



Figure 1. March 1952 • Volume 46, Number 3, *New Outlook for the Blind*, frontispiece.

A Look Back

Editor's note: As a bricklayer adds a new row of bricks upon those already cemented, the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB) and its predecessors, over the course of the past century, has added new knowledge upon the foundation of earlier contributions. As a mason might step back and admire the skilled handiwork of the ground floor laid by earlier craftsmen, JVIB has often paid tribute in its pages to such pioneering standouts as Louis Braille, Frank H. Hall, Samuel Gridley Howe, Helen Keller, and others whose efforts cemented the cornerstones of the body of knowledge of the field of visual impairment and blindness.

The legacy of Louis Braille has often been acknowledged in the pages of the journal. In 1912, the journal commemorated the 100th anniversary of his birth, stating, "The year 1809 is remarkable as having given birth to many epoch-making men. To the comparatively small world of the blind it gave, on January 4, one, Louis Braille." In 1925, the journal remarked on the 100th anniversary of the birth of his braille system. In 1952, on the centennial of his death, it published a special seal bearing his likeness (see Figure 1).

Samuel Gridley Howe, founder of the first school for the blind and other institutions, and champion for public school programming for blind children, was honored in 1924 by the student-led Howe Club at Perkins, which celebrated his birthday. In an account of this ceremony published in Outlook for the Blind, a student stated, "It is good for any school to keep in memory its founder." The journal further honored Dr. Howe in 1926 by publishing Laura E. Richard's tribute entitled, "The Cadmus of the Blind," an excerpt of which follows.

Frank H. Hall's lifetime of contributions to the field were memorialized upon his death

in 1911. As superintendent of the Illinois Institution for the Education of the Blind, he is widely known for his invention of the braille-writer, but lesser known for his advocacy for establishing public school programs for blind children in Chicago. His other contribution was the invention of a "stereotypemaker" which revolutionized braille bookmaking internationally.

Charles F. F. Campbell, the founding editor of Outlook for the Blind, was celebrated for his contributions to the field upon his retirement by H. Randolph Latimer, former acting director of the American Foundation for the Blind, the entity that was poised to take over the operations of the journal from Campbell. The journal continued its tradition of highlighting the works of early pioneers, for example, by publishing Perkins School for the Blind Director Gabriel Farrell's tribute to John Francis Bledsoe on the occasion of his retirement from the Maryland School for the Blind in 1942. Finally, Helen Keller, one of the first contributors to Outlook for the Blind, whose writings appeared some 25 times in the life of the journal, was remembered upon her death in 1968 by the editors of the journal in an essay detailing the breadth and scope of her contributions to the field and to the world.

Over the decades, JVIB and its predecessors have honored those who have laid the cornerstones of our literature. Upon their foundation our services continue to steadily evolve today—and will into the future. Mentioned earlier was John Francis Bledsoe, superintendent of the Maryland School for the Blind. His son Warren, who described himself as a "congenital worker for the blind" by virtue of his birth on the campus of the Maryland school, served as one of the journal's editors before he began his important work with the U.S. Veterans Administration. Warren Bledsoe, who passed away in 2005, is widely regarded as the champion of the professional literature

of the field. The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired award for excellence in literature that bears his name was awarded to JVIB this past July. In turn, we are publishing his timely Credo Ascribed to Certain Masters of the Art of Teaching Blind People, which appeared as part of an article he published in 1971. The credo itself is a tribute, if not to the leaders of the field, then to those who do its most important work.

MICHAEL J. BINA, Ed.D.
CHAIR, JVIB EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Winter 1911 • Volume 4, Number 4, "Frank H. Hall," *Outlook for the Blind*, pp. 157–158.

EDWARD E. ALLEN

Superintendent, Perkins School for the Blind

On January 3, 1911, after some months of brave fighting with disease, died one whose career with the blind, though short, has been of far-reaching service, Mr. Frank H. Hall. Before coming into the work for the blind, he had had a very varied experience in public schools. To the state institution for the blind at Jacksonville, Ill., he brought this ripe experience, his resourcefulness, his courage, his sympathy and his generosity. After a few short years there he felt convinced that under proper conditions many blind boys and girls would better live at home and attend the local public schools than spend most of their impressionable years in institutions. And so, in the early 90's, when the city of Chicago was considering having an institution for its own blind youth, he urged the experiment of teaching these children in the public schools, and was chiefly instrumental in shaping the plan which was finally adopted in the fall of 1900, and in having Mr. John B. Curtis, one of his own teachers, appointed to carry out this first experiment

of its kind in America. The plan was so well conceived that the public day classes in five other cities have been modeled upon it. The introduction of public school work for the blind in America is perhaps Mr. Hall's greatest contribution to the cause of the education of our blind youth.

