

Robert Fogel, Nobel laureate in economics, to speak on campus Oct. 18

By Linda Myers

Robert Fogel, a Nobel laureate in economics in 1993 and a 1948 graduate of Cornell, will give a public lecture on campus Monday, Oct. 18.

The talk, titled "Changes in the Process of Aging during the 20th Century," takes place at 4:30 p.m. in 105 Ives Hall. It is part of the University Lecture Series and is free and open to the public.

Fogel is the Charles Walgreen Distinguished Service Professor of American Institutions at the University of Chicago. He shared the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1993 with Douglass North, a professor at Washington University, St. Louis, "for having renewed research in economic history by applying economic theory and quantitative methods to explain economic and institutional change," wrote the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences' Nobel committee. The committee also called Fogel a "pioneer in new economic history, or cliometrics -- research that combines economic theory, quantitative methods, hypothesis testing, counterfactual alternatives and traditional techniques of economic history, to explain economic growth and decline."



Fogel

Fogel's most controversial books were *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (with Stanley L. Engerman, 1974), which received the Bancroft Prize in 1975, and a follow-up volume, *Time on the Cross: Evidence and Method*. In those books he "mobilized mountains of data -- from accounts of slave auctions to plantation medical records to crop yields -- ... to show that [U.S.] slavery was economically viable and profitable," wrote Cornell Professors Glenn Altschuler and R. Laurence Moore and Vice Provost Isaac Kramnick in *The 100 Most Notable Cornellians*. Some critics mistook the works for an apology for slavery and misunderstood the point -- that slavery's economic success not only revealed black achievement under adversity but accounted for slavery's persistence, necessitating a civil war to eradicate what Fogel called "a morally repugnant institution."

He also was the author of *Railroads and American Economic Growth* (1964), *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism* (2000); *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (1989); and *The Slavery Debates, 1952-1990: A Retrospective* (2003). During his visit, he will sign copies of his most recent book, *The Escape from Hunger and Premature Death, 1700-2100: Europe, America, and the Third World* (2004), at the Cornell Store Oct. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Fogel was born in New York City in 1926, the second son of parents who had emigrated to the United States from Odessa four years earlier. Initially interested in physics and chemistry, he shifted to economics and history, with the hope of finding solutions to such social problems as the massive unemployment of the Great Depression. He went on to earn an M.A. in statistics at Columbia University in 1960 and a Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in 1963, where he worked under renowned economist Simon Kuznets. After a brief stint as a faculty member at the University of Rochester, he joined the faculty at the University of Chicago in 1964. There, he became interested in using mathematical models and statistical methods of economics to study the complex long-term processes that were the focus of economic historians.

His current research is on nutrition, longevity and the changing patterns of aging in the United States. His *Guide to Business Ethics* is forthcoming.

In his Nobel Prize autobiography, Fogel credited his older brother, Ephim, as "the main intellectual influence on me [who] inspired me with his intellectual brilliance." The late Ephim Fogel was a professor of English at Cornell and an expert on the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam.

Robert Fogel invited his brother's widow, Charlotte, a social worker and therapist in the Ithaca area for many years, to accompany him and his wife, Enid Cassandra, to the Nobel award ceremonies in Stockholm.

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