

= Fern Hobbs =

Fern Hobbs (May 8 , 1883 ? April 10 , 1964) was an American attorney in the U.S. state of Oregon , and a private secretary to Oregon Governor Oswald West . She was noted for her ambition and several accomplishments as a young woman , and became the highest @-@ paid woman in public service in America in her mid @-@ twenties .

Hobbs made international news when Governor West sent her to implement martial law in the small Eastern Oregon town of Copperfield . The event was considered a strategic coup for West , establishing the State 's authority over a remote rural community and cementing his reputation as a proponent of prohibition .

Hobbs later worked for the American Red Cross in Europe and at the Oregon Journal newspaper . She died in Portland in 1964 .

= = Early life = =

Hobbs was born on May 8 , 1883 , in Bloomington , Nebraska , to John Alden Hobbs and Cora Bush Hobbs . Her family moved to Salt Lake City , Utah when she was six years old ; she lived there for 12 years , finishing high school . Her father then met with financial difficulties , and she moved to Oregon , settling in Hillsboro . There , she put her younger brother and sister through school , while studying stenography and working for a living .

She soon became a private secretary to the president of the Title Guarantee and Trust Company . The bank , which held many assets of the Oregon Common School Fund , failed during Hobbs ' time there . Ben Olcott , who was the Secretary of State and a member of the State Land Board , was charged with protecting the Common School Fund , and was involved in negotiating with the failing bank over the State 's assets . He took note of Hobbs ' strong loyalty to her employer .

After the bank 's failure , Hobbs worked as a governess for J. Wesley Ladd (brother of William S. Ladd) in Portland . She also helped raise her younger brother and sister , studied stenography and the law , and worked as a secretary . In 1913 , Hobbs graduated from Willamette University College of Law with a Bachelor of Laws degree , and was admitted to the Oregon State Bar .

Olcott , who managed Oswald West 's successful 1910 campaign to become Governor of Oregon , recommended that West hire Hobbs as his private stenographer . She was hired , and impressed West to the point that he hired her as his private secretary two years later . At that time , at age 27 , she was the highest @-@ paid woman in public service in the United States , earning \$ 3 @,@ 000 per year .

= = Martial law in Copperfield , Oregon = =

West ordered Hobbs to Copperfield , Oregon to restore law and order on January 2 , 1914 , along with a group of six militia men that included Oregon State Penitentiary warden B.K. Lawson . Copperfield , located on the Snake River in Baker County , had grown up around construction projects for a railroad tunnel and power plant . Fifteen @-@ hundred jobs in the area came from the railway project of E. H. Harriman or the power generation facility .

The town had descended into lawlessness with a number of saloons , brothels , dancing halls , and widespread gambling . The town had no law enforcement officers , and the local government officials had become bar keepers . Governor West had extended prohibition laws , Some local residents had appealed to the state government for assistance. but they were widely ignored in Copperfield . Over half the residents of the town had signed a petition , addressed to West , alleging that saloons owned by the mayor and City Council members were selling liquor to minors and staying open later than their posted hours . Governor West responded by ordering county officials to restore order , close the saloons , and force the resignations of the corrupt city leaders by December 25 , 1913 .

County officials did not take care of the problem , so West sent Hobbs , hoping the presence of a woman would prevent any outbreak of violence . Hobbs was a petite woman standing 5 feet 4

inches (1 @. @ 63 m) tall and weighing less than 100 pounds (45 kg) . She was dispatched with orders to restore order and to implement martial law if necessary . While Hobbs was traveling to Eastern Oregon , both she and Governor West were coy with reporters about the presence of the militia men , suggesting that Hobbs might be acting alone .

The saloon keepers , who received word that Hobbs was accompanied by law enforcement officers only shortly before her arrival , greeted her by dressing up the town with bunting , blue and pink ribbons , and flowers . A town meeting was arranged at 2 : 30 p.m. on January 3 . Hobbs renewed the call for the resignation of city officials , but the request was refused . Hobbs ' escorts then arrested the city leaders and ordered Lawson to declare martial law . It was the first time in Oregon since the Civil War that martial law was put into effect .

Soon the town was disarmed and order restored , with the gambling equipment and weapons confiscated , and the saloons closed down . Hobbs then left Lawson in charge and caught the 4 : 00 p.m. train out of town that same day . The residents did not openly resist Hobbs or the militia men , although nearly all were armed and had been prepared to offer non @-@ violent resistance . She stopped at the county seat in Baker City to officially remove the town 's officials in front of a judge before returning to the state capitol in Salem . The Baker County Circuit Court quickly enjoined the militia from holding the town under martial law ; Sheriff Rand began assembling a posse to carry out the court order . Governor West requested a hearing , seeking Rand 's temporary removal from office , and appointed Hobbs to represent the State as special counsel .

The actions of the governor were later challenged in court , with Hobbs and West among the defendants . The saloon keepers sought remuneration for liquor they claimed was confiscated during the period of martial law . The Baker County circuit court determined the governor 's actions were within his powers , and the Oregon Supreme Court ultimately concurred .

These events made Hobbs the most famous woman in Oregon at that time . Hobbs also made national and international news for these events . Writer Stewart Holbrook reported :

= = Later life = =

After the Copperfield affair , Hobbs continued as Governor West 's secretary until the end of his term in 1915 . She visited the Union County town of Cove in February 1914 , also to investigate complaints about a saloon . A local election had declared the town " dry , " but a county election had declared the entire county " wet . " On advice of a judge , the mayor of Cove stated that he was unable to determine whether the saloon was legal or not , but expressed deference to the governor 's wishes . Hobbs did not order the saloon closed down .

She then moved to Portland and practiced law . Women 's rights groups promoted Hobbs as a candidate to run for governor , but she never ran for office . Within a few years Fern Hobbs became the commissioner of Oregon State Industrial Accident Commission , working on getting taxes due on the Oregon & California Lands . In 1917 , with the United States entering World War I , she began a long association with the Red Cross . From 1917 to 1922 she worked in Europe , including time spent as the chief of the casualty division in Paris , France . In that position Hobbs was responsible for notifying dead soldiers ' next of kin . She returned to Europe in the 1930s , working in the Rhine Valley when it was occupied by France .

Upon returning to Oregon , Hobbs worked as a secretary for the Oregon Journal newspaper . She retired in 1948 as the secretary to the paper 's business manager . Fern Hobbs died on April 10 , 1964 , at the age of 80 , and was buried at the Hillsboro Pioneer Cemetery in Hillsboro , Oregon .

The Oregon writer Stewart Holbrook interviewed her in the early 1950s , a few years after her retirement , observing that she " still weighs 104 pounds . Her eyes are clear and blue behind her glasses . There is not a gray hair on her head . She lives as quietly as she has always lived , except for those dreadful few days so long ago [concerning Copperfield] . " Holbrook noted during his interview that " the subject of Copperfield bores her " and concluded his account of her as follows :