

TRUE WEST

ALL TRUE — ALL FACT — STORIES OF THE REAL WEST

October, 1958 - 25c

"TOUGHEST TOWN ON EARTH!"

I SAW BLACK JACK HANGED!

WORLD'S WEIRDEST RODEO

DYNAMITE ON A ROPE!

I FOUND A LOST MINE

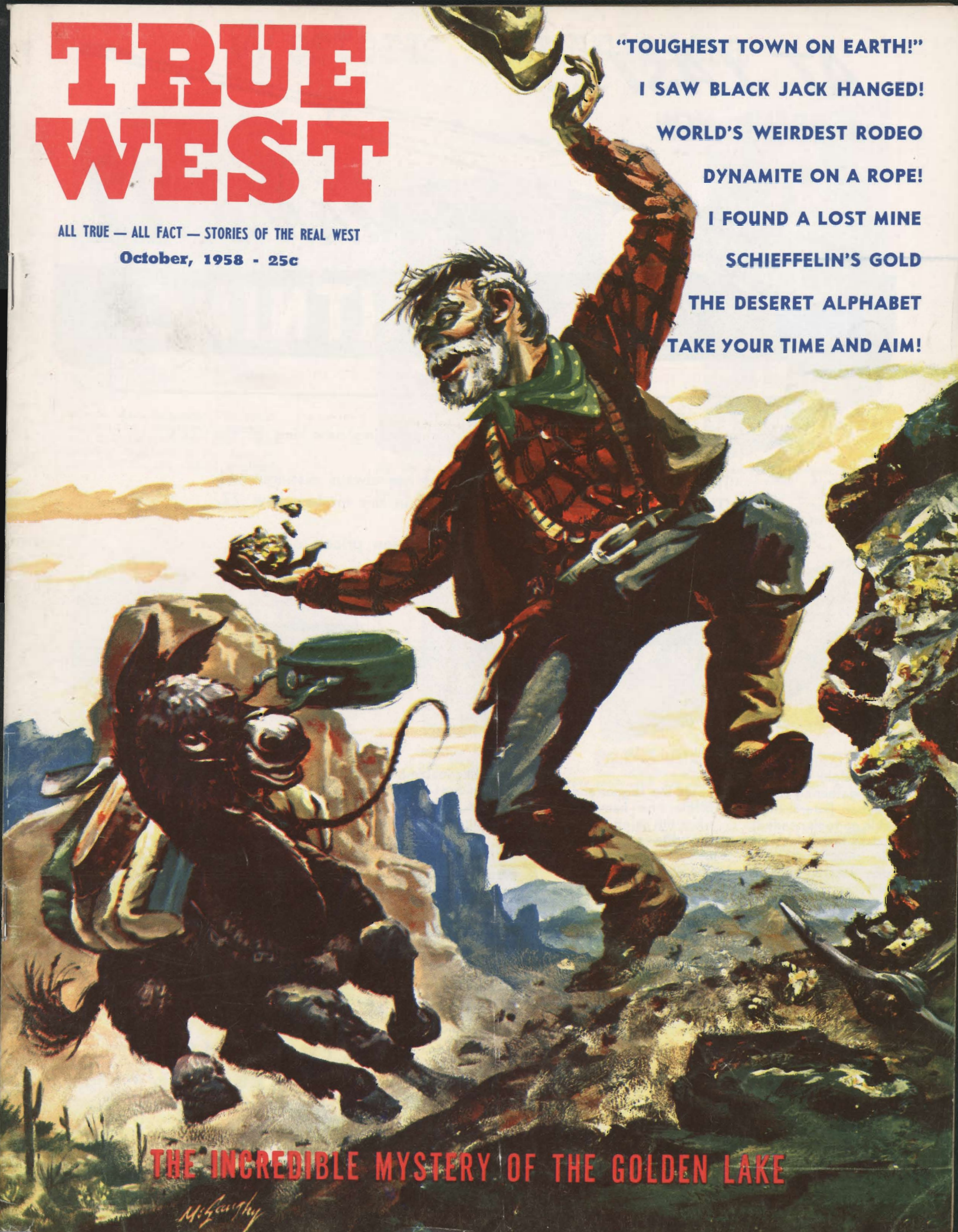
SCHIEFFELIN'S GOLD

THE DESERET ALPHABET

TAKE YOUR TIME AND AIM!

