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UTAH TERRITORY ~ 1853

by
Wm. Powell
3/68

The day had been pleasantly warm, but the feel of Fall was in the air; the leaves were beginning to show their fall colors; nature was gently nudging summer aside, making way for winter.

The Saints in the Great Basin were completing preparations for winter feeding of the church livestock. President Brigham Young had spent the day inspecting some of these facilities and planning for winter care of these herds which meant so much to survival in the valley.

Feeling quite satisfied with the project, he started the long ride home, enjoying the beauty of Fall in the valley. He noted the changing colors, the obvious preparation of the wild life for the cold weather ahead. The Sege Lily seemed to be resigned to the fact that its season was about over and was awaiting the frost and the blanket of snow that would usher in its long sleep until Spring.

As he journeyed homeward, he reviewed the past year, its trials and tribulations, its achievements -- the temple site had been consecrated, the corner stones laid. The Indians had been particularly annoying, causing some deaths and destroying property; nine shiploads of converts had departed from Liverpool -- destination -- Zion in the Mountains; construction of a six mile "Spanish wall" around the city had been started; the first number of a sixteen page octavo publication, The Journal of Discourses had been published in England; many wagon trains had arrived from the East -- Zion was growing. Missionaries had been banished from Norway and Prussia; successful preaching in Cape of Good Hope, England, Iceland. Floods in City Creek and Iron County - Capt. John Gunnison killed by indians, Elder Willard Snow died and buried at sea.

It was after dark when he arrived home; an unmistakable chill of approaching winter was in the air. With his thoughts of the day now filed away in his mind, his thoughts now turned to his family as he entered the house to receive a warm welcome.

As he passed by the study room where the tutor was instructing some of his children and some young lady converts from Denmark in the art of spelling and pronunciation, he overheard an almost impatient voice saying, "No! You spell 'though' 't-h-o-u-g-h', not 't-h-o'."

After dinner, in the quiet of his room, he pondered this remark and was reminded of other observations in this regard and his own difficulty in learning the cumbersome system of phonetic spelling. "Why," he asked himself, "couldn't a more practical system be devised? What could be done to make learning the English language easier for the non-English speaking converts and the children of Zion?"

The next day Brigham Young met with the Board of Regents of the newly-formed University of Deseret and laid the matter before them, suggesting that a study be made in view of some spelling and pronunciation reforms.

This was the beginning of

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A CHRONICLE of (THE)

1853


(DESERET)


(ALPHABET)

October 1853

The newly organized University of Deseret (now the University of Utah), was at that time not a class-teaching institution, but an education-promoting, supervisory and examining organization. This was certainly the place to submit such a problem. Could the principles of phonography be used in this reform? Many such questions were asked that day and many ideas proposed. A committee was formed to study this new project and develop some ideas for discussion. This committee appears to have consisted of Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, Robert C. Campbell, and George D. Watt. W. W. Phelps was also mentioned by one writer; however, it is believed that George D. Watt was principally responsible for the resulting alphabet.

(Continued)

In the River Ribble, near Preston, George D. Watt, the first convert in England was baptised.⁽⁵⁾ He migrated to Nauvoo in 1840, continued active in the church and returned to his native England to fill a mission. His mission was two-fold; to preach the gospel to his countrymen and to learn the Pitman method of shorthand, then being taught in England.

He applied himself diligently to the completion of his assignment in both callings, and returned to Nauvoo where he applied his newly learned system of shorthand in recording many sermons of the early leaders of the church.

He moved West and became the church reporter, a position he held for many years. His name appears as reporting conferences into the year 1866, almost 20 years of reporting service using shorthand he originally learned in England.⁽⁶⁾

November 24, 1853

The Deseret News reported that the Board of Regents had met frequently with the governor (Brigham Young) and others to investigate *"The elementary sounds of language."*

They believed that *"the present orthography of the English language is too full of absurdities to be tolerated by an enlightened people without a gradual and complete reformation."*⁽⁷⁾

December, 1853

The Deseret Alphabet as finally adopted was an odd assortment of thirty eight characters, one for each of the discernible sounds in the English language. The letters C, D, L, O, P, S, and W of the Roman alphabet were retained (after a fashion), however, even these letters took on some new sounds. Thirty-one new characters were added, some taken from illustrations of ancient alphabets in an old Webster's dictionary, and Watt designed some himself.⁽⁸⁾ The letter to be sounded as G seems to be a copy of the demotic Egyptian phonetic valued e symbol.⁽⁹⁾

December 1854

Governor Young spoke before the territorial legislature promoting the project:

"...While the world is progressing with steam-engine power and lightning speed in the accumulation of wealth, extension of sciences, communication and dissemination of letters and principles, why may not the way be paved for the easier acquisition of the English language, combining as it does great extension and varied expression with beauty, simplicity and power and being unquestionably the most useful and beautiful in the world. But while we freely admit this, we also have to acknowledge that it is perhaps as much abused in its use and as complex in its attainments as any other."

