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# Are there seeds of the CORD–CARD merger in Deseret Alphabet texts?

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# Outline

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# Utah English

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- Adventus Mormonum (permanent Anglophone settlement of Utah): 1847
- By 1870, 35% of Utahns were foreign-born—mainly from Great Britain (though also from Scandinavia); this percentage subsequently declined.
- In 1880, US-born residents of Utah were primarily from: NY, IL, PA, IA, OH, MO (each >5% UT's US-born pop.).
- It has been argued that “the large amount of contact and mixture... led to... dialect leveling... [while] children were being born and acquiring the early stages of... Utah English” (Bowie 2003: 33).

# CORD-CARD in Utah English

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- The merger /ɔ/ → /ɑ/ before /r/ is widely-documented in Utah English, particularly along the Wasatch Front (Pardoe 1935; Cook 1969; Helquist 1970; Yaeger 1975; Krahnke 1979; Di Paolo 1992; Lillie 1998; Bowie 2003, 2008).
- The merger is a variable process; in decline; and a source of local humor (Lillie 1998).
- Lexical frequency and other considerations, like homophony, may play a role: *war* [war] is more common than *born* [barn].

# CORD–CARD: Phonetic causes?

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- Bowie (2003) found that, in the recorded speech of first-generation (high social-status, male, LDS General Authority) Utahns, a preceding glide was in fact a leading contributor to [ɑ] realizations—but it's not clear if this is a phonetic or lexical effect.
- In an acoustic study of one speaker (male, b. 1922; Bowie 2008): ↑F1, ↑F2, ↓F3 for CORD.
- Preceding /l/ may limit the merger (ibid.).
- Common [ɑr] realizations (Bowie 2003): *authority, war, Lord, Mormon, before, for, more*.

# The Deseret Alphabet

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- Mormon settlers in Nauvoo, Illinois, began experimenting with phonemic brachygraphies, based primarily on Pitman Shorthand, in the early 1840s (Beesley 2004; Moore 2006).
- After years of discussion, the project reached maturity around 1854: The result was the Deseret Alphabet.
- This was part of a broader movement toward the orthographic reform of English, which has echoes in linguistic innovations like Bell's Visible Speech and the International Phonetic Alphabet.
- It was also an expression of an emergent culture featuring Mormonism's unique brand of millenarian positivism (vid. Hill 1994): "[W]e should soon have a literature published in *our* characters" (*Deseret News* 12/22/1869; emphasis added).

# The Deseret Corpus

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## ■ Print publications

- Passages from the Bible, *Book of Mormon*, and *Doctrine & Covenants* in the *Deseret News* (1859–1860, 1864)
- *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* (NY: Russell Bros., 1869)
- Primers: *Dh Desēret Furst/Sekund Bük* (1868)

## ■ Partial manuscripts: Hebrew Bible, *Doctrine & Covenants*, *Catechism for Children*

## ■ Church administration records

- Minutes of meetings, George D. Watt (1854–1855)
- *Ledger C*, T. W. Ellerbeck[?] (1859–1860)
- Church Historian's Office journal (1859)

## ■ Letters and Diaries: Marion J. Shelton (1859–1860), Thales H. Haskell (1859), Annie Smith (1869)

## ■ Hopi vocabulary, Marion D. Shelton[?] (1860)

## ■ Ephemera: Street and shop signs; gravestone[s?]





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POF XE FLD SFTOGE XN X LEOFYHNS AMFSTI HAN OMO IHNO X FETH WE XEF WYAD  
 JNNO XN OTEI SHT CETHFDOL. EMI H OEO IO RES XN OOTIHYNOT AIA  
 POFL JI X FLD WE FIE HTOGYMS FOSTI, JIA OEO MLYH X HIFBYHMYHS WE X S  
 JIA XEF OEO WWE WY SFC LOSOBTI OTEI SFOE, XN XEF WWE HO JAO POF X  
 FMS IO OJXAT IOOJXAT XEF OTOE; XEFPOF OOTIHYNOT AIA OMI OBY X WWC B  
 JHYHMYHS WE X SHI, JIA AIA OEO POFL WY FIE FOL OTOE IHNO X SHI, JIA XE  
 SLE ABAI WY FO AIA MTOE XJO, HSOOFC XN XE AIA JEO TMSADMYH WE X  
 SHI. JIA H OEO IO RES XN JNOOTOOH, FO WWC X COE FYE, AIA FEO BO  
 OOTIHYNOT, OBY IO X WOLE WE X SHI. JIA H OEO IO RES XN OOTIHYNOT

Smith, Joseph, Jr., translator, *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* (1869). NY:  
 Russell Bros., p. 308. Courtesy United States Library of Congress.