THE INCREDIBLE MYSTERY OF THE GOLDEN LAKE

McCaughy



The Deseret Alphabet

An unusual accomplishment by a remarkable people

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and
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THIS year marks the one hundred and fifth anniversary of one of the strangest and least known episodes in the history of our country. For when the Mormon leader Brigham Young severely criticized the written and printed form of the English language on April 8, 1853, the germ of a new alphabet to represent the English language was sown.

A phonetic alphabet was devised and played a significant part in Mormon pioneer life for about twenty years. The *Deseret News* was to feature translations from the Gospel of St. Matthew for about a year and a half. Three primers and the Book of Mormon were published. A coin was minted. Store signs were painted. Mormon journals were kept. Tombstones were made. All were in the strange characters of the Deseret Alphabet.

Brigham Young apparently did not expect that the new phonetic alphabet would be used solely in the land of the Latter-day Saints, or Mormon country. Actually, he believed that the Mormons were devising a scientific representation of our language that would one day be adopted by the English-speaking world.

To understand the creation of this unusual alphabet, one must first look at the attitudes of the strongly united Mormon people which could lead to such a move. First, the schools were used to perpetuate their own theology. Second, they placed a very high value on educational self betterment. One of the first educational acts consummated in Utah was to establish the University of Deseret, less than two and a half years after the pioneers settled in Great Salt Lake Valley. By the act of April 28, 1850, the first university west of the Missouri River was founded. Also, the people were in need of establishing a common alphabet. The communities were made up of converts to Mormonism from many nationalities, each desirous of learning to communicate with his neighbor as quickly as possible.

SPEAKING of the English language in the tabernacle in Great Salt Lake City, in 1853, Brigham Young said to his

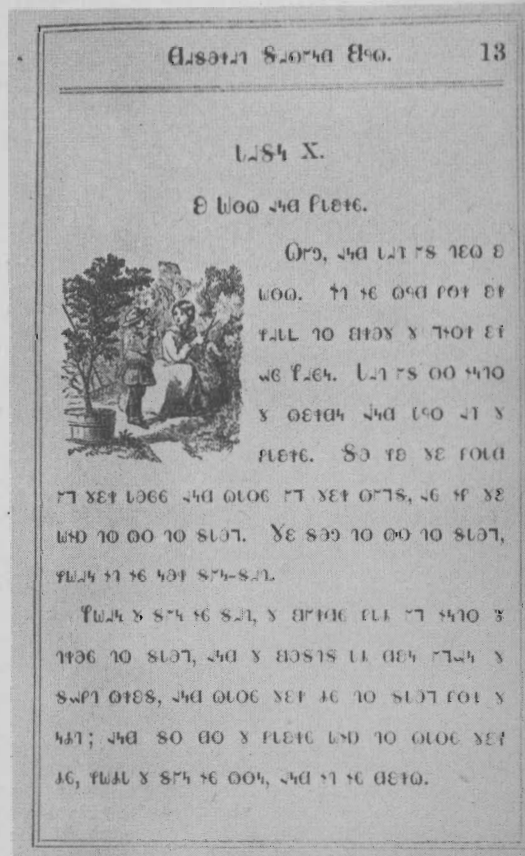
followers, "I have asked the Board of Regents to cast out from their system of education, the present orthography and written form of our language, that when my children are taught the graphic sign for A, it may always represent that individual sound only. But as it now is, the child is perplexed that the sign A should have one sound in mate, a second sound in father, a third in fall, a fourth sound in man, and a fifth sound in many, and in other combinations, soundings different from these, while, in others, A is not sounded at all. I say let it have one sound all the time. And when P is introduced into a word, let it not be silent as in Phthisic, or sound like F in Physic, and let two not be placed instead of one in apple. If there were one set of words to convey one set of ideas, it would put an end to the ambiguity which often mystifies the ideas given in the languages now spoken."

