

hence our express and telegraphic facilities are greater, and we hear Washington and foreign news much sooner than many points in the western states—this is very different from the days of ‘ox train telegraphs.’ When an express arrives the printers have no peace until an ‘extra’ is out, which is generally in six or seven hours, and is looked for by many with intense anxiety.”³

PONY EXPRESS CLUB IN SALT LAKE CITY

A pony express club was formed in Salt Lake City, at the head of which was President Young, who with a few other persons and the *Deseret News*, paid for a duplicate of the California press service, and the *News* would get out the “extras” as described above. The expense was such, however, that it was finally determined that the club must be enlarged to 100 paying members, which would reduce the expense to 20 cents per capita per week for such a club, or “ten cents a pony;” and President Young directed that no more *News* “extras” be printed until 500 cash subscribers at 10 cents each per week be listed.⁴ Such was the desire for the latest word from “the states” in those stirring war times, however, that the subscriptions were readily obtained, and the duplicate of the dispatches the pony express riders were carrying to the Pacific press continued to be taken at Salt Lake City, until the telegraph supplanted the pony system, which, as will be remembered, it did in October, 1861.

THE DESERET ALPHABET—ABORTIVE

To this period belongs an effort, or a series of efforts, to introduce a new alphabet for the English language, called the Deseret Alphabet. It was a laudable undertaking to simplify the orthography and reading of the English language “by establishing a determinate and uniform relation between

3. Letter to the presidency of the European Mission, *History of Brigham Young*, Ms., 1861, p. 245.

4. *History of Brigham Young*, Ms., 1861, pp. 245 and 404-5.

the sign and its sound;" in a word, "a phonetic alphabet." This effort was begun in October, 1853, by the board of regents of the "University of Deseret" appointing a committee, of whom Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball and George D. Watt were members, to prepare such a system. Various opinions were entertained, of course, as to what the system should attempt. Parley P. Pratt was in favor of each letter of the new alphabet representing a single sound, invariably; but this, it was urged, would make the alphabet too cumbersome. At a session of the board of regents in December, 1853, the alphabet was adopted under the name by which it was ever afterwards known, although it subsequently received various modifications. As finally adopted and used to a limited extent, the alphabet consisted of thirty-two letters or sounds, "of which the so-called vocal sounds were eleven, including six long, with short sounds to correspond; four double, and one asperate, and twenty-one articulate sounds."⁵

As in all things relating to "Mormon" effort a variety of opinions obtained as to the purpose for which the alphabet was adopted. "Some persons," says M. Jules Remy, "have supposed that the object of the alphabet was to prevent access to the Mormon books and writings;" and this in face of all the efforts to give publicity to "Mormon books and writings,"⁶ and their translation into as many languages as possible. Bancroft mentions as an additional motive to simplified spelling and pronunciation of the English language, the further object of exclusiveness—"a separate people wishing to have a separate language, and perhaps, in time, an independent literature;" and this in the face of petitioning—during the time of introducing the alphabet—for the coming of transcontinental telegraph and railroad lines, and repeated efforts for the admission of Utah into the Union, all which

5. *History of Deseret University, Ms.*, pp. 1-35 *passim*, quoted by Bancroft, *History of Utah*, p. 712, note.

6. *A Journey to Great Salt Lake City*, M. Jules Remy, 1861, vol. ii, p. 184.

would make for closer association of the Latter-day Saints with their fellow citizens of the United States, not exclusiveness, either in community life or in literature. There was no other purpose in the adoption of the Deseret Alphabet than a laudable desire to simplify the orthography and reading of the English language, by the substitution of a simple phonetic, for the present complex and confessedly defective, alphabet. The experiment, however, was not successful; the difficulty of application, involving the effacement of etymologies and the disconnection of roots from their derivatives, together with the limitations of the community, making it abortive.

The characters were a "Mormon" invention. Captain Burton saw in them, however, a stereographic modification of Pitman's and other phonetic systems, and appeals to the *facsimile* of the characters which he publishes.⁷ Bancroft declares them to be borrowed from the Greek, and appeals to the characters, a *facsimile* of which he also publishes. Bancroft also makes a fanciful allusion to a relationship between this alphabet and the characters in which the *Book of Mormon* was written, affecting ability to trace certain resemblances between some of the characters transcribed by the Prophet from the *Book of Mormon* plates to the Greek characters *pi*, *rho*, *tan*, *phi*, and *chi*.⁸ A font of type for the new alphabet was cast in St. Louis and some books, *The Deseret First and Second Readers* were published, and to a limited extent were introduced into some of the schools. In 1869 Orson Pratt published the *Book of Mormon* in the characters of the new alphabet, but with this the experiment closed.

SURVEY OF MISSION PRESIDENCIES—EUROPEAN

During the exciting times in Utah from 1857 to 1865 the church did not fail to carry on the several missions she had founded in various parts of the world. When Elders Orson Pratt and Ezra T. Benson, of the council of the

7. *City of the Saints*, p. 420.

8. Bancroft's *History of Utah*, pp. 712-14.