

= William Blackstone =

Sir William Blackstone SL KC (10 July 1723 ? 14 February 1780) was an English jurist , judge and Tory politician of the eighteenth century . He is most noted for writing the Commentaries on the Laws of England . Born into a middle @-@ class family in London , Blackstone was educated at Charterhouse School before matriculating at Pembroke College , Oxford in 1738 . After switching to and completing a Bachelor of Civil Law degree , he was made a Fellow of All Souls , Oxford on 2 November 1743 , admitted to Middle Temple , and called to the Bar there in 1746 . Following a slow start to his career as a barrister , Blackstone became heavily involved in university administration , becoming accountant , treasurer and bursar on 28 November 1746 and Senior Bursar in 1750 . Blackstone is considered responsible for completing the Codrington Library and Warton Building , and simplifying the complex accounting system used by the college . On 3 July 1753 he formally gave up his practice as a barrister and instead embarked on a series of lectures on English law , the first of their kind . These were massively successful , earning him a total of £ 453 (£ 63 @,@ 000 in 2016 terms) , and led to the publication of An Analysis of the Laws of England in 1756 , which repeatedly sold out and was used to preface his later works .

On 20 October 1758 Blackstone was confirmed as the first Vinerian Professor of English Law , immediately embarking on another series of lectures and publishing a similarly successful second treatise , titled A Discourse on the Study of the Law . With his growing fame , Blackstone successfully returned to the bar and maintained a good practice , also securing election as Tory Member of Parliament for the rotten borough of Hindon on 30 March 1761 . In February 1766 he published the first volume of Commentaries on the Laws of England , considered his magnum opus ? the completed work earned Blackstone £ 14 @,@ 000 (£ 1 @,@ 756 @,@ 000 in 2016 terms) . After repeated failures , he successfully gained appointment to the judiciary as a Justice of the Court of King 's Bench on 16 February 1770 , leaving to replace Edward Clive as a Justice of the Common Pleas on 25 June . He remained in this position until his death , on 14 February 1780 .

Blackstone 's legacy and main work of note is his Commentaries . Designed to provide a complete overview of English law , the four @-@ volume treatise was repeatedly republished in 1770 , 1773 , 1774 , 1775 , 1778 and in a posthumous edition in 1783 . Reprints of the first edition , intended for practical use rather than antiquary interest , were published until the 1870s in England and Wales , and a working version by Henry John Stephen , first published in 1841 , was reprinted until after the Second World War . Legal education in England had stalled ; Blackstone 's work gave the law " at least a veneer of scholarly respectability " . William Searle Holdsworth , one of Blackstone 's successors as Vinerian Professor , argued that " If the Commentaries had not been written when they were written , I think it very doubtful that [the United States] , and other English speaking countries would have so universally adopted the common law . " In the United States , the Commentaries influenced Alexander Hamilton , John Marshall , James Wilson , John Jay , John Adams , James Kent and Abraham Lincoln , and remain frequently cited in Supreme Court decisions .

= = Early life and education = =

William 's father , Charles Blackstone , was a silk mercer from Cheapside , the son of a wealthy apothecary . He became firm friends with Thomas Bigg , a surgeon and the son of Lovelace Bigg , a gentleman from Wiltshire . After Bigg 's sister Mary came to London , Charles eventually persuaded her to marry him in 1718 . This was not seen as a good match for her , but the couple lived happily and had four sons , three of whom lived into adulthood . Charles (born August 1719) and Henry (May 1722) , both became fellows of New College , Oxford and took holy orders . Their last son , William , was born on 10 July 1723 , five months after Charles ' death in February .

Although Charles and Mary Blackstone were members of the middle class rather than landed gentry , they were particularly prosperous . Tax records show Charles Blackstone to have been the second most prosperous man in the parish in 1722 , and death registers show that the family had several servants . This , along with Thomas Bigg 's assistance to the family following Charles ' death

, helps explain the educational upbringing of the children . William Blackstone was sent to Charterhouse School in 1730 , nominated by Charles Wither , a relative of Mary Blackstone . William did well there , and became head of the school by age 15 . However , after Charles ' death the family fortunes declined , and after Mary died (5 January 1736) the family 's resources largely went to meet unpaid bills . William was able to remain at Charterhouse as a " poor scholar " , having been named to that position in June 1735 after being nominated by Sir Robert Walpole .