His second contribution is scarcely of less service. When he became superintendent at Jacksonville in 1890, the best way of embossing books for the blind was either the English method of punching out the embossed characters, point by point, on sheet brass by means of hammer and awl, or the American means ... of producing electroplates or stereotypeplates from forms of movable type set up by hand. This was a slow process and an expensive process.... In 1893, Mr. Hall and his coadjutors brought out an appliance for punching at a stroke characters composed of several points, directly upon thin sheets of metal, thus rapidly producing plates as good as electroplates or stereotypeplates and several times cheaper.... Mr. Hall induced Messrs. Harrison and Seifried, the generous mechanics who had helped in the planning of the machine, to manufacture and sell it at so reasonable a price that schools and individuals could buy one and set up printing offices of their own.... Naturally [the machine's] appearance revolutionized book-making for the blind in America and Europe alike. A few educators of the old school even feared that its appearance would so cheapen embossed book-making that the blind would be flooded with inferior literature; and, indeed, the variety of general reading, of text, and of music scores for the blind in America has increased more within the past eighteen years than in all the many years preceding. The invention of this machine is that which made practical and feasible the teaching of blind children in the public schools, for by its means they could be kept supplied with the same text-books which their seeing schoolmates had.

May 1923 • Volume 17, Number 1, “The ‘Outlook for the Blind’ and Its Retiring Editor,” *Outlook for the Blind*, pp. 3–4.

H. RANDOLPH LATIMER

Former acting director-general, American Foundation for the Blind, and president, American Association of Workers for the Blind

... *Outlook for the Blind* has given [excellent service] in work for the blind in the past sixteen years. But [this fact does] not tell anything of the time and work which [Charles F. F.] Campbell has given generously to this enterprise. Moreover, Mr. Campbell’s hope long deferred of a national organization to underwrite the magazine, realized only now when circumstances have borne him practically beyond the pale of work for the blind, is a spiritual contribution to the cause which can never be interpreted in terms of material values.

... Few of us who were actively engaged in work for the blind as far back as 1907 will fail to realize that we are all working together these days with infinitely more intelligence and sympathy than we were at that time. Those of us who have been thoughtfully watching the growth of work for the blind all these years agree fully ... that no one agency has been as potent as the *Outlook for the Blind* in bringing this work to a point where it may be justly termed a profession. For this, in all common justice, the lion’s share of the credit belongs to Mr. Campbell. When the rest of us, having done our daily tasks, were peacefully sleeping, the editor of the *Outlook* must have been burning his midnight oil by the gallon, and renewing his faith as best he might in the ultimate as well as the immediate service this magazine might prove to be to the blind. It has never by any manner of means measured up to its editor’s ideal of what it should be, but it is exceedingly doubtful that any other person, under the circumstances, could have accomplished anything approaching what he

has done. Those who have deprecated the value of the *Outlook* are, in the main, those who have contributed little if anything of a constructive nature either to the *Outlook* itself or to the content of its pages; and we are disposed to say ... that, considering it has been largely a one-man job, and a sideline at that, the *Outlook for the Blind* has been very good and useful indeed. Moreover, had more of the leading workers for the blind contributed of their best thought to its pages, the magazine would, of course, have been more valuable to us all.

As it stands, the pages of the *Outlook for the Blind*, stretching over the past sixteen years, contain a priceless accumulation of the best thought of the profession which cannot be found elsewhere and to its one and only editor belongs our eternal thanks for having begged, borrowed, or obtained this information from a preoccupied, hard-working, and always busy profession.

... It affords me exceeding great pleasure to express to Mr. Campbell in the name of the Foundation—the official organ of the profession, the dream of his life—the sincere thanks and appreciation of all thoughtful readers of the *Outlook*, for the excellent service he has given to the cause during these many years.

June 1925 • Volume 4, Number 1, “Louis Braille,” *Outlook for the Blind*, p. 5.

