This book brings together a number of previously published articles by Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff. Its essays examine differences in the rates of economic growth in Latin America and mainland North America, specifically the United States and Canada. It demonstrates how relative differences in growth over time are related to differences in the institutions that developed in different economies. This variation is driven by differences in major institutions – suffrage, education, tax policy, land and immigration policy, and banking and financial organizations. These factors, in turn, are all related to differences in endowments, climate, and natural resources. Providing a comprehensive treatment of its topic, the essays have been revised to reflect new developments and research.

Stanley L. Engerman is John H. Munro Professor of Economics and Professor of History at the University of Rochester and visiting professor of Economics at Harvard University. He is the author of Slavery, Emancipation, and Freedom: Comparative Perspectives (2007); co-author of Time on the Cross (with Robert W. Fogel, 1974); co-author of Naval Blockades in Peace and War (with Lance Davis, 2007); and co-editor of Finance, Intermediaries, and Economic Development (with Philip T. Hoffman, Kenneth L. Sokoloff, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, Cambridge, 2003). He is a co-editor of the three-volume Cambridge Economic History of the United States (with Robert E. Gallman) and of the multi-volume Cambridge World History of Slavery (with Keith Bradley, Paul Cartledge, and David Eltis).

National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Series on Long-term Factors in Economic Development
Edited by Claudia Goldin


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Economic Development in the Americas since 1500

Endowments and Institutions

STANLEY L. ENGERMAN
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with contributions by Stephen Haber, Elisa V. Mariscal, Eric M. Zolt
To Dr. Louis Sokoloff and to Judy Engerman
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Kenneth Sokoloff’s academic career ended much too early. Ken did not like endings. He disliked them so much that it was difficult for him to finish papers and projects, end conversations, or leave a dinner table. It was impossible for him to say good-bye. He would welcome guests to his home but he would never say farewell. It was difficult for each of us to say good-bye to our friend. This volume honors his memory by finishing some of what he did not in his lifetime.

Memoir by Claudia Goldin

I first met Ken in 1975 when he was a second year graduate student at Harvard and I was an assistant professor teaching at Princeton. I had earned a semester of leave at Princeton after teaching a heavy load my first two years. Just as I was planning my research leave, the phone rang. It was Bob Fogel. “Claudia,” he said, “I have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you. You can teach my graduate course at Harvard.” The rest of the conversation is a blur. I had learned, long before, that one does not say “no” to Bob Fogel.

I taught Bob’s graduate economic history courses at Harvard in the Fall 1975 and Spring 1976, both required for the Ph.D. In some ways teaching at Harvard 1975 through 1976 was the dumbest thing I could have done with my leave; in many other ways it was one of the very smartest things I ever did. I got to know David Landes; I met many superb graduate students interested in economic history, all of whom thought Bob Fogel would be their teacher; and I met Ken Sokoloff.
Ken entered graduate school with deep interests in economic history, probably nurtured by his undergraduate institution, the University of Pennsylvania. He wrote his research paper for my course on early twentieth century immigration. When Bob Fogel returned, Ken turned his attention to other aspects of economic history, including productivity and manufacturing. Ken and I kept in close contact during the remainder of his graduate years. My work on women in the labor force was greatly informed by the manufacturing data Ken had compiled.

Ken wrote his dissertation on productivity change in manufacturing during the Early Republic. Although Ken never finished his planned volume, In Pursuit of Private Comfort: Early American Industrialization, 1790 to 1860, he did leave a large legacy on aspects of early industrialization that are contained in several papers. Among these papers is the long piece in the NBER-CRIW volume number 51, edited by Stanley Engerman and Robert Gallman, Long-term Factors in American Economic Growth. There is also a paper in Explorations in Economic History on the transition to the factory system from the artisanal shop. And there are two papers with me, one in the Journal of Economic History on “Women, Children, and Industrialization,” and “The Relative Productivity Hypothesis,” in the Quarterly Journal of Economics.

The work on early industrialization was primarily based on the manuscripts from three censuses of manufacturers (1820, 1850, and 1860) and the McLane Report of 1832, an incomparable document on manufacturing compiled from surveys by the Treasury Secretary. Ken also used primary documents given to him by Jeremy Atack as well as published census volumes.

The findings were novel, exciting, debate-provoking, and deeply historical. Ken’s questions were several. How rapid was productivity change (labor and total factor) in manufacturing in the period of the Early Republic (1820 to 1860)? To what degree was manufacturing the “Engine of Growth”? How did productivity change vary across different industries? What accounted for productivity change?

The main findings of his work were that the pace of productivity growth was high, particularly relative to agriculture. The manufacturing “Engine of Growth,” moreover, was ubiquitous and was not found only in the much-celebrated textile industry. Furthermore, productivity growth was not just associated with capital deepening, the increase in capital per unit of labor. And it was not just associated with increased sources of motive power. The striking finding was that productivity change was only slightly greater for the mechanized and capital intensive industries.
Productivity change of some magnitude could be uncovered in virtually every part of manufacturing, even industries that operated with small workshops. The increase in labor productivity was mainly accounted for by an increase in technological change, as measured by the residual, and an increase in the raw materials used per unit of labor. Very little was due to an increase in capital per worker.

