

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

**SCOTT W. ROGERS**

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

Helene L. Cohen

at

University of Utah  
Salt Lake City, Utah

on

19-21 June 2000

From the Original Collection of the University of California, Los Angeles

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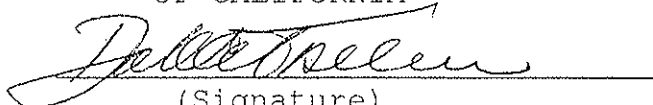
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INTERVIEWEE

THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY  
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## SCOTT W. ROGERS

1955 Born in Ogden, Utah, on 31 December

### Education

1979 B.S., Utah State University  
M.S., Utah State University  
1986 Ph.D., University of Utah

### Research Appointments

1986-1991 Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California  
Postdoctoral Fellow

### Professional Experience

1991-1993 University of Colorado, Health Sciences Center  
Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology  
1993-present University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah  
Assistant Professor, Department of Neurobiology

### Honors

1994 Klingenstein Fellow  
1991-1995 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

### Selected Publications

- Rogers, S.W. et al., 1994. Autoantibodies to glutamate receptor GluR3 in Rasmussen's encephalitis. *Science* 256:648.
- Twyman, R.E. et al., 1995. Glutamate receptor antibodies activate a subset of receptors and reveal an agonist binding site. *Neuron* 14:755-62.
- Carlson, N.G. et al., 1997. Identification of amino acids in the glutamate receptor subunit, GluR3, important for antibody-binding and receptor activation. *Journal of Biological Chemistry* 272:11295-301.
- Carlson, N.G. et al., 1998. Nicotine blocks TNF $\alpha$ -mediated neuroprotection to NMDA by an  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin-sensitive pathway. *Journal of Neurobiology* 35:29-36.

- Gahring, L.C. et al., 1998. Autoimmunity to glutamate receptors in Rasmussen's ecephalitis: A rare finding or the tip of an iceberg? *The Neuroscientist* 4:373-79.
- Rogers, S.W., 1998. Exploring dinosaur neuro-paleobiology: Computed tomography scanning and analysis of an *Allosaurus fragilis* endocast. *Neuron* 21:673-79.
- Rogers, S.W. et al., 1998. Age-related changes in neuronal nicotinic acetylcholine receptor subunit Alpha-4 expression are modified by long-term nicotine administration. *Journal of Neuroscience* 18:4825-32.
- Rogers, S.W., 1999. Allosaurus, crocodiles and birds: Evolutionary clues from spiral computed tomography of an endocast. *The Anatomical Record: The New Anatomist* 257:162-73.
- Rogers, S.W. et al., 1999. Inflammatory cytokines IL-1alpha, IL-1beta, IL-6, and TNF-alpha impart neuroprotection to an excitotoxin through distinct pathways. *Journal of Immunology* 163:3963-68.



## ABSTRACT

**Scott W. Rogers** was born and grew up in Ogden, Utah. His father, a meat inspector, and his mother, a housewife, were divorced when Scott was about six years old; his father left the state, and Scott lived with his mother. They belonged to the Presbyterian church, an unusual circumstance in Mormon Ogden, and both felt stigmatized and ostracized, at least to some degree.

Scott has always loved science; in fact, he feels that he was “born with” that love. He was lucky enough to have good science teachers throughout his school years; he took every possible class, even persuading the junior high school authorities that science was a religion, and that those non-Mormons who did not attend the Mormon class each day should be allowed to study their own “religion,” science, during that period. He participated in science fairs, and attended the National Youth Science Camps; at the international science fair he took second place and was offered a job by the USDA botany labs. He persuaded them to change the venue to the Forest Service, and he spent summers working in nearby national parks.

