

FROM THE ARCHIVES

As part of our 100th Anniversary Celebration, David Wilcox is contributing several articles on the deep history of AAHS. Here is the second.

Antiquarianism in Arizona B.C. (Before Cummings)

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Territorial status for Arizona in 1863 soon led to the publication of many newspapers in which long discussions interpreting its archaeological record and repeated notices of new discoveries became commonplace, as the website *Chronicling America* reveals. Based on accounts of earlier travelers by Father Kino and others, as well as the interpretative frameworks established by J. X. Clavigero and A. von Humboldt (Wilcox and Fowler 2002), Arizona's ruins were seen as "Aztec" or "Toltec" in affiliation. Many excellent questions were asked repeatedly, but the possibility of answering them seemed highly unlikely given only the antiquarian, "object-oriented" conceptions of what could be learned simply from "relic-hunting." Gradually, though, new scientific methodologies began to be formulated by anthropologists like Frank Hamilton Cushing and Jesse Walter Fewkes, and then, by proponents of the "new archaeology" of 1917, based on the study of time relations. However, antiquarianism predominated in Arizona B.C. (Before Cummings).

At first, there was no assertion by the people's legislative representatives of their power to regulate the exploitation of ruins and relics, nor any institutions to compete for public legitimacy. Developments on both of these fronts, however, slowly developed, and they defined the political and regulatory context that would so well serve Byron Cummings and the Arizona State Museum (ASM), founded in 1893 as a natural history museum (Bostwick 2006; Thompson 2005; Wilcox 2005). Several institutions might have become

the locus of dominium over the curation of archaeological collections and knowledge. For example, the Arizona Legislature recognized such rights variously in an Arizona Historical Society and the office of Territorial Historian, as well as in ASM. The Arizona Antiquarian Association, founded in 1895, tried to establish a state-supported antiquity museum at the Tempe Normal School. By 1915, however, all of these initiatives had failed, except ASM, which still had its state-granted rights.

The commercial exploitation of ruins and relics was initially confined to individual actions, or to small expeditions to supply World's Fairs or other expositions from 1876 to 1904. For example, a prospector named Patrick O'Toole excavated mummies of three children and an infant in Montezuma's Castle—and shipped two of them to Los Angeles for sale. A reporter of this incident, touched by the tenderness of a mother toward her wee infant, commented, "Ah, how little did she think that in the far future some ghoul-like Christian relic scavenger in the boasted civilization of the nineteenth century would desecrate the sanctity of the tomb and spirit away that darling form to adorn a niche in some far away dime museum!" (*Arizona Weekly Citizen* 1896:3). As if such behavior was not

outrageous enough, the founding of the Hyde Exploring Expedition in the 1890s greatly escalated the scale of such looting (Snead 2004). In 1903, several of its employees bought out the Hydes.

J. W. Benham, who had already opened "The Curio" store in Phoenix, took over the "mammoth Indian store on Twenty-third" in New York City and the huge Albuquerque store (*Arizona Republican*, June 2, 1903, 3:4). A reporter for the *Coconino Sun* (1905:3) laid out



Members of Richard Wetherill's Hyde Exploring Expedition crew excavating Cave 7 in the 1890s (University of Pennsylvania Museum)

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the true situation: "In several cities are large establishments filled with all sorts of plunder. Carloads are shipped eastward every few weeks. Enormous quantities have been shipped to Europe and sold. ... Several big dealers send out expeditions regularly to replenish their supplies."

Rising to this challenge, the educator Edgar Lee Hewett, in alliance with W. H. Holmes and F. W. Hodge at the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, in 1904, wrote a Circular for the General Land Office about looting in the American Southwest. He subsequently authored the federal Antiquities Act of 1906, which restricted the legitimate right to collect artifacts on federal and Indian lands to public institutions that would make their collections available to all for educational purposes (Thompson 2000). As early as 1906, Cummings and his Utah University museum became allied with Hewett and his network of supporters, who included Mitchell Carroll, Alice Fletcher, Holmes and Hodge, and Charles Lummis, who, in 1914, opened the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles as a public institution. In 1909, Hewett succeeded in establishing the Museum of New Mexico. Thus, when Cummings came to Tucson in 1915, he immediately seized the moment by bringing new collections with him for ASM (*Arizona Sentinel Yuma Southwest* 1915). Further, in 1917, Cummings acquired the large Joshua Miller antiquities collection for ASM and merged the support group he established in 1916 with the Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society (AAHS) of Phoenix, retaining their name. Thereafter, AAHS became an iconic guarantor of ASM's legitimacy as a public institution devoted to educational values that helped raise Arizona's children to be civilized people equal to all other Americans, thereby implementing the Cummings game plan.

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