Allan B. Cunningham was the first head of the History Department at Simon Fraser University. He obtained his BA degree from the University of Durham, and his MA and PhD degrees from the University of London. He was a Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University, when he accepted an appointment to SFU in 1964 to set up the History Department. Cunningham was a specialist in the Middle East and Arab-Israeli relations. A fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, the Royal Historical Society, and the Turkish Historical Society, Cunningham won a Guggenheim fellowship in 1979. He also served two terms as Dean of Arts during the early years of the University.

In addition to his career as a historian, Cunningham had a distinguished record as a spitfire pilot during World War II. He was also an accomplished painter and a well-known mountaineer. The Peak of the Brothers in the Andes is named after him and his brother, Frank Cunningham, who taught in SFU's geography department.

Allan Cunningham died in January 1988.