He matriculated at Utah State, intending to study botany. He soon found botany boring and, wanting to be “more active in the discovery process” of science, sped up his education to finish in three years. By that time he had become interested in *Drosophila* genetics, and his mother had been diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. In order to be able to care for his mother Scott decided to do a master’s degree at Utah State, working in Eldon Gardner’s lab. He finished that degree in a year; his mother died soon after his graduation, and his grandmother and a number of other relatives soon after that. He had intended to pursue a PhD at the University of Michigan that fall, but he gave up those plans and spent a year working as a technician at Utah State.

His personal life more settled by then, he entered University of Utah to study human genetics. He found the program not to be on the cutting edge (“Henry Ford” genetics, as he calls it), and went into Martin Rechsteiner’s cell biology lab. There he set out to show that protein degradation could occur outside lysosome and could be selective. Rogers there discovered PEST sequences, important to cell regulation. From his master’s thesis he got four papers.

As he was considering California Institute of Technology and Harvard University for a postdoc, he was introduced to Lorise Gahring, an immunologist who was considering the very same labs. They liked each other immediately and were married six months later. Meanwhile, their original choices for postdocs did not work out, and Lorise took a postdoc at Scripps Research Institute. Scott found one at the Salk Institutes for Biological Studies, working on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors in Stephen Heinemann’s lab. When Michael Hollmann cloned glutamate receptors Rogers began working on both receptors, making antibodies. Often Scott and Lorise worked together, approaching the same problem from their different perspectives.

After about six years they began searching for jobs, wanting tenure-track positions at the same school. They ended up at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver, Colorado. While they were there Scott, even though his lab took about a year to get set up, and Peter Ian Andrews discovered that Rasmussen’s encephalitis, until then treatable only by removal of a hemisphere of the brain, could be treated as an autoimmune disease, by neutralizing the sufferer’s antibodies.

While the Rogerses were at a Neuroscience meeting in California, the entire lab burned down, but at least Scott's serums were preserved in the freezer. This seemed an omen, and the Rogerses left for University of Utah, to take positions at the Veterans Health Administration, in the Eccles Institute of Human Genetics, where in their separate disciplines they studied aging and the immune system, nicotine addiction, etc. For genetic studies Utah's closed and well-documented Mormon society is ideal.

For fun, the Rogerses and their dog go fossil-hunting (a hobby that had to be curtailed when Scott published a paper on an Allosaurus endocast, as the avocation was becoming a vocation) in the Great Basin or Moab or other areas nearby. Scott feels he has met his professional and personal goals; that science offers great "freedom of imagination"; that if it were not for having to write grants, he would be like "a kid in a candy store."

## UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWER:

Helene L. Cohen, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.S., Nursing, UCLA; P.N.P., University of California, San Diego/UCLA; M.A., Theater, San Diego State University.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

**Place:** Rogers' office, University of Utah.

**Dates, length of sessions:** June 19, 2000 (132 minutes); June 20, 2000 (149); June 21, 2000 (132).

**Total number of recorded hours:** 6.9

**Persons present during interview:** Rogers and Cohen.

### CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one in a series with Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences conducted by the UCLA Oral History Program in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts's Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences Oral History and Archives Project. The project has been designed to document the backgrounds, education, and research of biomedical scientists awarded four-year Pew scholarships since 1988.

To provide an overall framework for project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty project consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Cohen held a telephone preinterview conversation with Rogers to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. She also reviewed prior Pew scholars' interviews and the documentation in Rogers's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including his proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members. For technical background, Cohen consulted J.D. Watson et al., *Molecular Biology of the Gene*. 4th ed. Menlo Park, California: Benjamin/Cummings, 1987; Bruce Alberts et al., *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. 3rd ed. New York: Garland, 1994; Horace F. Judson, *The Eighth Day of Creation*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979; and recent issues of *Science* and *Nature*.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Rogers's childhood in Ogden, Utah, and continuing through his undergraduate work at Utah State University, his graduate work at University of Utah, his postdoc at University of California, San Diego, and the establishment of his own laboratory at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center and University of Utah. Major topics discussed include the impact of Mormonism on his life, his breakthrough work on PEST and protein degradation outside of the lysosome, special problems facing researchers who combine both immunology and neuroscience, his study of

Rasmussen encephalitis, and his paper on dinosaur neurobiology.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Stephen Wilson, editorial assistant, edited the interview. He checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Rogers reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made no corrections and additions.

