# Byron Cummings, Founding Father

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On a typically hot late summer day in 1915, a slight but athletic man, already of an age to qualify him for senior citizen status, arrived in Tucson, Arizona. He had come to develop a newly established Department of Archaeology and to revive the dormant Arizona State Museum at the University of Arizona. He brought to these challenges a solid education in the Classics; a keen interest in past cultures; twenty-two years of teaching and administrative experience at the University of Utah; an established reputation as a pioneering archaeologist; a deep sense of responsibility toward his fellow human beings; stern Presbyterian moral standards and ethical principles; a sincere respect for truth and honor; enormous energy; a strong will; and great vision.

That man was Byron Cummings, who not only set the stage for an internationally respected program in anthropology, but also trained some of the leading archaeologists of the last century. As we commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of that program, the sixth oldest in the nation after Harvard, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Chicago, and Berkeley, it is appropriate that we honor him for his seminal role in creating our intellectual home, for being our founding father.

Although I met him only once and very briefly, I am arrogant enough to attempt such an homage because of the respect and deep sense of debt that I have for him. It is not my purpose to chronicle the details of his life. Rather, I want to call attention to the successes, as well as the setbacks and frustrations, he experienced while trying to meet the challenges he had accepted on that hot summer day one hundred years ago. We are fortunate that Todd William Bostwick and the U of A Press have provided us with an excellent biography of Cummings replete with delightful stories about him. I shall be gratefully and shamelessly taking advantage of Todd's fine scholarship as I attempt to express my appreciation for that remarkable man who was known to one

and all as "the Dean."

Byron Cummings, the youngest of the eight children of Moses and Roxana Hoadley Cummings, was born on 22 September 1860, in the small farming community of Westville in upstate New York. His father died during the Civil War, but his mother carried on, teaching Byron and his siblings the values of self reliance, perseverance, hard work, truth, courtesy, and kindness. Cummings followed those maternal guidelines throughout his long life. He received a good education in the Classics at Rutgers, BA 1889, MA 1892, and developed a special interest in ancient cultures.

In 1893 he accepted a position at the University of Utah and on the way West he stopped in Chicago to visit the World Columbian Exposition with its many exhibits on Native American life. That exposition led to the founding of the Field Columbian Museum in 1893, the same year that the Territorial legislature in Arizona established the museum that became his responsibility twenty-two years later.

At the University of Utah, Cummings became a popular teacher, a skilled administrator, and a famous archaeological explorer, much like his contemporary at Yale, Hiram Bingham, the discoverer of Machu Picchu in Peru in 1911. Cummings and his students experienced the excitement of archaeological discovery as they explored one of the last unknown regions of the country around Navajo Mountain on the Utah-Arizona border. From 1906 to 1909 they discovered many spectacular cliff ruins such as Betatakin and Kiet Siel. In 1910 Cummings continued his own education at Chicago and Berlin and visited the archaeological treasures of Greece and Rome.

In March 1915, he, and ultimately fourteen other faculty members, resigned from the University of Utah over a long smoldering issue of freedom of speech. He had heard that the University of Arizona was interested in establishing "a program in anthropology" – his very words – and offered his services. Newly appointed UA President, Rufus Bernhard von KleinSmid, gave him a part-time position as Head of a brand new Department of Archaeology and Director of the Arizona State Museum, beginning 15 September 1915. Although Cummings had applied for a position in anthropology, von KleinSmid was following a common practice of the time in naming the new department. In the more conservative regions of the country, anthropology was closely linked to the deeply unpopular concepts of evolution and racial equality, so

new programs in anthropology were often either named archaeology or buried in a Department of Sociology.

Cummings, President von KleinSmid, and long-time Democratic Governor of Arizona, George W. P. Hunt were advocates of the Progressive policies of President Theodore Roosevelt. They worked together very effectively to expand Arizona's fledgling university and to make anthropology a key player in that effort. In spite of these favorable conditions, Cummings was faced with a Herculean task and there were many demands on his time.