Blackstone revelled in Charterhouse 's academic curriculum , particularly the Latin poetry of Ovid and Virgil . He began to attract note as a poet at school , writing a 30 @-@ line set of rhyming couplets to celebrate the wedding of James Hotchkis , the headmaster . He also won a silver medal for his Latin verses on John Milton , gave the annual Latin oration in 1738 , and was noted as having been the favourite student of his masters . On 1 October 1738 , taking advantage of a new scholarship available to Charterhouse students , Blackstone matriculated at Pembroke College , Oxford .

= = Oxford = =

= = = Study = = =

There are few surviving records of Blackstone 's undergraduate term at Oxford , but the curriculum of Pembroke College had been set out in 1624 , and Prest notes that it was probably still followed in 1738 , so Blackstone would have studied Greek , science , logic , rhetoric , philosophy , mathematics , geography and poetry . Blackstone was particularly good at Greek , mathematics and poetry , with his notes on William Shakespeare being included in George Steevens ' 1781 edition of Shakespeare 's plays . Many of Blackstone 's undergraduate texts survive , and they include few legal texts , instead being wide @-@ ranging ; politics , current affairs , poetry , geometry and controversial theological texts . The last element is understandable , given his family 's theological interests , but the more surprising element is the sheer number of texts he owned given his relative poverty as a student .

On 9 July 1740 , after only a year and a half as a Bachelor of Arts student , Blackstone was admitted to study for a Bachelor of Civil Law degree , civil law being the only legal area recognised by his university . This degree course was seven years long , the first two " supposedly devoted to a broad course of reading in humane studies " , which allowed him to study his own interests . On 20 November 1741 he was admitted to the Middle Temple , the first step on the road to becoming a barrister , but this imposed no obligations and simply allowed a legal career to be an option . At the time there was no proper legal education system , and Blackstone read (in his own time) Coke on Littleton , the works of Henry Finch , and related legal tracts .

In addition to his formal studies , Blackstone published a collection of poetry which included the draft version of *The Lawyer to his Muse* , his most famous literary work . In 1743 he published *Elements of Architecture* and *An Abridgement of Architecture* , two treatises on the rules governing the art of construction . His next work (1747) was *The Pantheon : A Vision* , an anonymously published book of poetry covering the various religions in the world . It depicts a narrator 's walking dream through the buildings of various religions , which are all (other than Christianity) depicted in a negative light . This followed his election as a Fellow of All Souls , Oxford on 2 November 1743 , and his call to the Bar by the Middle Temple on 28 November 1746 .

His call to the Bar saw Blackstone begin to alternate between Oxford and London , occupying chambers in Pump Court but living at All Souls College . As the central courts only sat for three months of the year , the rest of his time was spent on Assize when his work at All Souls permitted . He regularly acted as a law reporter ; his personal notes on cases start with *Hankey v Trotman* (1746) . Blackstone 's barrister practice began slowly ; his first case in the Court of King 's Bench was in 1748 , and he had only 6 additional motions there through 1751 . Two appearances in the Court of Chancery are also noted , and he is known to have been consulted in *Roger Newdigate 's* long @-@ running lawsuit there , but his early court appearances are infrequent . This is considered

to have been due to bad luck , with his call to the Bar occurring at the same time as the massive contraction in business by the central courts , along with his singular lack of connections due to his status as an orphan from the middle class ; he was described as " unrecognised and unemployed " . He filled his time by acting as counsel for Oxford , and from May 1749 with his election as Recorder of Wallingford .