January 19, 1854 — As reported in the Deseret News.

"The Board of Regents, in company with the Governor and heads of departments, have adopted a new alphabet, consisting of 38 characters . . . with the sanguine hope of simplifying the English language . . .

"These characters are much more simple in their structure than the usual alphabetical characters . . . The written and printed hand are substantially merged in one.

"The orthography will be so abridged that an ordinary writer can probably write one hundred words a minute with ease, and consequently report the speech of a common speaker without much difficulty.

"As soon as this alphabet can be set in type, it will probably be furnished to the schools of the Territory for their use and benefit, not, however, with a view to immediately supersede the use of the common alphabet which though it does not make the comers thereunto perfect, still it is a vehicle that has become venerable for age and much hard service.

"In the new alphabet every letter has a fixed and unalterable sound and every word is spelled with reference to given sounds. By this means, strangers cannot only acquire a knowledge of our language much more readily but a practiced reporter can also report a strange language when spoken. . . ."

January 1854

From "Incidents in Utah History", (1851-1854), we read the following:

"Governor Young met with the Regents of the Deseret University this winter for the purpose of reforming the orthography of the English language. After many attempts to render the common alphabet subservient, it was considered necessary to introduce a new set of characters, more simple in their structure, from which every superfluous mark should be excluded and in which every letter should have a fixed and unalterable sound excluding the use of silent letters." (10)

Considerable delay was experienced in getting the reform into use. After the alphabet was developed and agreed upon by the Regents, there had to be a way developed to reproduce the new characters on paper so they could be studied and then some method of printing had to be devised. The available type certainly was not suitable and getting type from the East was very expensive and took time. Paper was very scarce and at that time they did not have bookbinding equipment in Utah.

There was some work done during this year in preparing manuscripts written in the Deseret Alphabet by Parley P. Pratt, one of the original members of the committee, as evidenced by the following excerpt from his diary: (From "Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt", under diary date January, 1854.)

".....The remainder of the winter was spent in the ministry; in the active duties of a Regent of the University of Deseret (being one of the Committee on the Deseret Alphabet and a New System of Orthography); in teaching a class in the Spanish language; in ministering in the ordinances of endowments in the house of the Lord;"

Parley P. Pratt's death three years later ended his contribution to this cause. However, had he lived we may be sure he would have contributed substantially to the development of ideas and materials for the reform.

November 30, 1854

"....Governor Brigham Young met with the Regents of the Deseret University, when resolutions were passed to extend the teachings of the new alphabet. The Regents were directed to lecture in different parts of the country in favor of getting up schools..." (10)

1855

The Legislature appropriated \$2500.00 to further the cause "under the direction and control of the Chancellor and the Board of Regents in procuring fonts of Deseret Alphabet type, in paying for printing of books with said type and other purposes..." (11)

Orson Pratt, Professor of Astronomy and Mathematics at the University of Deseret, was assigned the leadership of this phase of the work and was dispatched to St. Louis to procure fonts of type, printing materials, etc., to commence actual printing of books and articles using the new alphabet. (12)

Orson Pratt's aptitude for this type of work and general business ability made his appointment a wise choice. It is believed that he did much of the translating.

This translating was very tedious work and many mistakes were made. A detailed treatise on the errors in the translating and printing of the Deseret Alphabet will be found in another section of this article.

February 4, 1856

"The Regency of the University met in Governor Young's room, at candle light and held till ten o'clock. The main subject dwelt upon was the getting up of first and second readers, for the children of Utah Territory.

A committee of three were appointed to get up these books, and present them to the Board, for acceptance. The committee were G. D. Watt, Saml. W. Richards, and W. Woodruff." (10)

"On the 11th, the Regency of the County met and the work of the committee was read and accepted. The committee of Revision or examination was appointed to assist those appointed as the first committee." (10)

"Prest. Young, for some time had his mind deeply exercised upon the getting up of the 'Deseret Alphabet' and carrying it into practical use. The committee were now making books under his direction, to be published in that Alphabet. They had to get new type made, as the letters were entirely different from any others in use at that time."

"The committee last appointed were Albert Carrington, D. H. Wells and Wm. Willes." (10)

1857

The available records show few advances in actual printing of books and lesson material during the next nine years. However, the leaders of these years were well aware of the need of education and were continually encouraging the saints to study and improve their minds.