William Van Benschoten, editor, prepared the table of contents. Wilson assembled the biographical summary and interview history. Gail Ostergren, editor, compiled the index.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Early Years	1
Family background. Happy childhood. “Genetic” love of science. Mormonism. Good teachers throughout school. Entering every possible science fair. Attending science camps. Winning second place in an international science fair. Job offer from USDA.	
College Years	23
Matriculates at Utah State University, majoring in botany. Growing bored. Finishes in three years. Spends summers working for U.S. Forest Service. Becomes interested in <i>Drosophila</i> genetics.	
Early Graduate Years	27
Mother diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Rogers lives at home to care for her. Decides to get master’s degree in genetics at Utah State University. Mother dies; grandmother and other relatives die. Rogers spends a year as technician at Utah State.	
Resumption of Graduate Studies	30
Begins PhD studies in human genetics at University of Utah. Bored again. Moves to Martin Rechsteiner’s lab. Fails preliminary exams first time. Eventually passes and gets four papers from his dissertation. Discovers PEST sequences, important to selective protein degradation and cell regulation.	
Postdoctoral Years	37
Considers Harvard University and California Institute of Technology. Meets and soon marries Lorise Gahring, an immunologist looking for postdoc in same labs. Lorise goes to Scripps Research Institute; Rogers finds postdoc at Salk Institute for Biological Studies, working in Stephen Heinemann’s lab, studying nicotinic acetylcholine.	
First Jobs	43
Rogerses take positions at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver. Scott has no lab for a year, but still discovers alternative treatment for Rasmussen’s encephalitis. Entire lab burns down while Rogerses are away. Scott’s frozen reagents luckily saved.	
Back to Utah	59
Both Rogerses accept tenure-track positions at University of Utah, mostly paid by Veterans Health Administration. Grant-writing. Diversity of students and faculty. Public outreach. Tenure. Publishing. Keeping up with science. Ethics in science. Patents. Competition and collaboration. Professional and personal goals.	

Vocational Avocation	114
Fossil-hunting around state. Dinosaurs in Great Basin. Using spiral CT scanner to study endocast of Allosaurus brain. Publishing in <i>Neuron</i> . Teaching comparative neuroanatomy.	
Index	150

## INDEX

### A

Abbey, Edward, 101  
Abbott Laboratories, 78  
*Allosaurus*, 116, 117, 122, 123, 126  
Alzheimer's Disease, 65, 66, 133, 135, 139  
American Epilepsy Society, 136  
American Meteor Society, 18  
amygdala, 80, 81  
Anaheim, California, 4, 55  
Anasazis, 55, 57, 116  
Andrews, Peter Ian, 45, 46, 54  
apoptosis, 35  
*Archaeopteryx*, 126

### B

Bakker, Robert T., 123  
Big Springs, Idaho, 25  
Bingham Canyon, Utah, 2, 3  
biochemistry, 19  
Bird, Elaine, 11  
Bonneville High School, 12  
Boston, Massachusetts, 37  
botany/botanist, 11, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26,  
27, 34, 71  
Bowman, James T., 26  
Boyle, Sidney, 24  
Brigham Young University, 24  
Butts, Secretary Earl L., 22  
BYU. *See* Brigham Young University

### C

C3H mouse, 67  
C57 mouse, 67  
Cache Valley, Utah, 23  
California Institute of Technology, 37  
Caltech. *See* California Institute of  
Technology  
Capecchi, Mario R., 33, 34, 35, 70  
Carlson, Noel G., 28, 90, 105, 119, 134,  
147  
Carroll, Dana, 37, 39