During his first five years at Arizona he developed and taught a half dozen new courses in general anthropology, American, European, Greek, and Roman archaeology; taught all of the UA courses in Greek and Latin until Frank Hamilton Fowler arrived in 1920 to develop the Classics Department; served as Dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences and Dean of Men; continued his archaeological explorations in northern Arizona every summer; converted his 1919 summer field trip into the first Archaeological Field School for credit as a contribution to von KleinSmid's newly created Summer School; unpacked the collections of the Arizona State Museum and arranged them for public viewing; solicited new items for the collections; personally catalogued both old and new specimens; created the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society as a support group for the museum; and gave dozens of highly popular public lectures, all with the help of only his oldest sister, Emma, who kept the museum open and explained the exhibits to visitors.

He enthusiastically supported von KleinSmid's efforts to promote cooperation with Latin American universities and served as Acting President when von KleinSmid was on tour in Latin America. That experience led to Cummings' excavation in the mid twenties of the lava engulfed pyramid of Cuicuilco south of Mexico City, which further enhanced his reputation as an archaeologist.

All of this hard work paid off, as his mother had taught him. The US Department of Education reported in 1922 that the archaeological work at the UA was noteworthy and praised the completion of the Steward Observatory, setting the stage for UA President Richard Harvill who, some twenty years later, built his effort to make the UA a nationally ranked research institution on the long-established excellence of anthropology and astronomy.

Although Cummings' idea of a museum was rather antiquarian, he had a good understanding of

the nature of anthropology and kept abreast of trends in this fairly new and rapidly developing academic discipline. He knew that in order to create a well-rounded program in anthropology he needed faculty specialists in ethnology, linguistics, and physical anthropology.

In 1927, while also serving as President of the University, he recruited Thomas Talbot Waterman, a 1914 Columbia PhD teaching at Berkeley, to offer courses in ethnology and linguistics. Waterman's departure for Hawaii the following year frustrated that early effort to broaden the curriculum. Although Cummings, with his background in Classical philology, could mentor students interested in language, he lacked a grounding in the new scientific linguistics. That subfield of anthropology did not again become available in the curriculum until just before the Second World War.

In 1928 the UA awarded the first MA degrees in Archaeology to Clara Lee Fraps (Tanner), Emil Walter Haury, and Florence May Hawley (Ellis). Cummings immediately enlisted their help in teaching courses in archaeology. Although only Clara Lee stayed on to become a permanent member of the faculty, their assistance freed him to seek out the specialists he needed to round out the program. He was especially concerned about the lack of physical or biological anthropology, a subfield in which he had no experience.

In 1931 he and Dean Emil Riesen (who supported the effort to broaden the "program in anthropology") sought the advice of Alfred Louis Kroeber at Berkeley who commiserated with him that physical anthropologists were in short supply, but commented that he had found that it was possible to get along without one. That, of course, was possible for Kroeber for he had earned his doctorate from Franz Boas at Columbia in 1901 and was probably the first master of all the subfields of anthropology. However, it was not much consolation for Cummings. In fact, anthropologists of all kinds were in short supply at that time. Between the 1890s and 1930, only about eighty PhDs in anthropology were produced in the entire country.

Undaunted, Cummings turned in 1932 to the University of Chicago and employed doctoral candidate John Henry Provinse to teach physical anthropology and ethnology. A pioneer applied anthropologist, Provinse left after four years to work for the Soil Conservation Service on the Navajo Reservation. Once again Cummings persevered and in 1936 asked his former student, Nor-

man Emanuel Gabel, a doctoral candidate at Harvard, to continue instruction in physical anthropology. He moved Museum Assistant Harry Thomas Getty to the Department of Archaeology in 1936 to offer the courses in ethnology.

That Cummings was able to achieve so much during the difficult years of the Great Depression is quite remarkable. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the severity of the budget cuts ultimately required the retirement of the most senior faculty members, including Cummings. Knowing he would be called upon to retire as Professor and Head of the Department of Archaeology, in November 1936 Cummings, then age 76, visited Haury at the Gila Pueblo Archaeological Foundation in Globe to inform him of his hope that Haury would replace him in 1937.