May 1858

To further complicate the development and actual use of the new alphabet, the Deseret News press and supplies were moved to Fillmore in preparation for abandonment and the possible burning of Salt Lake City rather than give the city intact to Johnson's Army. Brigham Young also gave instructions that if Fillmore was endangered, the press and other materials and equipment were to be moved one hundred miles further south to Parowan to insure survival of the priceless equipment. (13)

The project of alphabet reform was laid aside giving way to more important things of the day; however, it was not forgotten.

With grim determination the Saints made the "move" south and awaited the outcome of the army's arrival.

An interesting and personal story of the "move" and the army's activity is recorded in the book "Autobiography and Poems" by Hannah Cornaby, 1881, Page 49.

"In the spring of 1858, the 'move' commenced, when all the people living north of Utah County, removed south. This made our little town quite lively. Several families encamped upon our lot, constructing temporary shelter for themselves. The government, having been misled by mischief-makers, thought it had made a mistake; so sent commissioners to Utah to find out what was the matter with the Mormons. On inquiry, it was found they were 'right side up', so they proposed to forgive us if we asked their pardon for keeping them out in the cold all winter, which we did with a very good grace, they promising to be quite peaceable if we would let them come in. The army entered our peaceful valleys and encamped at Fairfield, not as an invading force, but restricted and shorn of its power; bringing with it, money, clothing, provisions and supplies of almost every description, which were placed within easy access of the people. Thus the army which threatened destruction to us as a people, like so many of the efforts of our enemies to destroy us, only proved a blessing in disguise, and the wrath of man was made to praise the Lord. In July, the people returned to their homes in peace. We prospered temporarily, and enjoyed the blessings of life as well as the consolations of our holy religion."

The territorial superintendent of schools, Robert Campbell, was a champion of the reform project and had this to say:

"The Superintendent takes great pleasure in seconding the efforts of President Brigham Young and the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret, in the introduction of the Deseret Alphabet. That English orthography needs reform is patent to all who have given the matter the slightest consideration. To follow in the footsteps of our venerated fathers in a system of orthography so inconsistent and ridiculous and which has never helped to make the comers thereunto perfect, is unworthy of a people whose constant and highest aspirations are to be associated with truth and intelligence, and who discard error in whatever form it is presented." (16)

1860

Brigham Young's enthusiasm for this new alphabet and system of spelling even influenced the Utah monetary system. Gold coins were minted in Utah in 1849 and in 1850. In 1860, the coins were redesigned and minted with the words "Holiness to the Lord" written in the peculiar hieroglyphic-like figures of the Deseret Alphabet. This was the last year of gold coinage in Utah, the practice being forbidden by Governor Cummings. The United States Government redeemed all gold coins that were made available with the current United States gold coinage, thereby creating a short supply of these coins for the collectors of today. (17)



March 1864

Apparently the problems of acceptance of the Deseret Alphabet began to plague the leaders of the church and Brigham Young considered an alternate or substitute for the Deseret Alphabet.

"Ex Gov. Young desired the Regency of the Deseret University to consider the system of phonotype instead of the Deseret Alphabet." (10)

There is no record available of the Regents' action on Brigham Young's suggestion and it is assumed that it was "shelved" and that the effort in behalf of the Deseret Alphabet as originally designed was continued.

1864 --- 1867

There is very little recorded of the activity of the alphabet project during this period. Apparently some further transcribing was done but the populace made small gains in learning the new alphabet and very little printing was done.

However, it was not forgotten. From an address given in the new tabernacle by George A. Smith on October 9, 1867 as recorded in the "Journal of Discourses", Vol. XXII, Page 138-141, we read the following:

"In speaking of the education of our children, I wish to draw the attention of the Saints particularly to the system of phonetics, or the Deseret Alphabet, which has been referred to by President Young and some of the brethren. This is calculated to considerably abridge the labor of our foreign brethren in learning to read English. I think that in all our schools phonetics should form one branch of study, and as fast as works of phonotopy can be obtained they should be introduced, for there is no doubt that a general reformation will be effected in our English orthography. It is said that the Lord will restore to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon Him with one consent. While we urge our brethren to acquire the English language, and to make themselves proficient in the useful branches of education, we wish them to remember that the orthography which the English nation has adopted is by no means perfect, for our present mode of spelling might be materially improved..."

1864--1867 (Cont.)

From an address given by George A. Smith on October 9, 1867 as recorded in the "Journal of Discourses", Vol. XXII, Page 138-141 (Cont.):

"And while we preach to all classes -- all the boys and girls under ninety -- to go to school and educate themselves in the various useful branches, we do not want our brethren who do not speak the English language to think that they are neglected or without the pale of this call. We hope the bishops and teachers will make every reasonable exertion to stir up the minds of the brethren and sisters who do not thoroughly understand English to the importance of this particular item of counsel. We, of course, wish them to stir up everybody on the subject of education, and to encourage, in every possible manner, our day and Sunday schools, for the cause of education should be popular in Israel now, as it was in the days of Joseph; and old and young should go to school together."