EDWARD E. ALLEN

Superintendent, Perkins School for the Blind

This summer of 1925 blind people and their friends have loyally celebrated in Paris the centenary of the birth of Braille’s system.

... For forty years before 1825, or from the first printing in relief, and for many more than forty years afterwards in most countries, the alphabet given by the seeing to the blind to read was some form of embossed Roman letter. It never proved wholly satisfactory

anywhere. Books or no books, the classroom instruction in literature or music remained chiefly oral. Any tangible writing as a fruitful mode of expression was impossible. But with the introduction of Braille's alphabet of points in arbitrary combination the era of educating the blind, as we understand it today, began. Every pupil both could and did learn to read it and to write in it. It was of universal application.... Great lending libraries of books and music have come to exist in it. More than any other single lever it has served to lift the educational status of blind people....

**September 1926 • Volume 20,
Number 2, "The Cadmus of the
Blind," *Outlook for the Blind*, p. 1.**

LAURA E. RICHARDS

Author, and daughter of Samuel Gridley Howe

Samuel Gridley Howe, born in Boston, 1801; died in Boston, 1870.... The tale of his work, the number and variety of his achievements, might well have filled two lives of ordinary length.

One grandfather fortified Bunker Hill; the other was one of the "Indians" of the Boston Tea Party. "Sam Howe" graduated successively from the Boston Latin School, Brown University and the Harvard Medical School. In 1824, at twenty-three years of age, he went to Greece, fighting for life and freedom against the Turk.

... The war over, Samuel Howe returned to his own country. He was offered, and eagerly accepted, the direction of the projected Institution for the Blind, one of the three Pioneer Schools. When he undertook a thing, he always found out first *how to do it*; then he did it. He went back to Europe, to observe and study existing conditions for the Blind. For two weeks he went about his father's home with bandaged eyes, to learn a little of what it meant to be blind; then in the same house

(since there was no other place, and no money to hire one) he opened the Massachusetts School for the Blind, with six pupils.

When he had taught the children to read, by means of raised letters; to write, by means of raised or grooved lines; to explore the rough maps which he made with sealing-wax and plaster: he took them before the Massachusetts Legislature and showed what had been done. The Legislature instantly appropriated six thousand dollars for the School; Colonel Perkins gave his fine house and garden for its accommodation; it became the Perkins Institution and the Massachusetts School for the Blind.

The Massachusetts, New York and Philadelphia schools were practically contemporaneous, but there were no others. Dr. Howe took his little band of children and went from State to State, going before the Legislatures, showing what could be done, what had been done, begging the rulers of each State to take up the work. So in his footsteps, all over this great country sprang up the Schools for the Blind, his unmarked but undying monuments.

In 1837 he overcame an obstacle which had hitherto been thought insurmountable. The story is well known of how he taught Laura Bridgeman, a blind deaf mute, to read, write, and hold communication with her fellow beings; bringing her mind from darkness into light, and, so, opening the door for every person similarly afflicted who should come after, to all time. His work among the blind ceased only with his life.

**October 1942 • Volume 36,
Number 4, "John Francis
Bledsoe—An Appreciation,"
*Outlook for the Blind and The
Teachers Forum*, pp. 193–197.**

GABRIEL FARRELL

Director, Perkins School for the Blind

John F. Bledsoe has retired.... and it was well expressed in a newspaper comment

which read: "After nearly a half-century of teaching the blind, John Francis Bledsoe, the gentle white-haired Southerner, who brought modern pedagogy and old-fashioned graciousness to the Maryland School for the Blind, has retired."

When Mr. Bledsoe became superintendent [of the Maryland School for the Blind] in 1906, it was located on North Avenue in Baltimore, a great monumental structure, typical of the institutions of that time, when people measured their sympathy for the afflicted by the size of the structures in which they housed them.... A fortunate event at the time was the fact that the building obstructed a thoroughfare which the growing city required. Something had to be done, and Mr. Bledsoe had the inspiration to move the school into the country.

... The transition from city to country was not a mere transfer in location, but a complete change in the form of housing a school. Instead of one building for all activities, Mr. Bledsoe felt that the children should live in small groups and, accordingly, on each side of the large school building he had cottages erected for the pupils and staff. Those of us who are steeped in the Perkins' tradition have been brought up to feel that the cottage plan originated here.

September 1968 • Volume 62, Number 7, "Helen Keller," *New Outlook for the Blind*, p. 201.