= = = University administration = = =

While dividing his time , Blackstone became an administrator at All Souls , securing appointment as accountant , treasurer and bursar on 28 November 1746 . Completion of the Codrington Library and Warton Building , first started in 1710 and 1720 respectively but not built until 1748 , is attributed to his work . In 1749 he became Steward of the Manors , and in 1750 was made Senior Bursar . Records show a " perfectionist zeal " in organising the estates and finances of All Souls , and Blackstone was noted for massively simplifying the complex accounting system used by the college . In 1750 Blackstone completed his first legal tract , An Essay on Collateral Consanguinity , which dealt with those claiming a familial tie to the founder of All Souls in an attempt to gain preeminence in elections . Completion of his Doctor of Civil Law degree , which he was awarded in April 1750 , admitted him to Convocation , the governing body of Oxford , which elected the two burgesses who represented it in the House of Commons , along with most of the university officers . With this and with his continuing work at the university , Blackstone announced on 3 July 1753 his intentions to " no longer attend the Courts at Westminster , but to pursue my Profession in a Way more agreeable to me in all respects , by residing at Oxford [and] to engraft upon this Resolution a Scheme which I am told may be beneficial to the University as well as myself " , which was to give a set of lectures on the common law ? the first lectures of that sort in the world .

This was not entirely out of benevolence ; according to Prest , Blackstone was likely aware that an Oxford alumnus , Charles Viner , was planning to endow a professorship of English law . The Regius Professorship of Civil Law had also become vacant in 1753 ; despite support from Lord Mansfield , Blackstone had been rejected in favour of Robert Jenner , widely considered Blackstone 's lesser intellectually but a far greater political mind . In addition , a private lecture series would be extremely lucrative . While his All Souls fellowship gave him £ 70 a year , records show that the lecture series brought him £ 116 , £ 226 and £ 111 a year respectively from 1753 to 1755 ? a total of £ 453 (£ 63 @ , @ 000 in 2016 terms) . A prospectus was issued on 23 June 1753 , and with a class of approximately 20 students , the first set of lectures were completed by July 1754 . Despite Blackstone 's limited oratory skills and a speaking style described by Jeremy Bentham as " formal , precise and affected " , Blackstone 's lectures were warmly appreciated . The second and third series were far more popular , partly due to the then unusual use of printed handouts and lists of suggested reading . No copies of these handouts exist , but Alexander Popham , later a close friend of Blackstone , attended the lectures and made notes , which survive . These show Blackstone 's attempts to reduce English law to a logical system , with the division of subjects later being the basis for his Commentaries .

Following his lecture series , Blackstone became more prominent in convocation and other university activities . Oxford and Cambridge at the time had a strange system of law ; due to their unique natures , they had exclusive jurisdiction over both academics and students in a fashion which followed either the common law or their own customs , based on the civil law . With his appointment as assessor (or chief legal officer) of the Chancellor 's Court , Blackstone became far more involved in the university 's peculiar legal system , and records show him sitting between eight and ten times a year from 1753 to 1759 , mainly dealing with small claims of debt . He also wrote a manual on the Court 's practice , and through his position gained a large number of contacts and connections , as well as visibility , which aided his legal career significantly . This period also saw Blackstone write his last known piece of poetry , Friendship : An Ode , in 1756 .

In 1756 Blackstone published the first of his full legal texts , the 200 page An Analysis of the Laws of England . Published by the Clarendon Press , the treatise was intended to demonstrate the " Order , and principal Divisions " of his lecture series , and a structured introduction to English law .

Prest calls this " a marked advance on any previous introduction to English law . . including constitutional , civil and criminal law , public and private law , substantive law and procedure , as well as some introductory jurisprudential content " . The initial print run of 1 @, @ 000 copies almost immediately sold out , leading to the printing of three more 1 @, @ 000 @-@ book lots over the next three years , which all sold out . A fifth edition was published in 1762 , and a sixth , edited to take into account Blackstone 's Commentaries on the Laws of England , in 1771 . Because of the success of the Commentaries , Prest remarks that " relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to this work " ; at the time , however , it was hailed as " an elegant performance . . calculated to facilitate this branch of knowledge " .