From the early days of Missouri and Ohio, the leaders of the church had constantly promoted educational endeavors. John Jaques prepared texts; Parley P. Pratt and others at the direction of the Prophet Joseph prepared many items of educational interests to be printed and distributed. Enlightenment and study of the arts was high on the list of the leaders of the Church at all times. So it was not new that a concerted effort was being made in the interest of education at this time.

1868

The new year arrived and still there was no evidence of books for the people of the mountains and valleys of Deseret. No doubt the Civil War had had certain repercussions on the entire country. Indian troubles, lack of printing materials, crude printing machinery, and many other difficulties had been deterrents to the Deseret Alphabet over the years. However, it is quite evident that much work had been done during these years in transcribing and preparing texts because early in this year actual setting up of type and preparing for printing of the books began.

October, 1868

Remarks by President Brigham Young in the new Tabernacle, "Journal of Discourses", Vol. XII, Page 298:

"... There are a few items I wish to lay before the Conference before we dismiss, which I think we shall do when we get through our meeting this afternoon. One of these items is to present to the congregation the Deseret Alphabet. We have now many thousands of small books, called the first and second readers, adapted to school purposes, on the way to this city. As soon as they arrive we shall distribute them throughout the Territory. We wish to introduce this alphabet into our schools, consequently we give this public notice. We have been contemplating this for years (since 1853). The advantages of this alphabet will soon be realized, especially by foreigners. Brethren who come here knowing nothing of the English language will find its acquisition greatly facilitated by means of this alphabet, by which all the sounds of the language can be represented and expressed with the greatest ease. As this is the grand difficulty foreigners experience in learning the English language, they will find a knowledge of this alphabet will greatly facilitate their efforts in acquiring at least a partial English education. It will also be very advantageous to our children. It will be the means of introducing uniformity in our orthography, and the years that are now required to learn to read and spell can be devoted to other studies...."

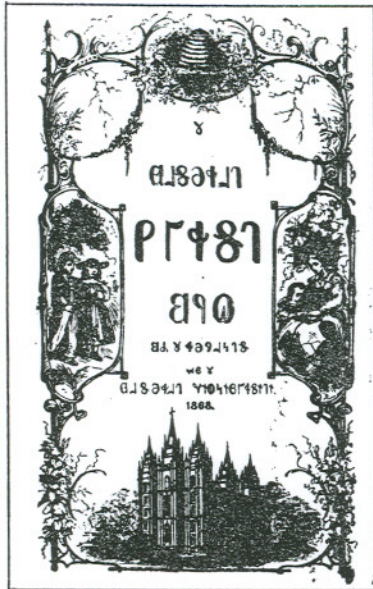
By this time the Deseret News had procured new printing equipment and had developed steam-power to operate the press; book binding equipment had been obtained, and publishing in the valley was no longer just an occasional octavo paper.

Fulfilling the announcement made by Brigham Young in his October 6th remarks, printing of the reader began.

* * * * *

Deseret Alphabet

The Deseret First Book, measuring 5" by 7-1/2", a beginning reader or primer which contained thirty-six pages of lesson material, based on simple pictures, came rolling off the press.



4 Deseret First Bko.

LESSON I.

1. 2. 3.
 4. 5. 6.
 7. 8. 9.

LESSON II.

10. 11.
 12. 13. 14.
 15. 16. 17.
 18. 19. 20.

Deseret First Bko. 5

LESSON III.

21. 22. 23.
 24. 25. 26.
 27. 28. 29.
 30. 31. 32.

LESSON IV.

33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50.

(18)

Following this, there was published the Deseret Second Book, much the same as the First Book, but containing twice as many pages, with stories composed of more difficult words.



16 Deseret Second Bko.

LESSON XIII.

QOOLS.

YTH BAWC EF FAWC WE OOLTS. YE LHO TO
 TH EPHTI 325, AND OOC 325. STS BAWC EF
 OEFH 4-1 TO THH SET FEYLT'G OOLTS. YE
 L4 441 LTH 325 B-D THOS, BHOOE YL4 3
 OOLTS OHO OUD, YE L4 441 FOHO-1 325. STS
 24 EF SOHO 4 THHMI YTH TOHS, C-ND BHOOM
 325. YE 325 THH 325 OAHDS, AND H4STH
 325 L4S OAHMSL4S, SO 325 YL4 YE 4THO 325.
 3 44146 HO SE L4 441 H FEPOE, B-1 325 SE
 L4 H O-1-S4 TH L4D. THH L4S 441 325, 441
 YE ST-1 YEF DEHTHIG TO HHOH, SOH, AND DEH1
 325. YE L4 OAH YEF DEHTHIG 441 F-4 THO YEF,
 OOH TH 441 H4. YE L4 OHO ST-1 Y-325.
 S46C TO H FEH41 TH 441 SE L4 HHO L4S
 OI YEF STH4L TO TH 325 DEHTHIG.

