, brandishing hunting rifles for dramatic effect, they stopped traffic on U.S. Route 99 south of Yreka. They handed out copies of a Proclamation of Independence, stating that the state of Jefferson was in "patriotic rebellion against the States of California and Oregon" and would continue to "secede every Thursday until further notice."

The succession vote passed on Dec 4th, 1941, and the newsreels were to air nationally the week of December 8. The secession movement came to an abrupt end though not before John C. Childs of Yreka was inaugurated as the governor of the State of Jefferson. The first blow was the death of Mayor Gable on December 2. Five days later came the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7. Secessionists then focused their efforts on the war effort which crippled the movement.

Timing is everything. Today Jefferson is a state of mind for folks who live in this area where they refer to themselves as the 51st state.