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27. 18 707 swol yst 03, 74 8 7774 404  
 h wtw 7 b w4 3 7.4 w8 7.478, w.87  
 7.7778 w7 434, 74 8 864x11 774340  
 40774 73L.w7 77h0 a, 7773 7747,  
 7776 87740x11 0h 77,  
 77 10 707 swol yst 03. 87L.11.  
 W.87 w7 740 w.87 w78 840. 707408.

Excerpt from the diary of Marion J. Shelton, February 1859. LDS Church History Library, MS-1412.

# Was the Deseret Alphabet used phonetically?

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- Are the phonetics of early varieties of Utah English, including the CORD-CARD merger, found in Deseret Alphabet texts?
- Caveat 1: There was no settled variety of “Utah English” to rely on in the 1860s.
- Caveat 2: Spellings in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* were scrutinized by a committee; the Alphabet was used less formally by only a handful of diarists and letter-writers.
- Who was this committee? The Board of Regents of the University of Deseret.
- LDS apostle Orson Pratt, Sr. (b. 1811, NY) was primarily responsible for publication of *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*; Robert Lang Campbell (b. 1825, Scotland) assisted him.

# Was the Deseret Alphabet used phonetically?

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- Did the dialect features of Deseret transcribers (and authors) play a role in the spellings they chose?
- Pratt was from New England, as were most other members of the Board of Regents.
- George D. Watt, an influential early user of the Deseret Alphabet, was from Northwest England.
- It appears the only southerner involved in the Deseret Alphabet project was John Vance (b. 1794, TN).
- Campbell, a proofreader of *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, was Scottish.
- If everyone used the Deseret Alphabet the way linguists now use the IPA, the result would have been fascinating—but that's not exactly how it happened.

# Was the Deseret Alphabet used phonetically?

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- Disagreements on pronunciations were natural, given that everyone involved in publishing *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* was from somewhere else.
- Imagine getting members of this disparate body to agree on the phonetic rendering of a word like *hair*.
- For *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, Pratt was instructed to use *Dr. Webster's Complete Dictionary of the English Language* (1864; W64) for pronunciation standards.

# Orthoëpy in action

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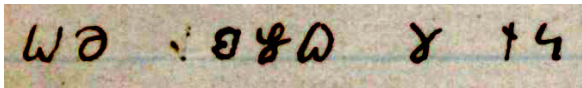
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“We ask thee in. . .” from the sacrament prayer (D&C XX). The transcriber (most likely Orson Pratt) replaced [æ] with [ɑ], in strict conformity with W64, and presumably against his own pronunciation of *ask*. Doctrine & Covenants Partial Ms. (ca. 1869), color adjusted. LDS Church History Library.

# Was the Deseret Alphabet used phonetically?

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- Reliance on W64 was key to Pratt's authority in fixing the 'standard' (and remarkably consistent) spellings in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*.
- However, W64 didn't resolve everything—even for contemporary orthoëpists.
- Pratt et al. had to make independent decisions in a variety of cases... But how to decide?

# Was the Deseret Alphabet used phonetically?

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- Consider the word *blessed*.
- W64 states that, as a participial adjective, it is “commonly sounded” with two syllables and its one-syllable pronunciation, where unlicensed, “is a mark of great vulgarity” (W64, p. xlv).
- Pratt et al. seem to have applied a more subtle pattern that is neither made explicit by W64 nor is it signaled by English spelling: the *-ed* ending is ubiquitous in the (quondam most recent, English) 1852 edition of the *Book of Mormon*.