Deseret Second Bko. 17

LESSON XIV.

QOOLS.

YEF 16 F FAWC WE OOLS. YOC TO L4 44 3
 OAHMS, BHOH D TH-4D, AND ALL FAWC OEFH4C
 AND FEPOC, YEF OOS. YEF FEYLT'G EF O-ND TO
 DEO H-4C TO L4 44. STS FOOS TH-4C 3 FEYLT'G
 FAWC YEF OOS OAH THO 44 D Y41, AND 44 325
 2441 SE SO4 OAH FEYLT'G THO DEO F 44
 F-325-O-4D.

OOS BHO44 TO LE YEF OOC C-11 THH 44 3
 STH4L. YF YE EF 441-LED TO S4L, AND EF L4D
 L4, SE L4 LE 325 OOC. Y 441 WE 3 OOS EF
 OOH OAHMHG, AND EF C-11 L4H4L. YE SO4
 OHO L41S, FEH41, AND 44 D THO OAHLS, SE EF
 HOUL 44 S4E TO 3 OOH OOS.

(18)

From available records, it appears that 10,000 copies of each primer was printed and most of them distributed through the Territory to promote the Deseret Alphabet and to teach the Saints, young and old, the "easier" new way of spelling.

Each book's frontispiece was an illustration of the thirty-eight characters of the alphabet, showing their sounds and how used.

(Continued)

| Long Sounds | | | Letter Name | | | Sound | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------|-------------|------------------------|-------|--------|-----------------------|-------|
| Letter | Name | Sound | Letter | Name | Sound | Letter | Name | Sound |
| ⓐ | ...e...as in...eat | ⓐ | ⓑ | ...at | ⓑ | Ⓒ | ...che as in...chese | Ⓒ |
| ⓓ | ...aw " aught | ⓓ | Ⓔ | ...oth...as in...thigh | Ⓔ | ⓓ | ...ow " owl | ⓓ |
| ⓕ | ...oo " ooze | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...ur " burn | ⓓ | ⓕ | ...yo | ⓕ |
| ⓖ | ...ga...ar in...gate | ⓖ | ⓓ | ...m | ⓖ | ⓕ | ...h | ⓕ |
| ⓗ | ...as in...it | ⓗ | ⓓ | ...n | ⓗ | ⓕ | ...eng as in...length | ⓗ |
| ⓓ | ...et | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...v | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...at | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...eth...as in...high | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ot | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...the " they | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ut | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...s | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...book | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...z | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...esh...as in...flesh | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...zhe " vision | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...i...as in...ice | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...zhe " vision | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ow " owl | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...ur " burn | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...yo | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...l | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...woo | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...m | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...h | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...n | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| | | | ⓓ | ...eng as in...length | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |

(Left) This is the illustration of the alphabet used in the First and Second Books.

(Right) This one was used in the Book of Mormon Part I and Book of Mormon complete copy.

(Note the change of spelling of the word "ALPHABET".)

| Long Sounds | | | Letter Name | | | Sound | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-------|-------------|------------------------|-------|--------|-----------------------|-------|
| Letter | Name | Sound | Letter | Name | Sound | Letter | Name | Sound |
| ⓐ | ...e...as in...eat | ⓐ | ⓑ | ...at | ⓑ | Ⓒ | ...che as in...chese | Ⓒ |
| ⓓ | ...aw " aught | ⓓ | Ⓔ | ...oth...as in...thigh | Ⓔ | ⓓ | ...ow " owl | ⓓ |
| ⓕ | ...oo " ooze | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...ur " burn | ⓓ | ⓕ | ...yo | ⓕ |
| ⓖ | ...ga...ar in...gate | ⓖ | ⓓ | ...m | ⓖ | ⓕ | ...h | ⓕ |
| ⓗ | ...as in...it | ⓗ | ⓓ | ...n | ⓗ | ⓕ | ...eng as in...length | ⓗ |
| ⓓ | ...et | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...v | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...at | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...eth...as in...high | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ot | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...the " they | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ut | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...s | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...book | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...z | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...esh...as in...flesh | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...zhe " vision | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...i...as in...ice | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...zhe " vision | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓓ | ...ow " owl | ⓓ | ⓓ | ...ur " burn | ⓓ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...yo | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...l | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...woo | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...m | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| ⓕ | ...h | ⓕ | ⓓ | ...n | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |
| | | | ⓓ | ...eng as in...length | ⓕ | ⓕ | | ⓕ |

The alphabet illustrations in the Deseret First and Second Books used the "long a" sound in the second syllable of the word "ALPHABET". In the illustration of the alphabet in the Book of Mormon Part I and the Book of Mormon complete issue, the "short a" sound was used.

