On June 1, the about 10 Bibliophiles met to discuss GANTS: The Parallel Lives of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, by the Harvard historian, John Stauffer.

Some readers felt this book provided a “feet of clay” version of Abraham Lincoln that differed from what they learned in school. His recurring vacillation on the issue of slavery was driven by his attempts to build and maintain a political coalition with border states to save the union. This accommodating attitude also infuriated Frederick Douglass, who once called Lincoln the “Slavery President.” Such language once so riled an assembled crowd that Douglass barely escaped a lynching mob.

Given the explicit horrors of slavery depicted in the book, some readers wondering how slavery could have lasted so long, raised the question “How did we get this way at that time?” Your reporter proposed an economic answer that was provided in a recent issue of TIME in an article entitled “Why We’re Still Fighting the Civil War.”

“As Lincoln suggested in his second Inaugural Address, the entire nation, North and South, profited from slavery and then paid dearly for it.

The economic engine of slavery was immensely powerful. Slaves were the single largest financial assets in the United States of America, worth over $3.5 billion in 1860 dollars — more than the value of America's railroads, banks, factories or ships. Cotton was by far the largest U.S. export. It enriched Wall Street banks and fueled New England textile mills. This economic giant demanded a piece of the action in the westward expansion.”

A brilliant Frederick Douglass impersonator is Charles E. Pace who recently performed at the Durham Western History Museum. For a sample of his work, view Frederick Douglass’ 4th of July speech at the website below: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oWp5rjv7L30

The book selected for discussion at our next meeting will be EINSTEIN: His Life and Universe by Walter Isaacson. We will meet on Wednesday, September 7 at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Trudy Bredthauer (9814 Harney Parkway in Regency). Arrangements will be announced later for an optional prix fixe brunch. Prof. Dan Wilkins, chair, UNO Physics Dept. will assist in explanations of the intricacies of general and special
relativity. Beyond his scientific genius, Einstein displayed a profound wisdom and humanity that are exemplified in his brief statement below:

“We are all here for a brief sojourn, for what purpose we know not, though we sometimes think we feel it.”

(Report submitted by Bob Runyon, 6/13/11, rrunyon@unomaha.edu)