Cartwright, George E., 31  
Case Western Reserve University, 40, 51  
caspase, 35  
CD4, 50  
CD8, 50  
CD9, 50  
cell biology, 18, 33, 34, 42, 43  
Chicago, Illinois, 4, 110, 125  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day  
Saints, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17,  
24, 67, 68, 69, 82, 83  
Churchill, Winston, 73  
Cleveland, Ohio, 51  
Cleveland-Lloyd Quarry, 116, 117  
Collins, Allan C., 66  
Colorado City, Arizona, 82  
Cook, Captain James, 123  
Cook, Helen, 10  
Cornell University, 3, 23  
Cotman, Carl W., 41  
Crain, Barbara, 44  
Crick, Francis H.C., 42  
Crohn's Disease, 66  
Crown Burgers, 40

### D

Dart, Dorothy, 97  
Darwin, Charles R., 36, 126  
Daynes, Raymond A., 37, 54  
DBA[2] mouse, 67  
de Duve, Christian, 34  
Deneris Evan S., 40  
Denver, Colorado, 12, 43, 46, 47, 52, 55,  
60, 109, 110  
dinosaurs, 96, 115, 116, 126  
DNA, 33, 96, 97, 139  
cDNA, 43  
*Drosophila*, 26, 27, 29, 31, 115, 126  
Dugway Proving Ground, 13  
Duke University, 44, 46, 54, 90

## E

Eccles Institute of Human Genetics, 58  
Einstein, Albert, 36  
electron microscopy, 35  
electrophysiology, 61, 135  
Ellis Island, 2  
emphysema, 63, 72  
endocast, 117, 118, 121, 123, 126, 129  
Erickson, Kent, 11, 12, 115

## F

Farmerville, Louisiana, 4  
FDA. *See* Food and Drug Administration  
Food and Drug Administration, 46  
Ford, Harrison, 76  
Ford, Henry, 32  
Ford, John Gardner, 23  
Forest Service [USDA], 22, 24, 25, 26,  
103, 107, 115  
*Fos*, 35  
fossil, 11, 60, 114, 115, 117, 126  
Frances, Norene, 11  
Freemason, 3  
Froerer, Lillian, 11

## G

GABA, 61, 71  
Gahring, Lorise C. (wife), 8, 28, 36, 37,  
38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,  
54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 81, 83,  
84, 85, 91, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 114,  
115, 119, 127, 128, 134, 135, 141, 145,  
146, 147  
Galilei, Galileo, 62, 145  
gamma-aminobutyric acid, 51  
Gardner, David J., 33  
Gardner, Eldon J., 26, 31, 33  
Gardner's Syndrome, 26  
genetics, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 61, 63, 67,  
69, 97, 99, 115, 145, 146  
George S. and Dorothy Dore Eccles  
Foundation, 58  
Georgopoulos, Costa P., 39  
Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical  
Center, 77

Gesteland, Raymoind, 33  
GluR, 51  
GluR3, 44, 46  
glutamate, 41, 42, 43, 45, 61, 64, 65, 66,  
67, 71, 124, 126  
Goldberg, Alfred L., 37, 38  
Grand Canyon National Park, 60  
Grant, President Ulysses S., 72  
Great Basin, Nevada, 115  
Grell, Ed H., 27

## H

Harvard University, 26, 37, 79, 142  
Hebert, Donald, 21, 30  
Heinemann, Stephen F., 39, 40, 41, 42, 44,  
47, 49, 111  
HIV. *See* human immunodeficiency virus  
Hoeffler, Barry, 58  
Hoidal, John, 63, 64  
Hollmann, Michael, 41  
Hughes, Howard, 58  
human immunodeficiency virus, 139  
Human Molecular Biology and Genetics,  
58, 59, 61, 93, 102  
Huntsman Cancer Institute, 101  
Huxley, Thomas Henry, 126  
HyClone, 27