This is a very noticeable "error" or "misuse" of the proper sound. Some of these sounds are most difficult to determine as right or wrong; consequently many errors are to be found. Compare these illustrations with the earlier 1859 illustrations, Page 5. They are basically the same except that the "letter sounds" are placed near the letter for easier understanding. This also made them easier to follow in assembling the letters to form words.

October 30, 1868

Much to the dismay of the regents, many transcribing and type-setting errors were discovered after the majority of the primers were bound and distributed. On this date the committee passed a resolution to print an errata sheet for each book, which were to be inserted at the back of each book by its owner.⁽¹⁹⁾ Because of the "loose sheet" method, most of the copies of the errata were lost or destroyed and therefore the "Errata" has become a rare item of Mormon Americana. A very few of the last books to be bound did contain the sheet as part of the original binding; however, these are more rare than the loose sheet errata.

The First Book Errata Sheet contained some forty corrected errors while the Second Book Errata Sheet corrected sixty-five.

| 2444. | |
|--|--|
| 783 3, 64411 QwL77, V. U. 448 Y D18 B 430068 | |
| U74 8784 884 | |
| 8, 9L UAN P04 Y118 438 Y105 | |
| 8, 10L " Q44 Q44 | |
| 8, 12L " 470 470 | |
| 9, 11L " 44L 44L | |
| 14, 14L " 887 887 | |
| 19, 4L " 74-88 " 74-88 | |
| 9L " 0484 " 0480 | |
| 21, 4L " 7448 Y104 | |
| 21, 14L " 8440 8840 | |
| 22 24L " 78 " 78 | |
| 5L " Q4474 438 Q0474 | |
| 11L " 74-88 " 74-88 | |
| 24, 12L " 44-4 " 44-4 | |
| 25, 14L " 887 " 887 | |
| 4L " 8 4474 6. 84048 U748 7484 4444 | |
| 13L " 404 4444 438 4444 | |
| 27, 14L " 874 " 874 | |
| 2187 " 8 " 8 | |
| 25 13L " 744418 438 744418 | |
| 10L " 88 " 88 | |
| 20L " 84 " 84 | |
| 21, 14L " 44 " 44 | |
| 7L " 744 " 744 | |
| 9L " 84 " 84 | |
| 13L " 4444 " 4444 | |
| 14L " 444 70444 438 444 70444 | |
| 15L " 70 744047 " 70 744047 | |
| 30, 13L " 4047 887 048 " 4047 887 048 | |

These illustrations show only one side of the sheet, thereby only showing part of the Errata.

The following is a translation of line 4, Second Book Errata Sheet:

Page 7, 5th line, for nnd read and.

| 2444. | |
|--|--|
| 44 X 41 P0475, 744 3, V. U. 448 Y D18 B 430068 U74 | |
| 878 884 | |
| 78 5, 9L UAN P04 048 438 D18 | |
| 7, 5L " 448 " 448 | |
| 8, 13L " 4447 " 4447 | |
| 8, 14L " 00 " 00 | |
| 10, 9L " 40-707 " 40-707 | |
| 12, 14L " Q447416 " Q447416 | |
| 15 5L " 4448 " 4448 | |
| 17 24L " 4440 " 4440 | |
| 18 14L " 40 " 40 | |
| 19 5L " 884 " 884 | |
| 19 13L " 8804 " 8804 | |
| 19 5L " 7447 " 7447 | |
| 21 5L " 44440 " 44440 | |
| 22 7L " 8846 " 8846 | |
| 24 7L " 844416 " 844416 | |
| 25 14L " 440 " 440 | |
| 26 5L " 44 " 44 | |
| 27 5L " 74474 " 74474 | |
| 28 4L " 44 " 44 | |
| 29 5L " 884 " 884 | |
| 34 14L " 44 " 44 | |
| 37 7L " 74 " 74 | |
| 19 " 44 " 44 | |
| 38 14L " 44 " 44 | |
| 38 14L " 44 " 44 | |
| 37 24L " 44 " 44 | |
| 38 5L " 74 " 74 | |
| 25L " 4444 " 4444 | |

Available copies of the Book of Mormon Part I and the complete Book of Mormon written in the Deseret Alphabet do not contain errata sheets. This writer has no information relative to errata sheets for these books and has not translated from these two books sufficiently to detect errors in translating or typesetting, however, one might rightfully assume that errors in spelling, translating and typesetting were made in light of the foregoing evidence of errors.