= = = Vinerian Professor of English Law = = =

On 8 March 1758 , the group executing Charles Viner 's will reported to Convocation that Viner recommended creating a Chair of English Law , with a £ 200 salary . After much debate , this position was created , and on 20 October 1758 Blackstone was confirmed as the first Vinerian Professor of English Law . On 24 October he gave his first lecture , to " a crowded audience " ; the text was soon printed and published as A Discourse on the Study of the Law . The lecture was tremendously popular , being described as a " sensible , spirited and manly exhortation to the study of the law " ; the initial print run sold out , necessitating the publication of another 1 @, @ 000 copies , and it was used to preface later versions of the Analysis and the first volume of the Commentaries . Within the university , however , Blackstone was not as popular . As soon as the lecture series opened , an anonymously written open letter was published charging that Blackstone had " violated the Statutes of the University , by arbitrarily changing the Day appointed for reading his solemn Lectures " . Blackstone suffered a nervous breakdown soon after the first lecture , and on 24 November he launched a suit in the Chancellor 's Court against " William Jackson of the City of Oxford Printer " for £ 500 damages , justified by Jackson " printing and publishing a scandalous Libell notoriously reflecting on the Character of him the said William Blackstone " . Jackson had refused to reveal who ordered the anonymous pamphlet , leading to the suit , but it evidently did not proceed further .

This suit , along with the struggle over the Vinerian Professorship and other controversies , damaged his reputation within the university , as evidenced by his failure to win election as Vice Warden in April 1759 , losing to John White . Prest attributes Blackstone 's unpopularity to specific personality traits , saying his " determination ... in pursuit of causes to which he committed himself could irritate as well as intimidate those of a more relaxed disposition . While quick to take offence at perceived slights on his own character and motives , he could also show surprising indifference to the effect his words and actions might have on others " . This marked the beginning of his break with Oxford , which coincided with his growing influence outside the university . In 1759 Lord Bute , Prince George 's official tutor , requested copies of Blackstone 's lectures , which he forwarded . Later that year Blackstone was paid £ 200 by the Prince , who became an " appreciative , loyal , and soon to be incomparably influential patron " . This patronage , and Blackstone 's purchase of a set of chambers in the Inner Temple , also transferring to that Inn , were significant steps in his departure from Oxford . In 1759 Blackstone published another two works , The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest , with other authentic Instruments , described as a " major piece of pioneering scholarship " leading to Blackstone 's election to the Society of Antiquaries in February 1761 , and A Treatise on the Law of Descents in Fee Simple , which was later used , almost verbatim , as chapters 14 and 15 of the Commentaries .

= = London = =

= = = Work at the Bar = = =

With sponsorship from the Prince of Wales and his success with the Analysis , Blackstone began

work as a barrister , although he kept up his lecture series at Oxford . By 1760 he had become " a very eminent figure indeed in the world of letters " , and his legal practice grew as a result . Although not considered a great barrister of the period , he maintained a steady flow of cases , primarily in the King 's Bench and Exchequer of Pleas . On the death of the third Earl of Abingdon , Blackstone was retained as counsel for the executors and trustees to oversee the family 's attempts to pay off debts and meet other obligations . On 5 May 1761 he married Sarah Clitherow , a member of a family of lesser gentry from Middlesex . Their first child , William Bertie Blackstone , born 21 August 1762 , did not survive to adulthood . Seven more children were born ; Henry , James , Sarah , Mary , Philippa , William , Charles , and George , who also died in childhood . The Blackstones had a large estate in Wallingford , including 120 acres (46 ha) of pastureland around the River Thames and the right of advowson over St Peter 's Church .

In February 1761 Blackstone was considered as a potential Tory candidate for the rotten borough of Hindon . After consultation with friends , he agreed to this prospect ? at the same time refusing the offer of appointment as Lord Chief Justice of Ireland . On 30 March 1761 he was returned for Hindon , and took his seat . This did not limit his legal work , initially , with the seat being given without a requirement to attend or vote in a particular way , and the grant of a patent of precedence at the same time actually increased the demand on his time . Court records show him pleading before Lord Mansfield in the Court of King 's Bench soon after his election , and acting as counsel in *Tonson v Collins* , a copyright case , *Thiquest v Bath* , an important case on international law , and *R v d'Eon* , acting for the prosecution in a feud over Louis XV 's newly appointed cross @-@ dressing Ambassador to the United Kingdom .