# What do you think? [blɛsɛd] or [blɛst]?

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Jac.	how blessed are they who have labored	?
I Ne.	and they shall be a blessed people	?
Mos.	consider on the blessed and happy state	?
I Ne.	blessed art thou, Nephi	?
I Ne.	shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed	?

# *Dh Bük ôv Mormun: [blɛsɛd] or [blɛst]?*

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Jac.	how blessed are they who have labored	ɛd
I Ne.	and they shall be a blessed people	t
Mos.	consider on the blessed and happy state	t
I Ne.	blessed art thou, Nephi	ɛd
I Ne.	shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed	t

# Typesetting and proofing *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- Presumably based on the most recent (1852) edition, edited by Franklin D. Richards (Orson Pratt had edited the 1849 edition); the Deseret Alphabet edition includes the same table of contents and versification as the 1852
- Composed of >5,500 unique words
- for a total of >270,000 words
- According to Pratt, the compositors at Russell Bros. made “a great abundance of mistakes in setting the type” and he had to read the proofs four times (to Robert Campbell, 12 Jun. 1869, as quoted in Beesley 2004, p. 90).



# Orson Pratt

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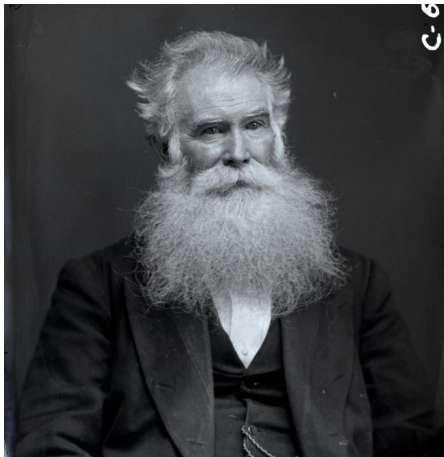
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# Robert Lang Campbell

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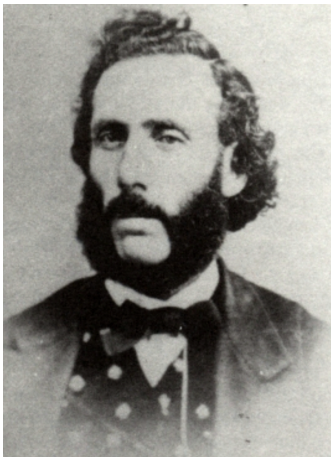
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# Novel words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- The *Book of Mormon* is filled with hundreds of *novel* proper nouns with no explicit pronunciation in W64.
- Some names arguably have Biblical analogues.
  - W64 includes a pronunciation guide to proper nouns found in the King James Bible and other works of literature, composed by W. A. Wheeler (b. 1833, MA).
  - These entries bear explicit pronunciations which sometimes diverge from W64 norms for conventional CORD–CARD words.
- Other *Book of Mormon* names are truly novel; all may have had idiosyncratic pronunciations—perhaps associated with the speech of Joseph Smith, as recalled by Pratt and others.
- Deseret Alphabet spellings may hold clues as to the realization of the incipient CORD–CARD merger in the formation of Utah English.



# The Deseret Alphabet and the CORD–CARD vowels

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- The Deseret Alphabet had unique glyphs for:
- /ɑ/ = *father*
- /ɒ/ = *bother*
- /o/ = *boat*
- /ɔ/ = *bought*



# The Deseret Alphabet and the CORD–CARD vowels

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- How were these vowels used to render CORD–CARD words?
- We have found **no evidence of complete** CORD–CARD **merger** in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*:
  - The low-vowel-glyphs are not used for CORD and
  - The mid-vowel-glyphs are not used for CARD.



# Persisting questions

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- Despite a lack of evidence for complete merger /ɔ/ → /ɑ/, e.g., *Mormon* spelled \*[mɑrmən]...
- What about variation between /o/, /ɔ/, and /ɒ/ before /r/?
- For novel words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*:
  - Are seeds of the merger evident in the usage of mid-vowel-glyphs or ɒ-glyph before /r/?
  - For example, unsanctioned usage of ɔ- or ɒ-glyphs could be evidence of confusion over the height of the vowel that occurs before /r/ and thus textual evidence of an early stage of the merger.
- How are conventional CORD-CARD words spelled in other Deseret Alphabet texts written by early Utahns?



