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**Blake, Clarence J. (Clarence John),  
1843-1919. Papers, 1835-1909 (inclusive):  
Finding Aid. H MS c607**

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Medicine)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Center for the History of Medicine (Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine)
<b>Creator:</b>	Blake, Clarence J. (Clarence John), 1843-1919
<b>Title:</b>	Clarence J. Blake papers
<b>Call Number:</b>	H MS c607
<b>Date:</b>	1835-1909 (inclusive)
<b>Physical Description:</b>	0.50 cubic feet 1 letter size document box and 2 oversized file folders.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	Papers are in English.
<b>Overview:</b>	Consists of correspondence to and from Blake, notebooks relating to the work done with Alexander Graham Bell, and biographical materials relating to Clarence John Blake and the Blake family, including drafted chapters of a biography of Blake and excerpts from Blake's speeches, writings, and letters.

### Preferred Citation

Clarence J. Blake papers, 1835-1919 (inclusive). H MS c607. Harvard Medical Library, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Boston, Mass.

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## Biographical Note

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Clarence John Blake (1843-1919), M.D., 1861, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts was an audiologist and otologist.

Clarence John Blake was born in 1843 to John Harrison Blake (1808-1899) and Sarah Ann Howe (1808-1881). He attended the Boston Latin School and the Lawrence Scientific School and received his M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1861.

Immediately after receiving his M.D., Blake travelled to Europe to study medicine. Initially, he began with obstetrics but soon switched to his other major interest, otology, the medical specialty focusing on the ear. His mother and sister, a musician, travelled with him. Blake

returned to Boston in 1868 but almost immediately received an invitation from one of his European teachers, Adam Politzer (1835-1920), to come back as his assistant; Blake spent the next nine months with Politzer before finally returning to Boston to set up his own practice.

Blake opened his own office and accepted a position at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (now Mass Eye and Ear) in 1869 but his clinic was almost immediately closed so the space could be used by other physicians. He was later appointed Aural Surgeon at the Infirmary and held the position until 1905. In 1870, he was appointed Lecturer in Otology at Harvard Medical School and, in 1888, he was named the first Professor and Chair of the Department of Otology at Harvard Medical School.

In 1871, Blake met Alexander Graham Bell, who had been invited to Boston to discuss Deaf education and his father's system of Visible Speech as it might be used in the Boston public schools. Bell and Blake collaborated for the next several years on the development of the telephone with Blake providing medical knowledge of the anatomy of the ear which Bell lacked. During later legal actions against Bell and the Bell Telephone Company, dated drawings and notes in Blake's possession were used to establish Bell's claim to precedence in the invention.

Blake was a member of several professional societies, including consecutive positions as the vice-president and president of the American Otological Society between 1873 and 1878. He was one of the founders of the *American Journal of Otology* in 1879 and, in 1891, was one of the founders of the Vincent Memorial Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts (now the Vincent Memorial Hospital Foundation), a hospital for and staffed by women and named after Boston actress Mary Ann Vincent (1818-1887).

Blake married Frances Hughes (1844-1902) in 1874; the couple had two children, Elizabeth Hughes (1876-1924) and Thomas Barnard (1881-1926). Frances Hughes Blake died in 1902 and Blake married Mary Alice Houghton (1863-1919) in 1907. Clarence John Blake died in 1919.

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## Scope and Content

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Consists of correspondence to and from Blake, notebooks relating to the work done with Alexander Graham Bell, and biographical materials relating to Clarence John Blake and the Blake family, including drafted chapters of a biography and excerpts from Blake's speeches, writings, and letters. There are three oversized certificates documenting Blake's education and undated draft wills from Blake and his second wife. Also included are materials relating to John Harrison Blake's travels, including letters of introduction, visas, and a small travel diary.

Papers are entirely in English.

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## Collection Arrangement

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- 1 I. Correspondence, 1876-1907
- 2 II. Notebooks, 1879-1889
- 3 III. Biographical Materials, circa 1912
- 4 IV. John Harrison Blake Papers, 1835-1885
- 5 V. Blake Family Papers, 1865-probably 1919

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## Administrative Information

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### Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research. Access requires advance notice.

Consult [Public Services](#) for further information.

### Conditions Governing Use

The Harvard Medical Library does not hold copyright on all materials in the collection. Researchers are responsible for identifying and contacting any third-party copyright holders for permission to reproduce or publish. For more information on the Center's use, publication, and reproduction policies, view our [Reproductions and Use Policy](#).

### Publication Statement

Center for the History of Medicine (Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine)

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

The collection was purchased in 2020.

1 Accession number 2021-061. Carpe Librum Books. 2020 October 09.

## Processing Information

Processed by Hanna Clutterbuck-Cook, 2021 November.

Processing staff in the Center for the History of Medicine analyzed, arranged, rehoused, and described the collection, and created a finding aid to improve access. Folder titles were transcribed from the originals when available; titles supplied by the processing staff appear in brackets only on the physical folders.