EDITORS

Helen Keller dedicated her life to helping her fellow men, particularly the blind, the deaf, and those burdened by other physical handicaps.

Her chief characteristics were wisdom, a keen sense of humor and a boundless enjoyment of life. She, as much as anyone who has ever lived, knew happiness and, equally, gave happiness to countless numbers of people the world over. To those of us who

knew her, to the millions who saw her, who heard her speak and have read her books, to the children in scores of countries who have studied her life, to all mankind she brought a realization of the heights to which one can aspire and which each of us should strive to attain.

Her life has been called a miracle, and a miracle it was, but a miracle accomplished only through a combination of indomitable will and towering strength that flowed from a faith and a determination that enabled her to accomplish what seemed impossible.

She gave of herself unceasingly—speaking, writing, traveling, working constantly to improve the conditions of blind people. At the outset of her work, she recognized that the development of programs to meet the needs of the blind was hampered by the lack of legislation in most states providing for the creation of state commissions for the blind and for coordination of action on state and federal levels. The impact of her personality and her efforts was the single most important factor in effecting the change leading to the nationwide network of state organizations that serve blind people today.

In social welfare and civil rights Helen Keller was half a century ahead of her time. She wrote:

"My love for America is not blind. Perhaps I am more conscious of her faults because I love her so deeply. The process of the emancipation of mankind from old ideas is very slow. The human race does not take to new ways of living readily, but I do not feel discouraged."

Her work for blind people took her to the farthest reaches of the globe. She lectured on their behalf in 35 countries on five continents. Wherever she went, she was received with a massive outpouring of love and admiration. She was the moving spirit which led to a new era of work for the blind of the world.

Tirelessly she strove to fulfill her dream, "that every blind child have an opportunity to receive an education ... and every blind adult, a chance for training and useful employment."

And to the entire world she was a living lesson in courage, in the force of faith, in the need for tolerance, and in the way of true happiness. She will be missed.

April 1971 • Volume 65, Number 4, "Gearing to Meet the Challenge of the Decade," *New Outlook for the Blind*, pp. 105–107; 116.

WARREN BLEDSOE

Chief consultant, Division of Services to the Blind, U.S. Social and Rehabilitation Service

The field of work for the blind is not, as some people suppose, narrow. The ubiquitous intrusion of blindness into every area of performance of blind people with a variety of temperaments has required multiple solutions to a variety of problems involving all sorts of sciences, knowledge, and skills. In the same day anyone in charge of a program for blind people might well wish he were an engineer, a lawyer, a social worker, a psychologist, an optometrist, an accountant, a statistician, and possibly a detective and a newspaper editor. Problems which seem to require expertise in all these areas are not uncommon. First, last, and always, the talents of a diplomat are required to enlist and draw upon the above-named and many more competencies which the situations of blind people bring into play in the modern world.

... In my opinion the key factor in meeting the challenge of the future in work for the blind will continue to be people playing certain roles.... 1) the status figures, ... 2) the hewers and haulers, fetchers and carriers, 3) the inventors, 4) the shining examples, and 5) the stormy petrels or agitators. A few months ago I began to notice another role which is

separate and distinct from the others. This role, in my opinion, is that of the counselor of state.... And I have experimented with writing down what I think is required of such a counselor. It is as follows:

1. As much ease with blind people as with the sighted.
2. Real true familiarity with the things blind people can and cannot do.
3. Diplomacy in managing the embarrassing dictum "blind people can do anything."
4. Total absence of snobbishness toward the practitioner "down in the mud" with blind people.
5. Ability to conjure with the national passion for the mechanical solution to blindness and the reverence for statistics and bigness.
6. Ability to master the barricade of "you will never know what it is to be blind"—either by blindness itself or an intuitive quality which is an adequate substitute....

... Whatever has been going on in other phases of the national life, work for the blind has been in a period of expanded investment during the past three decades. The Social and Rehabilitation Services alone has put \$10 million into research and demonstration since 1954 when the Vocational Rehabilitation Act was revised to include funds for such a program. The administrator and the chiefs of Services to the Blind and Visually Handicapped have had an understanding based on a recognition of the importance of the people at the grassroots: [those] ... in direct contact with blind people, who actually play the leading roles in work for the blind. It is said that there are only two real ranks in the Roman Catholic Church: bishop and priest. Perhaps work for the blind might reduce itself to two: The counselors of state, described above, and

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