However, Cummings had not expected and did not want to give up his position as Director of the State Museum. When the Board of Regents and the University insisted on full retirement he was deeply offended and stubbornly rebelled. He went public and generated supportive newspaper editorials and a flood of letters. A compromised was worked out that gave him the position of Director Emeritus with half salary and made Haury the operational Director beginning in 1938. Unfortunately, the combination of financial stress, political pressure, poorly defined policies, management insensitivity, prideful stubbornness, and widespread lack of information about what was really happening spawned creative conspiracy theories that lasted for many years.

Because of the personal and institutional trauma caused by the retirement issues, Cummings' considerable success in broadening the curriculum is often not fully appreciated. Nevertheless, it is very clear that, despite the scarcity of qualified candidates and the desperate fiscal constraints of the Depression, Cummings made real progress toward his goal of a comprehensive program in anthropology. Fortunately, the change in leadership did not diminish that progress in any way.

Haury vigorously continued Cummings' policies. To symbolize and cement the progress that Cummings had made, he changed the name of the department from Archaeology to Anthropology, just as Donald Brand had done at New Mexico in 1935. Unfortunately, the slow recovery from the Depression and the interruption of the Second World War frustrated Haury's efforts to maintain the momentum that Cummings had

achieved. It was not until the mid fifties that the Department could boast at least one permanently funded faculty position in each of the four basic subfields and applied anthropology.

There is no better measure of the quality of Cummings' emerging program than the success of his students. At both Utah and Arizona he was a popular teacher introducing countless students to both the romance and the reality of southwestern archaeology. At Arizona, between 1927 when the first BAs in Archaeology were awarded and 1938 when Cummings retired, 90 BA and MA degrees were granted, half of them to women.

Although most of the forty-five masters theses dealt with archaeology and prehistoric material culture, new themes regularly emerged. As early as 1930 Charles Willis Wisdom drew upon his major in Classical languages to do field work on the Pima language and the following year Frances Gillmor produced her biography of John and Louisa Wetherill, traders to the Navajo. In 1935 Helen Forsberg analyzed the human skeletal remains from the sites of Tuzigoot and Kinishba. Gordon Randolph Willey discussed the methodology of southwestern archaeology in 1936 and Father Victor Rose Stoner did ethnohistorical research on Sonoran missions in southern Arizona in 1937.

Despite the dim prospects for employment during the Depression, several of Cummings' students found ways of earning doctorates at Chicago, Harvard, Columbia, Berkeley, Michigan, and USC. Four of them, Emil Haury, Edward Holland Spicer, Waldo Rudolph Wedel, and Gordon Willey, were elected to the National Academy of Sciences. Clara Lee Tanner and Florence Hawley Ellis became beloved role models for inspiring young women at Arizona and New Mexico. Five of Cummings' students made significant contributions to the development of dendrochronology: Lyndon Lane Hargrave, Emil Haury, Florence Hawley Ellis, John Charles McGregor, and William Sydney Stallings.

Cummings felt strongly about the need to present the results of archaeological research to the public and he saw the spectacular ruins preserved by the National Park Service as a major contribution to that effort. The names of some of his students are forever linked to the Park Service units that they excavated, repaired, restored, and interpret-

ed: Louis Richard Caywood and Luther Earl Jackson at Tuzigoot National Monument, Martha Jean McWhirt Pinkley at Mesa Verde National Park and Pecos National Historical Park, Sallie Pierce Brewer van Valkenburgh at Montezuma Castle and Wupatki National Monuments, and Carl Frederick Miller at Russell Cave National Monument in Georgia.

I have been inspired by Byron Cummings and befriended, mentored, encouraged, and supported by some of his students. I imagine that some of you share that experience. Our personal and intellectual debt to him is profound. On this day of our celebration of the glories of our first century and of our dedication to continuing excellence in the century ahead, we join together to recognize the very real and enduring achievements of that energetic Classical scholar who came here and started it all on that hot summer day one hundred years ago.