

Stuart Bland Campbell (14 April 1888–17 November 1973), attorney and member of the House of Delegates, was born in Wytheville, the son of Archibald Alexander Campbell, a schoolmaster-turned-lawyer, and Susie Lee Stuart Campbell, a half sister of Henry Carter Stuart, governor of Virginia from 1914 to 1918. At age fourteen Campbell entered Hampden-Sydney College, of which his father was a trustee, and after serving as president of his class graduated in 1906. He taught school in Wytheville before entering the law school of the University of Virginia, from which he graduated in 1910. Campbell returned to Wytheville and began the practice of law in partnership with his father.

In the autumn of 1911 Campbell won election as a Democrat to a four-year term as commonwealth's attorney of Wythe County. From April to December 1912 he was the chief prosecutor in the trials of Floyd Allen and his kinsmen for their parts in a notorious shootout at the Carroll County courthouse on 14 March 1912. Wythe County juries found Allen guilty of murder in the first degree but settled on lesser sentences for the others. A Washington County jury subsequently convicted Claude Swanson Allen of first-degree murder, and both men were executed. One of the men killed in the shootout was Circuit Court judge Thornton Lemmon Massie. Campbell's father was appointed Massie's successor, thus dissolving the law partnership. Instead of seeking reelection in 1915, Stuart B. Campbell resumed his private law practice handling both civil and criminal cases throughout southwestern Virginia.

On 30 September 1915 Campbell married Mary Rebecca Miles in Smyth County. They had one daughter and one son, Stuart B. Campbell Jr., who practiced law with his father after 1941 and who became a prominent Presbyterian layman. Campbell joined the United States Naval Reserve during World War I. He achieved the noncommissioned rank of chief yeoman but was still in officer training school at Princeton University when the war ended, after which he returned to Wytheville.

On 16 June 1921 Campbell was appointed to the Board of Examiners of Applicants for Admission to the Bar (later the Virginia Board of Bar Examiners), which operated under the

authority of the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. Campbell served without interruption until he retired in 1969, a total of forty-eight years, and was president for half that time, from 9 May 1944. He estimated in 1958 that every board member devoted six weeks each year to drafting the examination questions, assessing the papers produced by prospective lawyers, and conferring afterward with representatives from the state's law schools to ensure that the board's questions and grading reflected current legal teaching. In 1938 Campbell helped to organize the Virginia State Bar, an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Appeals, and became a charter member of its executive committee.

A member of the Virginia State Bar Association since 1912, Campbell was elected to its executive committee in 1930 and served as president in 1935–1936. His presidential address, "Suggested Changes in Practice and Procedure," proposed methods to improve the convenience and speed of legal proceedings in Virginia. At the association's 1936 meeting Campbell was elected the Virginia representative to the new House of Delegates of the American Bar Association. He served continuously until 1958. Campbell was also elected a fellow of the American Bar Foundation and received that organization's Fifty Year Award in 1961. The Virginia State Bar Association honored him in 1965 as a life member.

In 1941 Campbell was elected to the first of three two-year terms in the House of Delegates representing Wythe County. Aware that the county had more Republicans than Democrats, he sought to avoid partisanship and tried to evaluate legislation impartially. Because the political organization of Harry Flood Byrd (1887–1966) controlled state government, Campbell won a reputation as one of the assembly's few independent members. He served on the Committees for Courts of Justice, Federal Relations and Resolutions, and Retrenchment and Economy during all three terms, on the Committee on Finance during his first two terms, and on the Committee on Mining and Mineral Resources during his second and third terms. In 1942 and 1943 Campbell also chaired a House commission to study the healing arts in Virginia, and in 1944 he was a member of a

House commission on improving the administration of justice.

On 14 May 1945, during a special session of the assembly, Campbell became chair of the Suffrage Commission charged with studying the state's voter registration laws. A coalition of forces including African Americans supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Virginia Voters' League, white anti-Byrd liberals, and some leading journalists pushed for changes in the Virginia laws that restricted the size and composition of the electorate, with particular focus on the poll tax. Leaders of the Byrd organization, who benefited from the existing laws, realized the growing strength of the opposition and went along with formation of a study commission. Campbell held public hearings throughout the state, and late in 1945 the commission recommended that the poll tax be abolished and replaced by an annual registration, a literacy test, and such other requirements as the assembly might prescribe.

The changes that Campbell's commission proposed required amendment of the state constitution. The proposals had to be approved in two consecutive sessions of the General Assembly and then submitted to the voters for ratification, a process that took four years. By the time the so-called Campbell amendments went before the voters in 1949, a groundswell of opposition had developed. Supporters of an expanded electorate considered the literacy test and the possibility of further restrictive requirements by the Byrd-controlled General Assembly to be as bad as the poll tax, while the Byrd organization was at best lukewarm about the amendments and may have desired their defeat. Campbell defended the amendments but to no avail. On 8 November 1949 the state's voters rejected them so overwhelmingly that they failed to receive a majority in any city or county.

Campbell retired from the assembly in 1947 because of the demands of his law practice and

other business responsibilities. He had succeeded his father as president of the First National Bank of Wytheville (later the First National Farmers Bank) and remained an officer for more than thirty years, until the bank's merger early in the 1960s with the Roanoke-based First National Exchange Bank of Virginia. An avid hunter and fisherman, Campbell was also a Freemason, active in the local Presbyterian church and Rotary Club, and a charter member of the Wythe County Historical Society. Stuart Bland Campbell died in a hospital in Wytheville on 17 November 1973 and was buried in the city's East End Cemetery.

E. Randolph Trice, *The Elks Parade: A Centennial History and Catalogue of Members of Upsilon Chapter of Kappa Sigma* (1983), 24–25; J. C. Schwarz, ed., *Who's Who in Law* (1937), 147; E. Griffith Dodson, *The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1940–1960* (1961), 510; 1973 interview with Campbell, Oral History Project of Wytheville Community College; Mary B. Kegley, *Wythe County, Virginia: A Bicentennial History* (1989), 250; BVS Marriage Register, Smyth County; *Commonwealth 2* (Sept. 1935): 19; Campbell, "Suggested Changes in Practice and Procedure" and report on bar examiners, *Virginia State Bar Association Proceedings* (1936): 263–276 (frontispiece por.), and (1958): 26–37; *Richmond News Leader*, 1 Apr. 1947; Andrew Buni, *The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1902–1965* (1967), 138–140; William Bryan Crawley Jr., *Bill Tuck: A Political Life in Harry Byrd's Virginia* (1978), 193–197; Ronald L. Heinemann, *Harry Byrd of Virginia* (1996), 272–273; obituaries in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 Nov. 1973, and *Wytheville Southwest Virginia Enterprise*, 20 Nov. 1973 (por. and editorial tribute); memorials in *Wytheville Southwest Virginia Enterprise*, 18 July 1974, and *Virginia State Bar Association Proceedings* (1975): 232–234.