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# Evidence from the Deseret Corpus



# Webster's (1864) Rules

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- According to the pronunciation rules of W64:
  - Type I:  $o \rightarrow [ɔ]$  before  $r$  in a monosyllable:  
*or, for, form, lord, north*
  - Type II:  $o \rightarrow [ɔ]$  in an accented syllable before  $r$  when *not* followed by a vowel or by another  $r$ :  
*former, orchard, abhor*
  - Type (I/II)a:  $o \rightarrow [ɔ]$  in derivatives of these words:  
*formed, northern, abhorring.*
  - Type III:  $o \rightarrow [ɒ]$  in an accented syllable before  $rV$  or  $rr$ :  
*orange, torrid, authority.*
- Remember: Deseret Alphabet had glyphs for /ɒ/ and /ɑ/, as well as /o/ and /ɔ/.

# Webster's (1864) Rules had exceptions

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- There are lexical exceptions to Type II and Type III licensing.
- Exceptions are signaled in individual dictionary entries.
- Type II: *forth* should have [ɔ], but it has [o] in W64.
- Type III: *glory* should have [ɒ], but it has [o] in W64.
- The difference either came naturally to the Deseret scribe (as a dialect feature); or every word had to be looked up individually (!).



# Conventional CORD–CARD words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- If English speakers in Utah were beginning to merge CORD–CARD in the 1860s, we might expect to find in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* examples of the  $\alpha$ -,  $\upsilon$ -, or  $\circ$ -glyphs to spell conventional words like *more* and *before*, where W64 requires the o-glyph.
- **However, that does not appear to happen.**
- Throughout *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, W64 rules appear to be in force *for conventional words*, despite the fact that many speakers of Utah English probably merged CORD and CARD within a few generations (Bowie 2003; cf., e.g., Heber J. Grant, b. 1856 in UT).

# Conventional CORD–CARD words in the *Book of Mormon*

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- /ɔ/: *corn, Jordan, cords, horses, or*
- /o/: *more, wherefore, ore, temporal*
- /ɒ/: *authoruty, morrow*
- /ɑ/: *hardness, hearken*
- The simplest explanation for this is that the Deseret Alphabet was not used for local phonetic transcription (or that the merger was not yet evident).
- I will present evidence for the merger in conventional words of Pratt's handwritten, partial manuscript of the *Doctrine & Covenants* (ca. 1869), the personal writings of Marion J. Shelton (1859–1860), and passages in the *Deseret News* (1864).

# Novel and Biblical proper names in the *Book of Mormon*

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- The *Book of Mormon* includes around 374 proper names.
- Approx. 219 novel proper names (including derivatives) are neither Biblical (like *Horeb*) nor otherwise in common English usage (like *Bountiful*).
- 32 proper names contain the sequence *-or-*; four are found in the Bible and one, *Mormon*, is listed as a regular entry in W64—it was already in common usage.
- In the entire *Book of Mormon* there are about 27 non-Biblical proper names that might show signs of the CORD-CARD MERGER due to the fact they have no W64 pronunciation.

# Deseret renderings of novel CORD-CARD

(\*) indicates an illicit spelling per W64

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- ɔ-glyph (starred when /o/ expected)
  - ✓ Stressed, initial, before C: 'Mormon
  - \* Unstressed, final: \*'Cohor, \*'Kimnor, \*'Nehor, \*'Corih[ɔ]r, \*'Korih[ɔ]r
  - \* Unstressed, initial: \*Cori'antumr
- o-glyph (starred when /ɒ/ expected)
  - ✓ Unstressed, initial: Mo'roni, O'rihah, Cori'antum, Mori'ancumer, Mori'antum, Mori'anton
  - \* Stressed, initial: \*'Corum, \*'Zoram
  - \* Stressed, non-initial: \*He'lorum, \*See'zorum, \*Pa'horan, \*Cu'morah
- ɒ-glyph: (none for /o/ in pre-rhotic environments)
- ʌ-glyph: Unstressed, final: 'Comn[ʌ]r