Errors, as mentioned, were never errors of facts in any of the books written in the Deseret Alphabet; they were errors of transposing of letters, mistakes in selecting the right sounding letter or actual typesetting mistakes.

This writer did find some transposing errors in the manuscript of the Old Testament.

Few people actually learned to use the Deseret Alphabet fluently, and those who did study it extensively, particularly the children, reaped a lifetime of spelling difficulties. They first had to learn some standard English spelling and pronunciation before they could begin learning and reading the Deseret Alphabet. No doubt they would have been better off had they learned only the English language and spelling, as did their forefathers, even though it was "full of absurdities".⁽²¹⁾

1869

On Tuesday, April 20, Orson Pratt left Salt Lake for the east, this time to arrange for printers to print the Book of Mormon in the Deseret Alphabet.⁽²¹⁾ We may assume that Orson Pratt and others had been doing extensive transcribing during the past few years preparing manuscripts for these books.

As agent for the church and the University of Deseret, Orson Pratt contracted with Russell Brothers of New York to print two books. One was the Book of Mormon Part I, through the Words of Mormon. There were eight thousand of these printed.

This book contained 116 pages, measuring 6" x 9".

The other book was the complete Book of Mormon, containing 443 pages, measuring 5-7/8" x 8-7/8". There were only 500 copies of this book printed.

The Book of Mormon Part I was to be used as an advanced reader.

Having completed arrangements for this printing, Orson Pratt arrived back in Salt Lake on September 26, 1869.⁽²²⁾

1870

Early in the year the books from New York were ready and the Deseret First and Second readers were already almost two years old. Their popularity had not increased and in fact opposition to their use grew more pronounced.

The intended "simplification" of spelling and pronunciation by this new reform, in actual application, became confusion.

The monotony of the lines of type without tails and loops at the top made it more difficult to learn than expected, and opposition to its use increased.⁽²³⁾

Perhaps if this new system could have been introduced into the territory twenty years before while the Great Basin was "isolated", it might have enjoyed more success.

By 1869, the Continental Railroad had been completed, bringing about an influx of outsiders into the territory, as well as a flood of printed material, both from the east and west, and thus the "isolation" of Utah came to an end.⁽²⁴⁾ The old "Overland Monthly", a staid publication from San Francisco, devoted to the development of the West, edited by Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard and Ina Coolbrith,⁽²⁵⁾ soon found its way into the valley of the saints. From the East the Harpers Weekly, a sophisticated periodical boasting of dignity and pictorial interest, found a welcome spot on the shelves of the Salt Lake City bookstores.



These and many other publications found a welcome among the Saints (and gentiles) creating further opposition to learning a new way of spelling with a new Alphabet.

1869--1877

In spite of all the problems involved, extensive effort was expended during these years to establish the Deseret Alphabet but it enjoyed little success.

These eight years were troubled years and yet very productive years of colonization and proselyting. Parley P. Pratt and Heber C. Kimball, two of the original members of the Deseret Alphabet committee, had passed away. Brigham Young, the alphabet's most vigorous champion, was still dedicated to its acceptance, although the opposition to its use and the evidence of its impracticality were about to close the door on the project.

Realizing that the Deseret Alphabet was encountering insurmountable difficulties in its acceptance, Brigham Young once again thought of Pitman and his system of phonotype. His persistence in his dedication to some simplification of the English language pushed him forward to a decision; that was to send Orson Pratt to England to develop a system of phonotype and publish the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants in still another type of alphabet and spelling.

From Discourses by Elder Orson Pratt, Salt Lake City -- Journal of Discourses, Vol. IXX, Page 112:

".....My mission, as is well known, was for the purpose of printing the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrines of Covenants, according to the phonotype system of Pitman. I will here state, that Pitman's system of phonetics has been changed and rechanged, in England, so many times, that it has finally and almost entirely dropped out of use.....I finally concluded to accept the American phonetic alphabet, with the exception of two or three characters, and to spell according to the American phonetic dictionary.....I made arrangements with a house in London to furnish the phonotype, and most of it had arrived in Liverpool just as I was called home..."

August 29, 1877

Orson Pratt had been "called home" ----- to the funeral of Brigham Young, Second President of the Church. A man of great vision, a man without equal in dreams and effort to build a great people. The author of the Deseret Alphabet idea had died. With his passing the reform of the written language in Utah and England was abandoned, its books becoming little-known literary curiosities.

1886

Writing about the Deseret Alphabet, the historian Bancroft said, "A further objective was exclusiveness, a separate people wishing to have a separate language and perhaps in time a separate literature."

