

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.

* * * * *

ALBETH LRBETH			
Letter	Name	Sound	Sound
7	P	as in eat	P
8	B	as in eat	B
9	T	ate	T
10	AH	art	AH
11	AW	ought	AW
12	O	oat	O
13	OO	ooze	OO
Short Sounds of the above.			
14	G	as in gate	G
15	F	as in fat	F
16	V	et	V
17	L	eth as in high	L
18	Y	ot the as in they	Y
19	S	ut	S
20	Z	book	Z
Double Sounds.			
21	SH	as in flesh	SH
22	ZH	as in vision	ZH
23	UR	as in burn	UR
24	L	l	L
25	M	m	M
26	N	eng as in length	N

(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".)

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Letter	Name	Sound	Sound
7	P	as in eat	P
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Short Sounds of the above.			
14	F	as in fat	F
15	V	et	V
16	L	eth as in high	L
17	Y	ot the as in they	Y
18	S	ut	S
19	Z	book	Z
20	SH	as in flesh	SH
21	ZH	as in vision	ZH
22	UR	as in burn	UR
23	L	l	L
24	M	m	M
25	N	eng as in length	N

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.

Line	Original	Corrected
8	UL LAA P04	V418 408 V405
10	Q44	Q44
12	400	400
14	J4L	F4L
16	807	807
18	74-80	74-80
20	0484	0480
22	V418	V408
24	8440	8040
26	70	70
28	Q4474	Q0474
30	74-80	74-80
32	44-4	44-4
34	807	807
36	8440	8040
38	8440	8040
40	8440	8040
42	8440	8040
44	8440	8040
46	8440	8040
48	8440	8040
50	8440	8040

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.

Line	Original	Corrected
7	UL LAA	P04
9	Q44	Q44
11	400	400
13	J4L	F4L
15	807	807
17	74-80	74-80
19	0484	0480
21	V418	V408
23	8440	8040
25	70	70
27	Q4474	Q0474
29	74-80	74-80
31	44-4	44-4
33	807	807
35	8440	8040
37	8440	8040
39	8440	8040
41	8440	8040
43	8440	8040
45	8440	8040
47	8440	8040
49	8440	8040
51	8440	8040

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

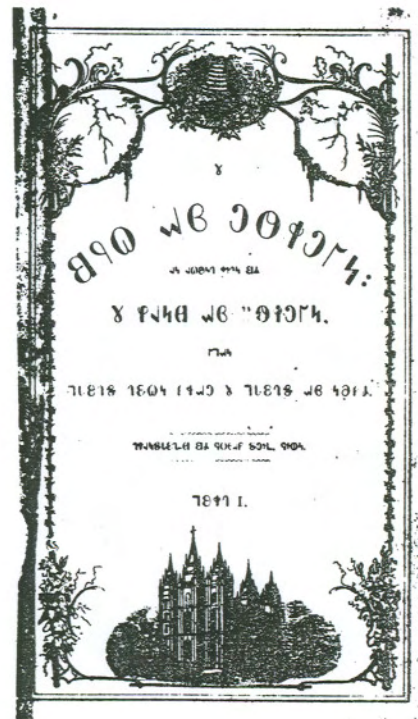
Early in the year the books from New York were ready and the Deseret First and Second readers were already almost two years old. Their popularity had not increased and in fact opposition to their use grew more pronounced.

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⁾

8 URBEDN

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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.