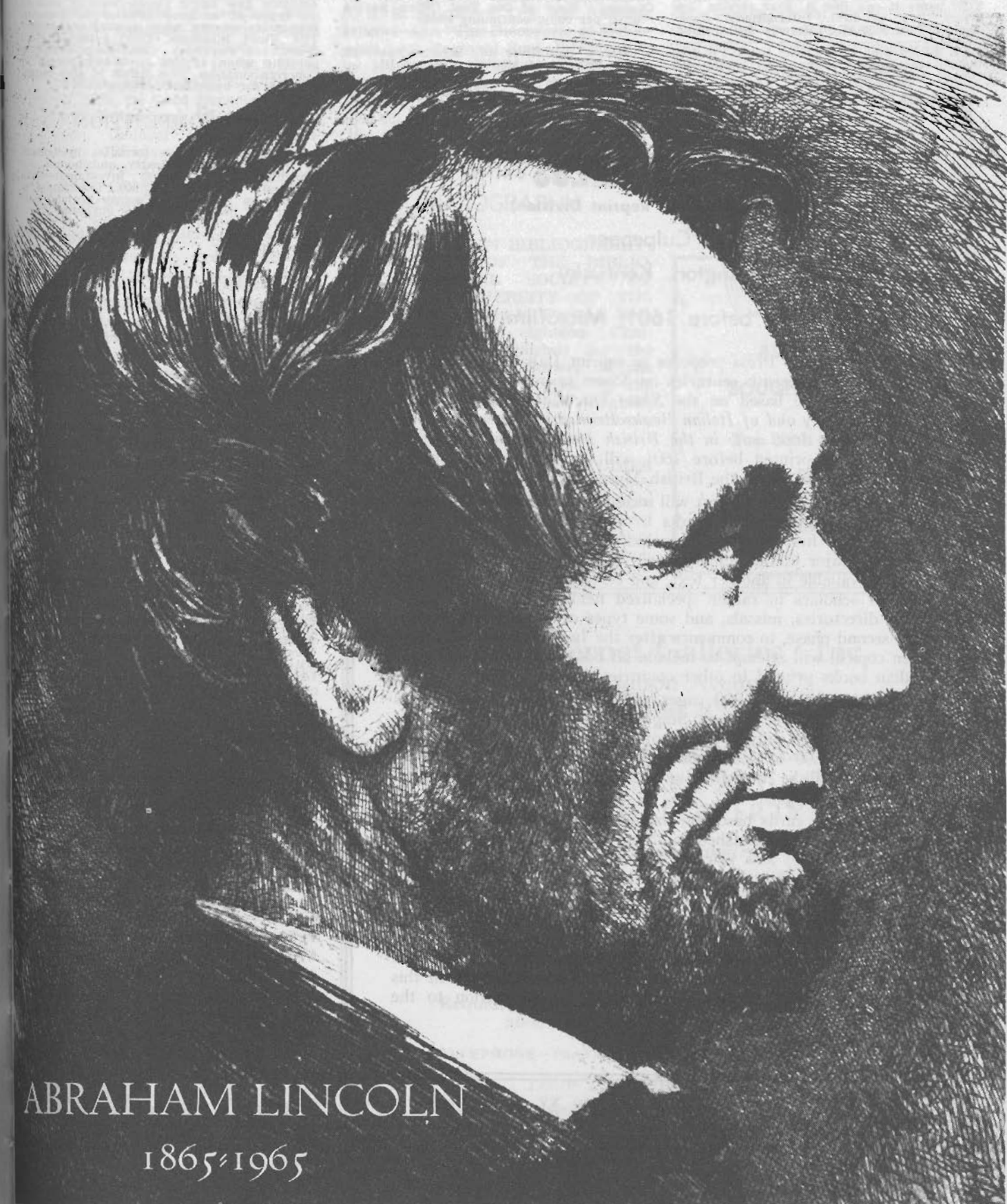


American Book Collector

APRIL, 1965, VOL. XV, NO. 8, 75¢



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1865-1965

THE DESERET PRIMER

By John Cumming



IT WAS a puzzling experience to pick up a slim, curious volume in pictured boards from the sidewalk stacks of a Boston bookstore housed in the basement of a pre-Revolutionary church meeting house. The book was puzzling because it was printed in characters that could not be recognized. The characters were not Oriental, they were not Syrian, Russian, or Greek; yet they were as different from our Roman characters as any of these.