T. E. Ellerbeck, Brigham Young's secretary, stated, "It was started with a view of enabling our youth to more easily learn to read and spell and to hinder or prevent their access to the yellow covered literature of the age or any other unwholesome reading."

So be it.....

* * * * *

John A. Widtsoe said: *"The Deseret Alphabet represents a noble experiment, with a thoroughly worth-while objective. It appeared to be premature. Even yet, however, spelling reform may decide to introduce some new letters, or to use the old ones in a new way."*(26)

May 19, 1967

In a forgotten corner of the church historian's archives, a package of time aged and yellow papers came to light. They were original manuscripts in the Deseret Alphabet of the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Doctrine and Covenants,⁽²⁷⁾ the Deseret Phonetic Speller and Catechism by John Jaques.

These were never printed and never will be, but will remain only as reminders of an ambitious effort of great men of the church.

1968

So the years have passed, with only an occasional mention of the project. A few historical articles of interest about this episode in church development have been written. The few books that have survived the ravages of time have been guarded by collectors. These "literary curiosities" have truly become a part of Mormon Americana to be sought after and treasured by collectors. They are to be observed with interest and accepted as an ingenious project which failed to achieve the goal its originators dreamed of and worked diligently to accomplish.

The casual reader of Mormon history may at times stop and ponder at some of the efforts in the material development of the church -- and may even think of some as failures. True, some did not attain the goals intended, some ended short of their goal. Some may seem to have been pure folly; while others fairly shone with the brightness of wisdom and success.

If this casual reading becomes concentrated searching for the real reason and result, one may well find good in all these efforts and find that these "failures" were really successes.

John A. Widtsoe said: "Latter Day Saints have reason to be proud of this episode in the history of their people. May the present generation be as ready to exchange old and imperfect methods for new and better ones, both in thinking and in practical daily life."⁽²⁸⁾



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FOOTNOTES

- (1) Title Page, Fourth Paragraph - Key Word "sea" -- Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 1899 Second Edition, P. 47-50.
- (2) Title Page, Eighth Paragraph - Key Word "reforms" -- Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 804.
- (3) Title Page, Last Paragraph - Key Word "problem" -- John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era*, January 1944, P. 33.
- (4) Title Page, Last Paragraph - Key Word "alphabet" -- Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 804, Zobell, *Improvement Era*, July 1967, P. 11, and Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 1886, P. 712.
- (5) Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 1899 Second Edition, P. 13.
- (6) Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 804-805.
- (7) *Deseret News*, November 24, 1853.
- (8) Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 805.
- (9) *Voices in Stone*, Table 81.
- (10) Hubert Howe Bancroft visited the president of the church some time prior to 1885 seeking information that would be helpful in writing his *History of Utah*, Vol. XXVI, 1886.

This visit resulted in the church historians preparing three separate manuscripts which were forwarded to Bancroft for his use in writing the history of the Mormons and Utah. They were entitled *Early Records of Utah, Incidents in Utah History*, and *Utah History Incidents*. These three manuscripts are now on file in the Bancroft library in Berkeley. In 1964, these manuscripts were copied and printed under the title of *History of Brigham Young 1847-1867*. This work was copyrighted by William L. Knecht and Peter L. Crawley. This is a record of important and interesting facts dealing with this twenty-year period. The footnote numbers (10) all refer to this book, pages 141, 151, 167, 265, 273 and 347. All excerpts have been copied verbatim.

- (11) *Utah Legislative Acts*, P. 110-111.
- (12) Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 805.
- (13) *Ibid*
Wendell J. Ashton, *Voice in the West*, 1950, P. 89.
- (14) Wendell J. Ashton, *Voice in the West*, 1950, P. 94-95.
- (15) Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 1899, P. 62, and Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 806.
- (16) Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, November 1954, P. 806.
- (17) Leslie L. Sudweeks, *Improvement Era*, March 1947, P. 151, and Sheridan L. McGarry, *Mormon Money*, P. 23.
- (18) Deseret Alphabet Books: *Deseret First Book, Deseret Second Book, Book of Mormon - Part I, and Book of Mormon (complete)*.
- (19) Letter in this writer's file dated April 1968.
- (20) Deseret First Book Errata Sheet and Second Book Errata Sheet.
- (21) Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology*, 1899, P. 80.
- (22) *Ibid*, P. 81.
- (23) H. H. Bancroft, *History of Utah*, 1886, P. 712.
- (24) Franklin Walker, *San Francisco's Literary Frontier*, 1939.
- (25) A. Roman, *Overland Monthly*, 1869, January - February.
- (26) John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era*, 1944, P. 63.
- (27) Zobell, *Improvement Era*, July 1967, and John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era*, January 1944, P. 63.
- (28) John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era*, 1944.

Also see:

B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1930.

Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedia History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1941.