# Cumorah

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- By analogy, *Cumorah* (n=9) might look much like Biblical *Gomorrah*.
- W64 explicitly (and by rule) assigns a stressed /ɒ/ to *Gomorrah* but in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, *Cumorah* has the o-glyph.
- Though it only appears 9 times in the *Book of Mormon*, it is a toponym common to Mormon discourse.
- *Gomorrah* appears one time in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, and on that occasion it is rendered according to W64: [gomɒrɑ]
- Because the spelling of *Cumorah* diverges from W64 norms, it may reflect pronunciation in Utah English, ca. 1870 (but not the CORD-CARD merger).



# Cumorah and Gomorrah from *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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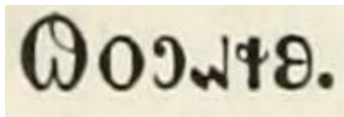
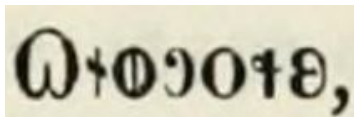
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[kiumora] *Cumorah* (Mormon), [gomorra] *Gomorrah* (II Nephi). Note the o-glyph in the former and the v-glyph in the latter. The insertion of the r-glyph in *Cumorah*, and the way Pratt dealt with glides in general, is perhaps an interesting subject for a different talk.

# Coriantumr

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- Those familiar with the *Book of Mormon* recognize this rather outlandishly-spelled name (Mark Twain drily called it “remarkable” (*Roughing It*, 1891, p. 149)).
- The name appears 76 times in the *Book of Mormon*.
- It is always rendered with the o-glyph, violating Webster’s rules (it should be spelled with the o-glyph).
- NB: A very similar name, *Coriantum* (9 instances), is spelled with the o-glyph, following the rule.



# C[ɔ]riantumr v. C[o]riantum

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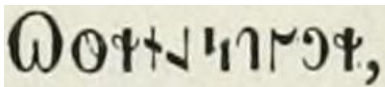
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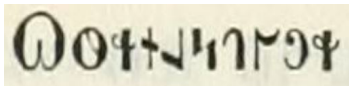
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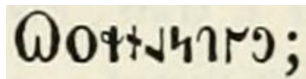
References



W04+JH794,



W04+JH794



W04+JH79;

*Coriantumr* (Omni; Helaman I) with the [ɔ]-glyph and *Coriantum* (Ether I) with the o-glyph. According to W64 rules, *Coriantumr* should be spelled with the o-glyph.

# Interim summary: *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- With remarkable precision, given the challenges of typesetting over 270,000 words in a new and peculiar character set, Pratt et al. largely followed W64 norms for conventional English words, including CORD-CARD.
- None of the novel proper names, except for *Mormon*, could have been looked up in W64.
- What principles were applied to the spelling of these novel words? Were they effectively phonetic transcriptions? If so, whose pronunciation did they represent?

# Interim summary: *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- Did the CORD-CARD merger influence the spellings of *Coriantumr* with the ɔ-glyph and/or *Cumorah* with the o-glyph, both contrary to W64?
- Similar words were spelled in conformity with W64.
- Conventional words like *authoruity* and *foreign* were spelled according to W64, using the ɒ-glyph.
- The ɒ-glyph is used widely in words like *not* and *of*, so there is no general FATHER-BOTHER merger.
- Were these just typos?

# Typos in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*

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- *Coriantumr* occurs 76 times; *Cumorah* occurs just nine (9) times but is one of the most recognizable toponyms in the *Book of Mormon* and the name of a famous historic site associated with the Latter Day Saint movement.
- Orson Pratt stated that he proofread the text four times.
- To date, we've transcribed around 30,000 words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* (see [go.illinois.edu/deseret](http://go.illinois.edu/deseret)).
- We have found 46 typos altogether (including errors in punctuation and capitalization).
- For conventional words, we have found only four (4) typos suggesting confusion between the glyphs of interest, e.g., [gon] for [gɔn] *gone*.