By October, 1853, the Board of Regents of the University of Deseret had appointed Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball and George D. Watt to work out the system of orthography and prepare a schoolbook on the new alphabet. The *Deseret News* of January 19, 1854, reported that the Board of Regents, in company with Governor Young and the heads of the departments, had adopted a new alphabet consisting of thirty-eight characters. It further reported, "These characters are much more simple in their structure than the usual alphabetical characters; every superfluous mark supposable is wholly excluded from them. The written and printed hand are substantially merged into one.

"We may derive a hint of the advantage to orthography from spelling the word 'eight' which in the new alphabet requires only two letters instead of five to spell it viz. 'AT.' There will be great saving of time and paper by the use of the new characters, and but a very small part of the time and expense will be requisite in obtaining a knowledge of the language." The *Deseret News* further stated that the speech of a common speaker could be recorded by

an ordinary writer using the new alphabet, which has a fixed and unalterable sound for every letter.

THE name "deseret," often gives the average reader a vision of sandy wastelands. Actually it is a reference to the honeybee. The word came from



The Deseret Second Book showing Lesson X, "A Walk and Flowers." Translated, the first lines read "Come, and let us take a walk. It is good for our health . . ."

Right: The Book of Mormon which was translated into the Deseret Alphabet by Orson Pratt in the spring of 1869 and published later that year by Russell Bros. in New York. Inset: Parley P. Pratt, brother of Orson Pratt, one of the principal inventors of the Deseret Alphabet.



Above: Mormon money coined between the years of 1849 and 1860. One coin in the group has its inscription in the Deseret Alphabet. Fourth from left is the obverse side and fourth from right is the reverse side.

L'IBRARIU L'ISTUDU S

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Letter.	Name.	Sound.	Letter.	Name.	Sound.
U	...e...	as in ...cat.	W	...t	...t
E	...a	"	Y	...d	...d
U	...ah	"	Q	...che.	as in ...cheese.
O	...aw	"	G	...g	
O	...o	"	O	...k	
O	...oo	"	O	...ga...	as in ...

Short Sounds of the above

Y	...as in ...	et.
J	"	at.
J	"	ot.
T	"	ut.
Q	"	book.
J	...i...	as in ...ice.
S	...ow	"
W	...woo	
Y	...ye	
Y	...h	

H ...eng. as in ...length.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED FOR THE DESERET UNIVERSITY
BY RUSSELL BROS.
1869.

Below: The Deseret Primers. Right to left, the first, second and third primers printed in the Deseret Alphabet. The third primer was the first book of Nephi of the Book of Mormon. Ten thousand each of the first and second and eight thousand of the third primer were printed.

the Book of Jared in the Book of Mormon. It describes the Jaredites from the Tower of Babel during the confounding of tongues, how they embarked in eight barges to the land of promise, America, about the year 2000 B. C. In the Book of Jared it is said, "Before embarking, they gathered seeds fowls, and animals, including deseret," which, by interpretation, is a honey-bee. Today, the word "deseret" is used synonymously with the word industry, and it represents well a people who by toil and perseverance have carved an empire in the West.

The type for the Deseret Alphabet was cast by a St. Louis foundry in 1856, the cost, \$2,500, being appropriated by the Territorial Legislature a year earlier. But delivery of the type was delayed till 1857 due to the Utah war.

Deseret translations from the Bible appeared in the *Deseret News* beginning February 16, 1859, and continued for about a year. The first and second readers in the Deseret Alphabet were not ready for actual distribution until October, 1868. The readers were translated by Professor Orson Pratt. And, by December, 1869, Pratt's translation of the Book of Mormon and the third reader were ready for sale. The third reader was actually the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon, known as the Book of Nephi. Ten thousand copies each of the first and second reader were procured. Eight thousand copies of the third reader and five hundred copies of the Book of Mormon were printed. The total cost of the printing project was about \$9,400, a phenomenal cost for an educational project in those days.