With this increase in his practice , Blackstone also saw an increase in his out @-@ of @-@ court work , writing opinions and recommendations for various Oxford colleges , the MP Jonathan Rashleigh and the fourth Earl of Abingdon , who paid him to draft several private Acts of Parliament . In April 1765 Blackstone began to actively seek judicial appointment . In December 1761 he asked Lord Shelburne , a patron , for his assistance in gaining appointment as Chief Justice of Chester , writing again in July 1762 to " prevail upon Lord Bute to recommend me to his Majesty 's Notice " , anticipating an upcoming vacancy in the Court of Common Pleas . Parliamentary service was considered a " desirable if never absolutely essential qualification for would @-@ be English judges " , something that did not necessarily bode well for Blackstone . Naturally inarticulate and reticent , he was an infrequent and " indifferent " speaker during his first session of Parliament , speaking only 14 times in seven years . His chosen career did lend him to politics , in that the lawyers in the House of Commons were often added to select committees to provide them with technical expertise in drafting legislation . He again applied for a judicial post in December 1762 , after an opening in the Exchequer of Pleas came up , but lost to George Perrott , a leading Exchequer barrister . The next five vacancies also failed to go to Blackstone , after the appointment of Lord Camden (a Whig) as Lord Chancellor .

= = = Commentaries on the Laws of England = = =

In 1765 Blackstone announced his resignation from the Vinerian Chair , effective after his 1766 lectures . These were divided into two 14 @-@ lecture series , on " private wrongs " and " public wrongs " delivered between 12 February and 24 April . At this point Blackstone had published nothing new since *A Treatise on the Law of Descents in Fee Simple* in 1759 . The decision to resign was most likely due to the increasing demands of his legal practice and the reduced profit from the lectures , which , after peaking at £ 340 in 1762 , dropped to £ 239 a year later and to £ 203 for the final round of lectures in 1765 @-@ 6 . In response , Blackstone decided to publish a new book ? *Commentaries on the Laws of England* . The first volume was published in November 1765 , bringing the author £ 1 @,@ 600 ? the full work would eventually bring in over £ 14 @,@ 000 . Owen Ruffhead described Volume I as " masterly " , noting that " Mr Blackstone is perhaps the first who has treated the body of the law in a liberal , elegant and constitutional manner . A vein of good sense and moderation runs through every page " . Every copy was sold within six months , and the second and third volumes , published in October 1766 and June 1768 , received a similar reception .

The fourth and final volume appeared in 1770 , dealing with Criminal Law . With the financial success of the Commentaries , Blackstone moved in 1768 from his London property in Carey Fields to No. 55 Lincoln 's Inn Fields . Neighbours included the Sardinian ambassador , Sir Walter Rawlinson , Lord Northington , John Morton and the Third Earl of Abingdon , making it an appropriate house for a " great and able Lawyer " .

Blackstone 's treatise was republished in 1770 , 1773 , 1774 , 1775 , 1778 and in a posthumous edition in 1783 . Reprints of the first edition , intended for practical use rather than antiquary interest , were published until the 1870s in England and Wales , and a working version by Henry John Stephen , first published in 1841 , was reprinted until after the Second World War . The first American edition was produced in 1772 ; prior to this , over 1 @,@ 000 copies had already been sold in the Thirteen Colonies .

= = = Judge = = =

Even after the publication of the Commentaries , Blackstone 's chances of judicial appointment remained slim . While he was old enough , experienced enough and widely respected , the presence of Lord Camden as Lord Chancellor and Blackstone 's lack of aristocratic patrons at the time hindered his chances . In January 1770 , however , Lord Grafton 's government began to fall , with Camden resigning on 17 January and Solicitor @-@ General John Dunning , following him . George III appointed Lord North as Prime Minister , and North picked Charles Yorke as Lord Chancellor . Yorke 's death on 20 January , after holding the position for less than three days , left several important legal positions within the government open . As such , Blackstone , now MP for Westbury , was apparently approached to become Solicitor @-@ General ; he refused , not wanting to deal with the complicated duties attached to the position .