Ten cents was not too great an investment to satisfy one's curiosity about this strange book, so it was placed with the others and packed away as part of this writer's vacation loot.

In unpacking, the little book with the strange characters was set aside while the most prized items of the trip were scanned and admired. However, the strange little item would not be cast aside but drew my attention so forcibly that I had to examine it closely.

Although the characters were completely foreign, there was something strangely familiar about the pictures on the cover. On one margin of the cover was a picture of a woman reading to two youngsters; on the other were a boy and a girl walking together. At the top was a beehive; and at the bottom was a picture of a building topped by many spires.

It was the building that looked strangely familiar. Suddenly my eye glanced from the beehive to the many-spired building and PRESTO! Everything clicked. I had a Deseret reader.

I enjoyed all the thrills that come with the discovery of a rare book on the 10-cent shelf of an old and famous book shop.

The strange characters were the invention of the Mormons at Salt Lake City in Utah. Some credit Brigham Young with the new alphabet; others credit W. W. Phelps and George D. Watt. All may have had a hand in it. Certainly Brigham Young was a strong and eager supporter of the new alphabet, as his sermons disclose.

Essentially the Deseret alphabet was an attempt at phonetic reform. By creating new symbols that represented individual sounds rather than several, it was thought that learning to read and write would no longer be a confusing experience to youngsters.

Introduced in 1853 with the enthusiastic approval of Brigham Young and the regents of the University of Deseret, the alphabet seemed to be off to a good start. Teachers were urged to promote its use in the schools, and special instruction sessions were set up for teachers and adults. The teachers did not react to the new system as favorably as its originators had expected. In spite of early efforts to spread the adoption of the alphabet, it appeared to be a dying cause.

Interest in phonetic alphabets was not peculiar to the Mormons. It was quite widespread during the 19th century and saw such supporters as Pittman, a shorthand inventor, and Teddy Roosevelt, among many. From time to time even today, somebody comes forth with such a proposal.

In 1868, interest in the alphabet was revived. Funds were voted for cutting types and printing books. It was decided that if the alphabet were ever to succeed, it would have to be taught to the youngsters who were

just learning how to read. Orson Pratt was appointed to furnish matter for two school books; and he and a colleague were sent East to arrange for the casting of the types and the printing.

They returned from their trip East with copies of the first and second readers, the first books printed in the Deseret alphabet. One can easily believe Orson Pratt's report that it was a very trying experience correcting the errors of the printers who were confused with the new and strange characters. Indeed, one of the points to check in the first reader is the page and a half of errata tipped in at the end.

The first reader contains thirty-six pages; the second, seventy-two pages. Ten thousand copies of each are said to have been printed. The first went on sale at fifteen cents and the second at twenty cents.

In the following year, the *Book of Mormon* was printed in the new alphabet in two different editions. One was the entire book for family use and reading;

ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ.

Letter.	Name.	Sound.	Letter.	Name.	Sound.
			ᐅ	...p	
ᐃ	...e...as in...	eat.	ᐆ	...b	
ᐄ	...a	" ate.	ᐇ	...t	
ᐅ	...ah	" art.	ᐈ	...d	
ᐆ	...aw	" aught.	ᐉ	...che as in cheese.	
ᐇ	...o	" oat.	ᐊ	...g	
ᐈ	...oo	" ooze.	ᐋ	...k	
<i>Short Sounds of the above.</i>			ᐌ	...ga...as in...gate.	
ᐍ	...as in...	it.	ᐎ	...f	
ᐎ	"	et.	ᐏ	...v	
ᐏ	"	at.	ᐐ	...eth...as in...thigh.	
ᐑ	"	ot.	ᐒ	...the " thy	
ᐒ	"	ut.	ᐓ	...s	
ᐓ	"	book.	ᐔ	...z	
<i>Double Sounds.</i>			ᐕ	...esh...as in...flesh.	
ᐔ	...i...as in...	ice.	ᐖ	...zhe " vision.	
ᐕ	...ow	" owl.	ᐗ	...ur " burn.	
ᐖ	...ye		ᐘ	...l	
ᐗ	...woo		ᐙ	...m	
ᐘ	...h		ᐚ	...n	
			ᐛ	...eng.as in...length.	

ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂ XXIII.



ᐱᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ. ᐅᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ, ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ. ᐅᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ. ᓂᓂ ᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ. ᐅᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ. ᐱᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ.

ᐱᓂᓂᓂᓂ XXIV.

ᐱᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ. ᐅᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ. ᐱᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ ᓂᓂᓂ.

ԱՅԿ XXXI.



Այս քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ

ԱՅԿ XXXII.

Սա քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ
 քսանութիւնը նախքան ինչ որ

1919.

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		ԱԿ	ՏԵՔ ԲԵԻ
"	8,	6L	ԱԿ ԲԵԻ ԿԻԵ ԳԻԵ ԿԻԵ
"	8,	10L	" " ՕՍԿ " ՕՍԿ
"	8;	12L	" " ԳԻԾ " ԳԻԾ
"	9,	11L	" " ԴԳԼ " ԴԳԼ
"	18,	3ԳԵ	" " ԲԵԴ " ԲԵԴ
"	19,	4L	" " ԴԿ-ԲԵ " ԴԿ-ԲԵ
"	"	6L	" " " " " "
"	"	9L	" " ՕՍԵՎ " ՕՍԵՎ
"	20,	4L	" " " " " "
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"	21,	3ԳԵ	" " ԲԵԾ " ԲԵԾ
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"	"	11L	" " ԴԿ-ԲԵ " ԴԿ-ԲԵ
"	24,	12L	" " ԳՍԿԿ " ԿՍԿԿ
"	26,	3ԳԵ	" " ԳԵԾ " ԳԵԾ
"	"	4L	" Կ ԱԿԿԳ 6. ԲԵԾԿԵ ԱԿԳԵ ԲԵԻԵԿ ԳՍԼԿԵ
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"	"	16L	" " ԿԵ " ԿԵ
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"	30,	13L	" " ԴԵԿԵ ԿԵԾ ԵԲԵ " ԱԵԿԵ ԿԵԾ ԵԲԵ

The page of errata

the other was to be an edition of three parts which would serve as readers to follow the first and second. Only the first part of the three part edition, designated the third reader, was published.

Despite persistent efforts to win support for the new system, the alphabet just did not win converts; and before many years had elapsed, it was completely forgotten.

The readers are classified as rare books today; but

Contributors

John Cumming is the Director of the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant. His last ABC contribution was "Ancient and Modern Michilimackinac: A Saga of the Mormon."
 The next in the series of Jeff Dykes popular Check Lists covers William Robinson Leigh (1866-1955). The "giant" Remington list is not too far away!
 Dr. Bernhardt Wall (1872-1956) devoted over eleven years to complete his magnum opus on Lincoln land-

of that I have my suspicions. Every copy that I have seen has been in mint condition. A copy appears in a bookseller's catalog or at auction and is followed by a couple of others in a short space of time. Then for a considerable period none will appear. Perhaps somewhere in Utah there are still thousands of them just as they came from the printer. After all, they were able to sell only a few hundred in 1868. What happened to the thousands of unsold copies?

marks. His original etchings were printed in 85 volumes on a hand press at Lime Rock, Conn., and privately distributed by subscription. Etched during the Depression only 36 complete sets were made. The price then was \$300 the complete set. Miss Carol Ann Barth, a student at Good Counsel, edited the selection presented in this issue. The continuity may not be strictly chronological due to difficulty of layout.
 Your editor and publisher purchased a set of the etchings, the copyright to the work, and the original etched plates, over 500, after Dr. Wall's death.