

## THOMAS E. CAMPBELL: Arizona's First Republican Governor

By Jack L. August, Ph.D.



Once in a while the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance leadership allows me to indulge my interest in the state's political history. Arizona's first native-born governor was also the state's first Republican governor and the first to break George W. P. Hunt's unyielding stranglehold on the state's top elective office. Thomas Edward Campbell, born January 18, 1878, in Prescott, became a hugely popular figure and his statewide notoriety thrust him to national political stature when his name was placed in nomination for U.S. vice president at the 1924 Republican National Convention at the Public Auditorium in Cleveland, Ohio.



In 1893 Campbell became the first graduate of Prescott High School and went on to St. Mary's College in Oakland, California, where he studied geology, but he dropped out and did not receive his degree. In 1894, he became assistant postmaster of the bustling mining town of Jerome and after service in the Spanish American War he returned to Prescott but soon moved back to Jerome where he became postmaster in 1899. The following year he married Gayle Allen whose father was an agent of the United Verde Copper Company.

In 1900, the twenty-two year-old Campbell was elected to the Arizona Territorial Legislature where he introduced a bill mandating an eight-hour workday. He was appointed Yavapai County Tax Assessor in 1907 and held that post until 1914 when he was elected Arizona State Tax Commissioner. In fact, Campbell was the only Republican statewide office seeker to break through the monolithic Democratic grip in the two-year-old state. He challenged Governor Hunt in the 1916 election and was the apparent winner, but an Arizona Supreme Court decision several months later awarded the disputed election and governorship to Hunt.

The details of the political logjam were noteworthy. During the 1916 election held on November 7, Campbell ran against incumbent Hunt who was seeking election to his third term of office. In a breathtakingly close election Campbell was declared the winner by 30 votes but Hunt refused to vacate the governor's office and both men took the oath of office on December 30, 1916. Hunt filed suit in Arizona Superior Court on January 25, 1917, and on January 27, the court declared Campbell governor. Hunt agreed to turn over the office on January 29, but appealed and on December 22, 1917, the Arizona Supreme Court overturned the lower court ruling. Campbell vacated the office on December 25, 1917 but also filed an appeal with the Supreme Court on January 8, 1917. His appeal was denied.

Campbell's temporary service in the governor's chair in 1917 saw several dramatic developments. One of the most significant events was the Bisbee Deportations in which "deputies" kidnapped 1,185 striking mine workers, their supporters from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and other residents in and around Bisbee. All were loaded onto filthy boxcars and taken approximately 200 miles into New Mexico and abandoned without money or access to transportation and warned not to return to Bisbee. The "deputies" were employed by Phelps Dodge Corporation which owned the

mine. Indeed, the Bisbee Deportation of 1917 was not only a pivotal event in Arizona's labor history, but also one that had an impact on labor activities throughout the country. Campbell expressed embarrassment with the excessive actions by the striking workers and the mine company response. He visited Bisbee after the incident and condemned both the IWW and the heavy handed actions of Phelps Dodge.

In a political oddity during Campbell's 1917 stint as Governor, the state legislature passed a law creating Arizona's distinct and colorful state flag. The action became law without Campbell's consent and he never bothered to explain his reasons for not signing the bill. However, after Hunt took office again in late 1917, Campbell immediately commenced his next gubernatorial campaign. He defeated the Democratic candidate, Fred T. Colter, in the November 5, 1918 election, by a slim margin, 25,927 to 25,558. Socialist candidate George Smith garnered 444 votes, which more than likely would have gone to Sims and Campbell would have experienced another challenge to the final tally. Campbell was reelected on November 2, 1920, defeating the Democratic candidate, Mitt Simms, who was the sitting Secretary of State, 37,060 to 31,358. These electoral triumphs were extraordinary accomplishments for a Republican in an overwhelmingly Democratic state.

True to his fiscal predilections he focused his energies on Arizona's tax structure—he was known as the father of Arizona's revenue and tax laws—and, of course, on Arizona receiving its rightful share of Colorado River water. A friend of President Warren Harding, President Calvin Coolidge, and President Herbert Hoover, Campbell helped Harding gain a resumption of diplomatic relations with Mexico in 1923 after its decade-long revolutionary turmoil. Coolidge appointed him U. S. Representative to the 1926 International Exposition in Seville, Spain. In 1930, Hoover named him president of the U. S. Civil Service Commission. And for twenty years he reached across the party aisle and worked with Congressman and later Senator Carl Hayden, a Democrat, to implement the Colorado River Compact, the association among western states to allocate Colorado River Water. Ultimately he lived to see it adopted not long before his death. Campbell suffered a cerebral hemorrhage on the State Capitol grounds and died March 1, 1944 at age 66 and was buried in Prescott.

Dr. Jack L. August, Jr. serves as Executive Director of the Barry Goldwater Center for the Southwest and is Visiting Scholar in Legal History at Snell & Wilmer L.L.P. He is a former Fulbright Scholar, National Endowment for the Humanities Research Fellow, and Pulitzer Prize nominee for his volume, *Vision in the Desert: Carl Hayden and Hydropolitics in the American Southwest* (Ft. Worth: TCU Press, 1999). Dr. August is the author of numerous books on the history of the New American West and has taught at the University of Houston, University of North British Columbia, and Northern Arizona University where his courses focused on the American West and environmental history.