## I

immunoglobulin G, 138  
immunoglobulin, 50  
interleukin-1, 38, 54, 71  
Island Park, Idaho, 25

## J

Jackson, Wyoming, 24, 25  
Javitz Fellowships, 38  
Jerome, Arizona, 3  
Johns Hopkins University, 3, 83  
Johnson & Johnson, 78, 140  
Julius, David, 41  
Jurassic period, 116, 126

## K

Kaplan, Jerry, 35, 116



Kiwi bird, 123

KKK. *See* Ku Klux Klan

Kodak International Amateur Film  
Festival, 14

Ku Klux Klan, 7

## L

La Brea Tar Pits, 116

Lazarides, Elias, 37, 38

LDS. *See* Church of Jesus Christ of Latter  
Day Saints

Lemke, Greg E., 49, 140

Lindsley, Dan L., 27

Lindstrom, Jon M., 44

lipids, 13

Logan, Utah, 2, 23, 28, 30, 37

London, England, 114

Louisiana, 4, 7

lysosome, 34, 35, 129

## M

MacDonald, Robert L., 61

Madsen, James H., 117

Marsh, Othniel C., 126

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, 32

Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
103

McNamara, James O., 44, 45, 46, 130, 137

Mendel, Gregor, 69

Merck and Company, Inc., 78

Mesa Verde, Arizona, 55

Meyer, Erin, 89

MIT. *See* Massachusetts Institutes of  
Technology

Moab, Utah, 59, 86, 87, 101, 115

molecular biology, 19, 26, 33, 40, 41, 91

Momontney, George, 13

Morgan, Thomas Hunt, 27

Mormonism/Mormon, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,  
10, 16, 17, 30, 32, 67, 68, 82

Mount Palomar, 96

Muscular Dystrophy Association, 41

myasthenia gravis, 44, 45

Myriad Genetics, Inc., 31

## N

National Academy of Sciences, 13, 40

National Institute of Drug Abuse, 58

National Institutes of Alcohol Addiction  
and Abuse, 53

National Institutes of Health, 38, 46, 50,  
53, 62, 69, 78, 113, 130, 132, 135, 138,  
141, 147

National Library of Medicine, 112

National Research Service Award, 38, 39

National Science Foundation, 13

National Youth Science Camp, 12

Nebraska, 4

neurobiology, 50, 54, 61, 70, 81, 85, 118,  
121, 122, 123, 125, 126

neurofibromatosis, 69

neuroimmunology, 48, 50, 51, 54, 73, 79,  
80, 81, 91, 145, 146

New Zealand, 123

NIAAA. *See* National Institutes of  
Alcohol Addiction and Abuse

nicotine, 41, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69

nicotinic acetylcholine, 39, 40, 41, 44, 65,  
66, 73

NIDA. *See* National Institute of Drug  
Abuse

NIH. *See* National Institutes of Health

n-methyl-d-aspartic acid, 51

Nobel Prize, 34, 40

NRSA. *See* National Research Service  
Award

## O

Ogden, Utah, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 22, 23, 30

Oklahoma, 4

Olivera, Baldomero M., 33

ornithine decarboxylase, 38

## P

Park Service [United States National], 24

Parkinson's disease, 65, 67, 135, 139

Parks, Thomas N., 88, 102

Patrick, James W., 44

PCR, 113, *See* polymerase chain reaction

PEST. *See* proline, glutamic acid, serine,

and threonine  
Pew Charitable Trusts, 70, 141  
Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences,  
49, 78, 94, 113, 141, 146, 148  
Pharmaceutical Manufacturers  
Association, 78  
plant anatomy, 19, 24  
plant biology, 19  
plasmapheresis, 46  
polymerase chain reaction, 97  
Prescott, Arizona, 3  
Prescott, Stephen M., 101  
Price Utah, 116  
proline, glutamic acid, serine, and  
threonine, 35, 36, 39, 40, 131, 141  
protein degradation, 34, 35, 36, 38, 129