On 9 February 1770 ? apparently with the intervention of the King , and possibly Lord Mansfield ? Blackstone became a Justice of the Common Pleas , succeeding Edward Clive , and was made a Serjeant @-@ at @-@ Law on 12 February . After only four days it was announced that Joseph Yates was to move to the Common Pleas , and Blackstone was again sworn in as a judge , this time of the Court of King 's Bench . This was apparently due to Yates ' poor health ; Lord Mansfield ran a busy court as Lord Chief Justice , and it was felt that his transfer to the Common Pleas was for the best . Others commented that it was instead due to political and judicial disagreement , with Yates unwilling to stomach the changes which Mansfield made to English law . Blackstone sat regularly as a judge , despite bouts of ill health , and also served on various circuit courts . Prest describes him as an " exceptionally careful , conscientious and well @-@ respected judge . . his judgments ranging between narrowly framed technicalities [and] broad statements of public commentary " . He was , however , considered a poor trial judge , being reversed on appeal more frequently than any of his peers .

Blackstone returned to the Common Pleas on 25 June 1770 , having spent less than six months in the King 's Bench ; Jeremy Bentham asserted that this was due to Mansfield 's having Blackstone removed similarly to his removal of Yates . Bentham asserted that in the King 's Bench , Blackstone was " always in hot water " , and that there was " heartburning " between the two ; Bentham 's account is considered dubious because historically , Mansfield and Blackstone had an excellent relationship , with the third volume of the Commentaries describing Mansfield as " a judge , whose masterly acquaintance with the law of nations was known and revered by every state in Europe " . There is only one recorded King 's Bench case , R v Proprietors of Birmingham Canal Navigation , in which Blackstone and Mansfield disagreed .

In the Common Pleas , Blackstone operated under a civil jurisdiction rather than a mixed civil and criminal one . This played to his strengths , and many of his decisions are considered farsighted ; the principle in *Blaney v Hendricks* , for example , that interest is due on an account where money was lent , which anticipated Section 3 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1934 . Blackstone 's decision in *Goldswain 's Case* was later repeated by Lord Denning in *Falmouth Boat Construction Co v Howell* in 1950 .

= = Death = =

Blackstone had long suffered from gout , and by November 1779 also had a nervous disorder which caused dizziness , obesity , high blood pressure and possibly diabetes . By 3 February 1780 he was too weak to write , and after " some Days almost totally insensible " , he died on 14 February . After a service conducted by Bishop Barrington on 22 February , Blackstone was buried in the family vault under St Peter 's Church , Wallingford . His estate at his death was worth less than £ 15 @, @ 000 ; therefore William Eden secured a £ 400 annual royal pension for Sarah Blackstone . The initial reaction to Blackstone 's death was subdued , but in December 1780 the Fellows of All Souls College agreed that " a Statue be erected to the memory of Sr W Blackstone deceased " . Constructed by John Bacon , the life @-@ sized statue of Blackstone in his judicial robes cost £ 539 , and has rested in the Codrington Library since 1872 . His brother @-@ in @-@ law , James Clitherow , also published two volumes of his law reports which added £ 1 @, @ 287 to the estate , and in 1782 the Biographical History of Sir William Blackstone appeared .

= = Legacy = =

Blackstone 's primary legacy is his written work , specifically the Commentaries on the Laws of England . Demand for reprinted , abridged and translated versions was " almost inexhaustible " in the 18th and 19th centuries , although the Commentaries ' emphasis on the sovereignty of Parliament drew ire . Alexis de Tocqueville described Blackstone as " an inferior writer , without liberality of mind or depth of judgment " . Other commentators differ ; one described him as " the core element in the British Enlightenment " , comparing him to Montesquieu , Beccaria and Voltaire . Academics have said that the Commentaries were crucial in changing English Law from a system based on actions to a system of substantive law . At the time of publication , the common law of England was still , in some ways , in its infancy , with people uncertain as to what the law was . The Commentaries helped to solidify legal thinking . At the same time , legal education had stalled , and Blackstone 's work gave the Law " at least a veneer of scholarly respectability " . William Searle Holdsworth , one of Blackstone 's successors as Vinerian Professor , argued that " if the Commentaries had not been written when they were written , I think it very doubtful that [the United States] , and other English speaking countries would have so universally adopted the [common] law " .