# Partial manuscript of the *Doctrine & Covenants*

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- Handwritten ms., ca. 1869; 194 pp.
- Transcribed by Orson Pratt (Zobell 1967)
- Here, Pratt vacillates between \*[ɒθɔrɪtɪ] and [ɔθɒrɪtɪ] *authority*.
- He eschews the ɒ-glyph in \*[pɛlægoræm] *Pelagoram* (a pseudonym for Sidney Rigdon).
- He even writes \*[wɔrn] *warn*, entirely consistent with the CORD–CARD merger.
- Hypercorrections from ɒ-glyph to o-glyph include: *Horah* and *Zoramites*.



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- Dozens of scriptural passages were transcribed and published in the *Deseret News*, 1859–1860, 1864.
- These appear to have more typos than *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*; they also differ systematically from the 1869 spellings in a variety of ways.
- The  $\text{ɒ}$ -glyph is frequently used in pre-rhotic contexts where  $\text{ɔ}$ -glyph is expected.
- Compare, for example, a passage from II Nephi found in both *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* and the *Deseret News*: “They shall not hurt  $*n[\text{ɒ}]r$  destroy in all my holy mountain;  $*f[\text{ɒ}]r$  the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the  $L[\text{ɔ}]rd$ , as the waters cover the sea” (*Deseret News*, 12/28/1864).
- (There are other discrepancies between the 1869 and 1864 versions not indicated here.)

# Marion J. Shelton (1859–1860)

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- Marion J. Shelton, a Mormon missionary among the Hopi, ca. 1860, is the most likely composer of an English–Hopi vocabulary that uses the Deseret Alphabet (Beesley and Elzinga 2015).
- In the 1860 vocabulary:
  - /ɒ/: **orphan, horse**, tomorrow
  - /ɔ/: morning, porcupine, warm
  - /o/: worn, gourd
  - /ɑ/: card, harvest, dark, heart, mark
- In an 1860 letter to Brigham Young, Shelton writes *shortly* with a Deseret Alphabet ɒ-glyph (ibid.).

# Marion J. Shelton (1859–1860)

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- In diary entries from February to March 1859, he writes *or, for, Taylor, morning*, and *ordinance* with the  $\text{ɒ}$ -glyph—but *north* with the  $\text{ɔ}$ -glyph (LDS Church History Library MS-1412).
- In two letters from New Mexico dated Nov. 13, 1859 (one to Apostle George A. Smith another to unnamed ‘brothers’), Shelton uses the  $\text{ɒ}$ -glyph in the following words: *for, corn, morning, Mormons, horses*
- Shelton was evidently uncertain about differentiating [ɒ] and [ɔ] before a rhotic and his tendency was to replace the mid vowel with an open vowel, as in the CORD–CARD merger.

# Marion J. Shelton's "words of reference" (TPQ 1869)

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- Shelton offered corrections for 35 words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*: "List of words of reference in the Deseret letter edition of the Book of Mormon".
- A handful of these are CORD-CARD words and the corrected vowel suggests Shelton spoke a dialect in which pre-rhotic [ɔ] was in some cases lowered to [ɒ], broadly consistent with the CORD-CARD merger.
- Shelton rendered these words consistently with the pronunciations evident in his 1860 vocabulary:
  - /ɒ/: **immortality, corruption, record, forsake, forbear**
  - /o/: temporal, memory, victory
  - This evidence is not as strong, however, because in all cases but (perhaps) *record*, Shelton corrects an [ʌ]-glyph instead of an [ɔ]-glyph.

# Marion J. Shelton's background

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- Shelton was born in McDonough County, Illinois, in 1833 and was 13 years old when he arrived in Utah.
- A significant number of early Utahns came from Illinois (11.7% of the Utah population in 1880; Bowie 2003: 33).
- The CORD-CARD merger has also been attested in St. Louis (though in the opposite direction, i.e., CARD→CORD).
- The merger there might trace its roots to the same source along the central Mississippi.



# John T. M[o]rris (d. 1855)

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Grave of John T. Morris, Cedar City, UT; photo by Horace Round (1941). Courtesy J. Willard Marriott Library.