## R

Rasmussen's encephalitis, 44, 45, 52, 59,  
61, 64, 66, 70, 72, 78, 79, 89, 109, 131,  
133, 135, 138  
Rechsteiner, Martin C., 33, 34, 35, 37, 43,  
62, 91, 105  
Research Society on Alcoholism, 109  
ribonucleic acid, 41  
RNA. *See* ribonucleic acid  
Rogers, Helen Upton (mother), 4  
Rogers, Shelby (father), 4  
Rosetta Stone, 141  
Roy High School, 12  
Rutgers The State University of New  
Jersey, 52

## S

Sagan, Carl E., 96, 98  
Salina, Utah, 63  
Salk Institute for Biological Studies, 39,  
43, 44, 49, 57, 63, 79, 91, 105, 106, 133  
Salk, Jonas, 42  
Salt Lake City, Utah, 1, 6, 7, 8, 23, 40, 47,  
55, 60, 68, 82, 86, 115  
San Diego, California, 39, 52, 60, *See*  
Scheffler, Immo E., 38  
Scripps Research Institute, 39, 42  
Semmelweis, Ignaz, 36

Shaw, Richard, 24  
Simpson, O.J., 97  
Skolnick, Mark H., 31, 32  
Smith, Joseph, Jr., 3  
spiral CT scanner, 118  
Stanley, Hugh P., 26  
Sterile Systems Inc., 27  
Sterling Scholar, 12  
Swenson, Joseph (great-grandfather), 1  
Swenson, Wilhelmina (great-  
grandmother), 1

## T

*T. [Tyrannosaurus] Rex*, 116  
Tabakoff, Boris, 53  
Tanzi, Rudolph E., 94  
taxonomy, 13, 19, 24, 26  
telencephalon, 121  
the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School,  
52  
theropod, 123, 126  
TNF. *See* tumor necrosis factor  
tumor necrosis factor-alpha, 51, 66, 71  
Trenholm, Karen, 118  
tumor necrosis factor, 61  
Twyman, Roy, 61

## U

UCSD. *See* University of California, San  
Diego  
UCSF. *See* University of California, San  
Francisco  
Uintah Mountains, 115  
United States, 67  
United States Department of Agriculture,  
13, 22  
United States Department of the Interior,  
25  
United States Military Academy at West  
Point, 13  
University of California, 83  
University of California at Los Angeles,  
29  
University of California, Irvine, 41  
University of California, San Diego, 38

University of California, San Francisco, 79  
University of Colorado at Boulder, 66  
University of Colorado Health Sciences  
Center, 43, 51  
University of Michigan, 28, 30, 31  
University of Utah, 1, 13, 31, 37, 39, 54,  
58, 59, 78, 82, 85, 91, 93, 94, 96, 102,  
116, 141, 147  
University of Utah Medical Center, 28,  
116  
Upton, Helvia S. (maternal grandmother),  
2  
Upton, Thomas J. (maternal grandfather),  
3  
USDA. *See* United States Department of  
Agriculture  
Utah Museum of Natural History, 116  
Utah State Supreme Court, 97  
Utah State University, 2, 19, 22, 27, 30

## V

Varmus, Harold E., 112, 113

Veterans Health Administration, 58, 76,  
80, 90, 99, 102  
Virginia City, Nevada, 3, 7

## W

Washington, D.C., 25  
Watson, James D., 26, 60  
Weber State College, 18  
Westinghouse Science Talent Search, 12  
Whisenand, Teri, 89  
White, Raymond L., 31, 101  
White, Rulon, 30  
Williams, Roger R., 31  
Wintrobe, Harold, 31  
World War II, 3  
Wyoming, 24, 25, 83, 115

## Y

Yale University, 83, 142  
Yellowstone National Park, 25, 60, 115  
Young, Brigham, 83