8. Legal education and the legal profession

G. Edward White

‘Legal education and the legal profession’ considers the development of American legal education and the legal profession from the rudimentary processes of the colonial and revolutionary years, through the increasing demands for legal services in the private sector of the nineteenth century, and to the transformation of law schools in the twentieth century. Despite its current difficulties, the legal profession, including its educational and judicial sectors, remains at the centre of American life, a place that promises financial rewards, influence, and stimulating work to many of its members and that has been intimately involved with the central issues of American society and politics.

Epilogue

G. Edward White

The ‘Epilogue’ concludes that this VSI may be taken as an effort to demonstrate how much of American history can be seen as connected to law and legal institutions. Of all the evidence demonstrating the role of law as a central force in the history of American culture, the most visible has been the status of the legal profession itself. Since the early settlements in colonial British America, a knowledge of law has been associated with governing institutions, politics, and influence in community affairs. The future role of the legal profession in American history is considered. Will the profession retain its position of centrality in American life?
Law has played a central role in American history. From colonial times to the present, law has reflected the changing society in which legal decisions have been made and has played a powerful role in shaping that society, though not always in positive ways. American Legal History: A Very Short Introduction sheds light on the impact of law on several key social issues: Native American affairs, slavery, business, home life, and criminal and civil offences. The expansion of laws regarding property rights is also considered, as well as the evolution of criminal punishment, the rise of tort law after the Civil War; and the progress in legal education.