# John T. M[p]rris (d. 1855)

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[dʒɔn t mɔrɪs bɔrn fɛb], in conformity with W64 rules. Detail of photo by Horace Round (1941). Courtesy J. Willard Marriott Library.



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- Can we reconstruct the habitus (mental state and behavior) of Deseret Alphabet writers?
  - Were they sounding out words as they went along, using the Deseret Alphabet the way we might use the IPA?
  - Were they consulting a printed resource like a list of (Deseret) spellings?
  - Were they consulting a(n English) dictionary?
  - Were they using explicit memory of words whose spelling they had already learned?
  - Were they using implicit memory, having already internalized the written visual shapes and handwriting gestures associated with words in Deseret characters?
- What kind of evidence do we need to support adherescent hypotheses?

# Discussion: Evidence for a habitus

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- Spelling variability within lexeme
- Spelling variability within phoneme
- (Partial) erasures, strikes-through, sub- and supra-linear annotations
- Parerga: Reference lists, narratives of learning, etc.

# Variability within lexemes

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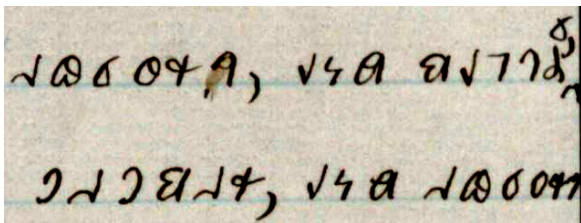
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‘exhort’ spelled with [ɔ] (per W64) and [o] on two consecutive lines. From Doctrine & Covenants Partial Manuscript, p. 207. LDS Church History Library.



# Erasure example

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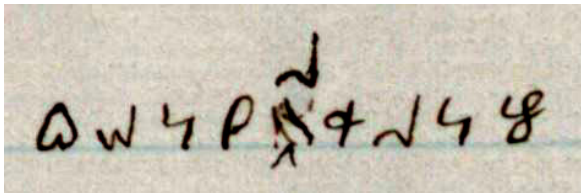
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'conference' with [Λ] replaced by [ε]. From Doctrine & Covenants Partial Manuscript, p. 207. LDS Church History Library.

# Discussion: Evidence for a process

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- Variability within lexeme suggests lack of understanding of the alphabet (or supralexicical prosody?); but if we have evidence that someone (like Pratt) was highly familiar with the alphabet, what do we make of it?
- Variability within phoneme (across different lexemes) may suggest pronunciation of the transcriber (e.g., Shelton's use of the pre-rhotic  $\upsilon$ -glyph in *nor* but not *Lord*).
- Erasures may be evidence of a look-up feature either internal or external.
- Reference lists, like Shelton's, could make the process easier and enhance consistency but, there is no evidence that anyone made such lists besides him.

# Discussion

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- What kinds of errors do we observe in learners of the International Phonetic Alphabet?
  - Over-reliance on English orthography (e.g., double-letters)
  - Vacillation in usage
  - Confusion of (typographically) similar glyphs
- We have found evidence for each of these error types in the Deseret corpus.

# Consistent vs. inconsistent discrepancies

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- Consistent discrepancies from W64 rules
  - C[ɔ]riantumr, Neh[ɔ]r, etc.
  - Cum[o]rah, Z[o]ram, etc.
- Inconsistent discrepancies from W64 rules
  - [ɒ/ɔ]th[ɔ/ɒ]rity
- Did typesetting technology play a role?
- Could a discrepancy like C[ɔ]riantumr evade Pratt's detection 76 times (on four different proofreads)?

# Discussion

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- The writings of Shelton and *Deseret News* transcriptions indicate that the Deseret Alphabet was used by some writers to encode phonetic detail.
- Shelton's spellings support an early date for the CORD-CARD merger, and (based on his own Illinois origins) suggest that it was a feature brought to Utah by the Mormon settlers of western Illinois.
- The spelling of novel words in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* paints a more nuanced picture than that of a transliterator merely following W64 rules.
- In unedited writings and the *Deseret News*, conventional words with sequences of *-or-* do not consistently follow W64; this is also true of some novel words in the meticulously proofread *Dh Bük ôv Mormun*.