The Commentaries had a particular influence in the United States ; James Iredell , an original Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States wrote that the Commentaries were " Books admirably calculated for a young Student , and indeed may instruct the most learned . . Pleasure and Instruction go hand in hand " . When the Commentaries were first printed in North America , 1 @, @ 400 copies were ordered for Philadelphia alone . Academics have also noted the early reliance of the Supreme Court on the Commentaries , probably due to a lack of US legal tradition at that time . Robert Ferguson notes that " all our formative documents ? the Declaration of Independence , the Constitution , the Federalist Papers and the seminal decisions of the Supreme Court under John Marshall ? were drafted by attorneys steeped in Sir William Blackstone 's Commentaries on the Laws of England . So much was this the case that the Commentaries rank second only to the Bible as a literary and intellectual influence on the history of American institutions " . Even today , the Commentaries are cited in Supreme Court decisions between 10 and 12 times a year .

Within United States academia and practise , as well as within the judiciary , the Commentaries had a substantial impact ; with the scarcity of law books on the frontier , they were " both the only law school and the only law library most American lawyers used to practise law in America for nearly a century after they were published " . Blackstone had drawn up a plan for a dedicated School of Law , and submitted it to the University of Oxford ; when the idea was rejected he included it in the Commentaries . It is from this plan that the modern system of American law schools comes . Subscribers to the first edition of Blackstone , and later readers who were profoundly influenced by it , include James Iredell , John Marshall , James Wilson , John Jay , John Adams , James Kent and

Abraham Lincoln . In advocating for American independence , Alexander Hamilton cited Blackstone for the proposition that " the law of nature , ' which , being coequal with mankind , and dictated by God himself , is , of course , superior in obligation to any other . It is binding over all the globe , in all countries , and at all times . No human laws are of any validity , if contrary to this ; and such of them as are valid , derive all their authority , mediately , or immediately , from this original . ' "

In the early 1920s the American Bar Association presented a statue of Blackstone to the English Bar Association , however , at the time , the sculpture was too tall to be placed in the Royal Courts of Justice . The sculpture , designed by Paul Wayland Bartlett was eventually cast in Europe and presented back to the United States for display . Congress approved the placement of the sculpture in Washington , D.C. on 15 March 1943 , and appropriated \$ 10 @, @ 000 for the installation . The bronze statue is a nine @-@ foot (2 @.@ 7 m) standing portrait of Blackstone wearing judicial robes and a long curly wig , holding a copy of Commentaries . It is placed on a tall granite base and stands on Constitution Avenue & 3rd Street NW . The town of Blackstone , Virginia is named after him .

= = = Blackstone 's Ratio = = =

Among the most well @-@ known of Blackstone 's contributions to judicial theory is his own statement of the principle that it " is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer " .

While this argument originates at least as far back as Genesis 18 : 23 ? 32 in the Bible , as well as versions by Maimonides and Sir John Fortescue , Blackstone 's analysis is the one picked up by Benjamin Franklin and others , so that the term has become known as " Blackstone 's Ratio " .

As John Adams , having studied Blackstone , put it :

Blackstone 's Ratio is a maxim of English law , having been established as such within a few decades of Blackstone 's work being published . It is also cited in courts and law in the US , and is strongly emphasised to American law students .

= = Works = =

Elements of Architecture (1743)

An Abridgement of Architecture (1743)

The Pantheon : A Vision (1747)

An Analysis of the Laws of England (1756)

A Discourse on the Study of the Law (1758)

The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest , with other authentic Instruments (1759)

A Treatise on the Law of Descents in Fee Simple (1759)

Commentaries on the Laws of England (1766)

Reports in K.B. and C.P. , from 1746 to 1779 (1780)