## HOLLIS Link

[HOLLIS Record](#)

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## Collection Inventory

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### Correspondence, 1876-1907

Identifier: Series I.

Physical Description: 0.15 cubic feet 1 letter size document box

#### Scope and Contents

Consists of correspondence sent to and from Clarence John Blake from a variety of correspondents in French, German, and English. Some letters not in English have been translated and transcriptions are included in the individual folder. Researchers interested in correspondence should also consult Series III: Biographical Materials.

#### Arrangement

Alphabetical by folder title.

Title/Description	Containers	
Envelope marked "French letters," undated	box 01	folder 01
Blake to Dr Warren, 1906	box 01	folder 02
Burckhardt-Merian to Blake, 1884	box 01	folder 03
Cox, Charles R to J Allen Warren, 1906	box 01	folder 04
Gouguenheim to Blake, 1888	box 01	folder 05
Grazzi to Blake, 1888	box 01	folder 06
Hommel to Blake, 1884	box 01	folder 07

Ladreit de Lacharriere to Blake, 1884	box 01	folder 08
Lanman to Blake, 1907	box 01	folder 09
Liagre to Blake, 1879	box 01	folder 10
Lowenberg to Blake, 1877	box 01	folder 11
Lowenberg to Blake, 1878	box 01	folder 12
Mach to Blake, 1879	box 01	folder 13
Moos to Blake, 1876	box 01	folder 14
Politzer to Blake, 1880	box 01	folder 15
Politzer to Blake, 1881	box 01	folder 16
Politzer to Blake, 1889	box 01	folder 17
Reik to Hurlbut, 1909	box 01	folder 18
Woodbury to Blake, 1907	box 01	folder 19
Zeuthen to Blake, 1879	box 01	folder 20

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## Notebooks, 1879-1889

Identifier: Series II.

Physical Description: 0.10 cubic feet 1 letter size document box

### Scope and Contents

Consists of two notebooks and a few pages of loose notes. The notebooks include sketches of equipment, raw data, manuscript drafts and notes, a patient case history, and rough sketches of a country cottage. The loose notes comprise notes on the United States Treasury, the population of the Earth, and household expenses (presumably Blake's).

### Arrangement

Alphabetical by folder title.

Title/Description	Containers	
Notebook, 1879-1880	box 01	folder 21
Notebook, 1880-1887	box 01	folder 22
Notes on US Treasury, house expenses, and population of the Earth, circa 1878	box 01	folder 23

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## Biographical Materials, circa 1912

**Identifier:** Series III.

**Physical Description:** 0.15 cubic feet 1 letter size document box

**Scope and Contents**

Consists of draft chapters for what appears to be a biography of Clarence John Blake, annotated in various hands. Also included are files of selections from Blake's writings and speeches.

**Arrangement**

Alphabetical by folder title.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Containers</b>	
Autobiographical Notes, probably 1885	box 01	folder 24
Bibliography, undated	box 01	folder 25
Chapter 1, undated	box 01	folder 26
Chapter 2, undated	box 01	folder 27
Chapter 3, undated	box 01	folder 28
Chapter 4, undated	box 01	folder 29
Chapter 5, undated	box 01	folder 30
Chapter 6, undated	box 01	folder 31
Concerning hospitals, undated	box 01	folder 32
From Blake's addresses, circa 1909	box 01	folder 33
Humorous Anecdotes, undated	box 01	folder 34
International Otological Congress, 1909	box 01	folder 35
Note on faith, probably 1885	box 01	folder 36
Notes, copies of letters, 1880-1906	box 01	folder 37
Notes, copies of letters, undated	box 01	folder 38
Notes, copies of letters, undated	box 01	folder 39

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**John Harrison Blake Papers, 1835-1885**

**Identifier:** Series IV.

**Physical Description:** 0.10 cubic feet 1 letter size document box

**Scope and Contents**

Consists of records related to the life of John Harrison Blake, primarily his travels in Europe and South America. Includes letters of introduction, visas, passports, and a small travel diary. The letters of introduction have typed translations.

### Arrangement

Alphabetical by folder title.

Title/Description	Containers	
Passport, visa, diary, circa 1866	box 01	folder 40
Letter of Introduction, 1835	box 01	folder 41
Letter of Introduction, 1837	box 01	folder 42

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## Blake Family Papers, 1865-probably 1919

Identifier: Series V.

Physical Description: 0.10 cubic feet 2 oversize flat folders

Physical Location: See flat file #3, drawer #15.

### Scope and Contents

Consists of three oversized certificates documenting Clarence John Blake's education.

### Arrangement

In original order.

Title/Description	Containers
Educational Certificates, undated <u>Physical Location</u> : FF3/15	
Wills and Testaments, undated <u>Physical Location</u> : FF3/15	

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Inventions -- United States
- Physicians -- United States -- Biography
- Telephone--United States--History
- Notebooks.
- Correspondence
- Certificates.
- Visas
- Otologists.

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- Blake, Clarence J. (Clarence John), 1843-1919
- Bell, Alexander Graham, 1847-1922