These findings came as a shock to many economic historians and historians, such as David Landes, who had believed that productivity advance was mainly due to mechanization and an increase in capital intensity. But Ken’s results would not have surprised Adam Smith, who knew that organizational change could have profound effects, even in the lowly pin factory.

Ken also demonstrated that small factories without capital were far more productive than artisanal shops. Size mattered, à la Smith. Another surprise was the predominance of women and young workers in America’s early factories and that this type of labor composition was not isolated to textiles. Females, moreover, increased as a fraction of the workforce as firm size increased. The higher fraction of females as firms increased in size meant that there was an increased division of labor with larger firms. Smith would have noted, as did Ken, that greater division of labor was another productivity enhancing innovation.

Ken’s work on early industrialization, manufacturing, and productivity morphed into a wide-ranging project on patents. The two lines of research are clearly related, but his work on patents took on a life of its own. It was yet another project that Ken could not bear to end by writing the definitive book. Thankfully, Naomi Lamoreaux, one of his co-authors on the patent project, will finish the volume.

Memoir by Stanley Engerman

I first met Ken when he was still a graduate student at Harvard. We had many discussions about his and my work, discussions that continued after he went to UCLA. I had read most of what he had written, and his work remained, as always, interesting and stimulating, but little thought was given to finding a project upon which to work as co-authors. My interests continued to be on the economics of slavery in the U.S. south, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, and Ken’s remained the study of productivity and the economic growth of rich and poor countries.

Our initial attempt at joint authorship came when Steve Haber asked Ken to write a concluding essay to a conference volume on the
backwardness of Latin America. After discussing the problem, it was decided that given our overlapping interests in economic growth, factor endowments, and income distribution there would be benefits from a cooperative effect. Our attention to the role of climate and factor endowments in shaping income distribution and institutions in colonial settlement served as a complement (or alternative) to arguments based exclusively on the European institutions that persisted in the settlements.

Although this argument attracted some favorable reactions, we felt that to solidify our points we needed to study, on a comparative basis, certain characteristics of the political economy such as suffrage, education, taxation, land policy, and, although it was left to Steve Haber to do, banking and finance. These new essays were published in a variety of places including journals, conference volumes, and book chapters. Ken’s involvement with the World Bank led to publications of some of these pieces in World Bank outlets and related places. These publications did not always reach a large scholarly audience, but they did get more public attention than we had anticipated. The present volume includes all of the articles (or excerpts) written as part of this project, edited to avoid too much repetition and overlap.

Working with Ken was always an exhilarating experience, intellectually exciting and very pleasant personally. Ken knew a lot about many things, enjoyed the process of learning more, and was willing to discuss and debate all issues. Disagreements existed, of course, but with the give-and-take over time they were resolved to mutual agreement. Of course, not everything was perfect in our joint work, but it was always enjoyable.

This memoir began with the description of Ken’s disinclination to end projects. My file drawers are filled with copies of many papers that Ken marked “Final Draft.” The difference between successive drafts is often no more than four or five words. If I were better organized this might not have been as big a problem. Alas, no matter how much I tried, I often found in working on this volume that I was initially using an earlier version of a “Final Draft,” and not the appropriate “Final Draft.” Hopefully Ken’s final “Final Draft” has made it into this volume.
Preface

This volume is based on a number of published essays dealing with a set of issues in economic history – the explanation for the dramatic change in the relative rankings of countries by income in different parts of the Americas. Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, the first areas to be settled by the European colonizers in the Western Hemisphere down to the eighteenth century, had greater income and wealth than the two leading countries in mainland North America, the United States and Canada. The Latin American colonies were initially wealthier than those of North America, both at the time of the Native American settlement and in the first two centuries of European expansion, but they then fell dramatically behind the North American colonies after the eighteenth century. In explaining this transition, we focus on the role of important economic institutions, what determined them, and what impact they had on economic behavior and structures. Understanding institutions is essential to understanding the process of economic development, and it is important to see how they developed in different societies. The institutions that developed were no doubt influenced both by those present in the European metropolis as well as the natural and other conditions in the New World. Natural conditions in the Americas determined the crops that could be profitably grown and the means of their production, as well as political circumstances. The climates and soils of North and South America differed dramatically, leading to marked differences in crops produced, and these, we argue, had long-term impacts on the institutions of societies throughout the Americas.

In addition to the chapters presenting the general arguments, there are separate chapters on key institutions influencing economics and politics.
These chapters discuss suffrage, education, taxation, land and immigration policy, and banking and financial systems. In each case we argue that the institutions that emerged in North America were more favorable to economic growth and to political equality than those elsewhere in the Americas. We are concerned both with demonstrating the differences and explaining them. We have both worked in economic history, economics, and history long enough to know that not all scholars will be convinced by all or even some of our arguments; nevertheless, we believe that the evidence presented is sufficient to argue for the important contributions of endowments, resources, and climate in helping to explain economic and political differentials in the Americas, as well as elsewhere.

All of the basic essays in this volume (except for Chapter 8) were completed before the most untimely death of Kenneth Sokoloff. Stanley Engerman completed all the subsequent editing for consistency and to avoid duplication. With the exception of Chapters 6 and 8, all essays were jointly written, and we both accepted full responsibility for their contents. Working with Ken for all the years was a most exciting and enjoyable personal and intellectual experience, and I hope this book provides an appropriate remembrance of both his scholarship and his personal contributions.
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