# Discussion: The FATHER–BOTHER merger

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- Had Pratt's pronunciation already undergone the FATHER–BOTHER merger?
- Pratt consistently uses the [ɒ]-glyph in highly frequent words like *of* and *not*.
- He also retains the [ɒ]-glyph in pre-rhotic contexts where it is licensed by W64:
  - *authority*\*
  - *quarrel, morrow, sorrow* (with double-r)
  - *foreign, forest* (without double-r)
- \*Vacillation on the vowels in *authority* suggests he may not have had an intuitive sense of the W64 standard.
- In Biblical and novel Biblical-sounding names, Pratt regularly used the o-glyph instead of the W64-licensed ɒ-glyph, e.g., *Zoram, Horah, Cumorah*.

# Discussion: How faithful is *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* to W64?

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- Variability in the spelling of some conventional forms suggests W64 was not always obeyed; it didn't provide for every eventuality; and/or it admitted variability among educated speakers.
  - /ju/: [ju], and [jɪu], in, e.g., *spiritually*, *departure*
  - with: [wɪθ] vs [wɪð]
  - -ed ending: [ɛmptɪɛd] (“savoring of affectation or an old-school education” W64 p. xlv)
  - Stressed *e* before *r*: [kʌnvɛrtɛd] vs [kʌnvɛrtɛd] (W64, p. xlii: the vowel is “radically distinct from both *û* [urge] and *ě* [end]”)
  - Unstressed -en: [ivn] vs [idɛn] (W64 p. xlv accepts variability in a handful of words, including *Eden*)
- We have found one regionalism: [mæsækrid] *massacred* (*Dh Bük ôv Mormun*, pp. vii, 271).
- ... more to be discovered?



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# Conclusion

- Deseret Alphabet texts almost certainly contain information about the pronunciation of early Utahns.
- We don't have enough evidence to make general claims about "Utah English" but linguists should appreciate how unique the Deseret corpus is—and lament the fact that there's not more of it.
- There is variability in the rendering of pre-rhotic /o/.
- In one Illinois emigrant's diary and letters, pre-rhotic /o/ follows the trajectory of the CORD–CARD merger, which became evident in "Utah English" a few generations later.
- Novel names in *Dh Bük ôv Mormun* suggest uncertainty about pre-rhotic /o/, but the evidence is not overwhelming; only a few examples, e.g. *Coriantumr*, move in the direction of the CORD–CARD merger.

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- The o-glyph in *Cumorah* (where W64 calls for /ɒ/) may have been a hypercorrection with regard to CORD–CARD; or it may have reflected the pronunciation of early leaders.
- *Cumorah* [kiumora] is a curious example: Why bring the first syllable into conformity with W64 (cf. *cumulative*) while leaving the second syllable as an exception?
- *Coriantumr*, *Cohor*, *Kimnor*, and *Nehor* (ɔ-glyph where o-glyph expected) may be a weak signal of the CORD–CARD merger: the vowel was produced lower than /o/ but higher than /ɒ/ or /ɑ/.

# Conclusion

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- What does all of this tell us about the timing and provenance of the CORD-CARD merger in Utah English?
- **Deseret Alphabet writings preserve evidence that some early Utahns variably lowered back vowels in pre-rhotic contexts.**
- So far, the earliest transcriptional evidence of this change comes from around 1860.
- Lowering of back vowels in pre-rhotic contexts was a salient feature of speakers born in Utah just a few generations later.

# Conclusion

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- The departments of Linguistics, Computer Science, and the University Library at Illinois are contributing to establish the Illinois–Deseret Consortium, intended to transcribe and make the Deseret corpus widely available for study.
- For more information, and to watch our progress, please visit **[go.illinois.edu/deseret](http://go.illinois.edu/deseret)**.



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- Kenneth Beesley
- Royal Skousen, Brigham Young University
- Dan Leon, The Classics, University of Illinois
- J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah
- LDS Church History Library



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