

# Al capone and the italian mafia in chicago



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With the rise of bootlegging at the beginning of the 1920s, there was easy money to be made for gangs and especially organized crime leading to the rise of the Al Capone and the Italian Mafia. With the ratification of the 18th amendment in 1919 and its enactment in 1920 many American citizens began to go against the government with the founding of speakeasies and bootlegging becoming very popular business to make money especially throughout the organized crime community. In 1920 Capone moved to Chicago with his good friend Johnny Torrio shortly after his father's death and begins his career in the crime industry with Torrio. Together the two were able to create a multimillion-dollar organization through the use of prostitution, gambling, and bootlegging. Although there were many famous bootleggers and people that used prohibition to make money and a name for themselves Al Capone is the most notable and well known of all those that opposed the 18th and crime organizations. An interesting part of Chicago's history is actually the Italian Mafia and Al Capone into a better light by explaining just who the mafia was, what they did, and how they operated.

The works of Al Capone and his career within the Italian Mafia not surprisingly began long before he even moved to Chicago and joined the Mafia. Alphonse Gabriel Capone was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1899 to immigrants Gabriel and Teresina Capone. Growing up Capone lived in a poor family with seven siblings with the average immigrant lifestyle in a New York tenement with his mother making money as a seamstress and his father as a barber. Throughout elementary school, Capone was a good student, until halfway through his schooling career in sixth grade when he began skipping school to hang out by the Brooklyn docks and letting his grades slip until he

inevitably had to repeat sixth grade. For Capone, this was a slippery slope that led up until one day when his teacher struck him and he hit back. After the fight with his teacher, Alphonse was beaten by the principle resulting in Capone never returning to school after that day. Shortly after his expulsion a decision to not return to school the Capone family moved from their tenant to a much better home on the outskirts of Park Slope, Brooklyn resulting in the most important part of Capone's life and career as a crime boss (History.com).

After moving to Park Slope Capone's life changed drastically whether for the better or worse. Not long after moving to his new home Capone ran into Johnny Torrio, who was running a numbers and gambling operation near the Capone residence and began running small errands for the gangster while eventually becoming good friends. However, Torrio left Brooklyn in 1909 to move to Chicago leaving Capone but still remaining close. Early on Capone attempted to work legitimately in a munitions factory as a paper cutter while also spending a little amount of his time with the street gangs in Brooklyn resulting in a small number of occasional fights. Of which fights Capone in 1917 while working as a bartender and bouncer in Coney Island made an indecent remark to a female at the bar resulting in her brother becoming angry with Alphonse. The dispute ended with Capone being punched in the face and cut leaving his infamous three scars along the left side of his face and neck giving him his nickname "Scarface" (Biography.com).

Later in his life when he was 19 Capone married Mae Coughlin weeks after the birth of their child Albert Francis and naming his good friend Johnny Torrio the godfather of the boy. Not long after his marriage and the birth of

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his child Capone moved his family to Baltimore where he took a legitimate job as a bookkeeper for a construction company. However, tragedy struck Capone with his father's unexpected death in 1920 due to a heart attack which in turn influenced him to accept an invitation from Torrio to move to Chicago and help him in his illegal business (fbi. gov).

Throughout his time in Chicago Capone and Torrio ruled over a booming business of bootlegging, prostitution, and gambling making them both notorious throughout the city. However, after a failed attempt on Torrio's life by a rival gang in 1925 Johnny left Chicago and returned to Italy leaving the whole operation and mafia to Capone. In his mentors leave of absence Capone did the opposite of what he was warned not to do and moved his base of operations to a luxury suite in the Metropole Hotel in downtown Chicago and began to live a life of luxury spending money whenever he could while also being careful with his actions to not get caught by doing things such as only making purchases in strictly cash so everything is untraceable (History. com).

During his time as a major crime boss in Chicago Capone had the press constantly at his door following his every move which resulted in him being loved but also hated by most of the public at the time. Because of his generous nature, good deeds throughout the Chicago community many people hailed him as a local hero. Throughout his time in Chicago Capone was to the surprise of many people despite his reputation as crime boss worked towards bettering his community in many ways. A good example of such was during The Great Depression when Capone opened a soup kitchen feeding hundreds of Chicagoans who were out of work at the time. However,

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that does not change the facts about how many murders and horrible acts he and his gang committed during his time as the infamous Chicago crime boss (Bair).

The most notorious of all crimes committed by the Mafia under Capone was the St. Valentines Day Massacre. On February 14, 1929, Capone's top hit man " Machine Gun" Jack McGurn attempted to take out Capone's longtime rival " Bugs" Moran that had previously tried to assassinate Torrio and Capone but was now after McGurn. Posing as police McGurn's hitmen drove to the North Side garage where Morgan was supposed to be and using tommy guns murdered seven of Moran's men in cold blood without warning. However, now Moran knew about the danger and was able to escape the slaughter of his men. Although staying in his Miami home at the time Capone was blamed for the Massacre which only served to worsen the public view of him (fbi. gov).

As a result of the St. Valentine's day massacre, there was a public outcry that forced President Herbert Hoover to intervene and ordered the federal government to speed up its efforts in bringing Capone in on tax evasion. Despite his best efforts with the use of bribery and intimidation, the judge switched the jury the day before the final day of the trial. On June 25, 1931, the US government finally were able to bring in Capone on 22 accounts of income-tax evasion thanks to a Supreme Court ruling in 1927 that ruled that income gained illegally was taxable. In 1931 Capone was sentenced to 11 years in prison on 22 accounts of income-tax evasion and sent to a federal prison in Atlanta where he spent the first two years of his sentence (Ocean View Publishing).

While in federal prison in Atlanta Capone was able to bribe the guards and staff to ensure he got the best stuff and obtained special treatment. However, this only lasted two years as in 1934 he was sent to the famous prison island Alcatraz, or otherwise known as “ The Rock”. On Alcatraz Capone wasn’t able to hold a strong influence on the prison’s staff due to Alcatraz’s isolated location and the warden’s refusal to recognize Capone as more than an average prisoner. Moreover, before Capone was even sent to any prison he contracted syphilis as a young man and now suffered from neurosyphilis, which caused dementia. Due to his worsening health condition after serving six and a half years in Alcatraz he was sent to a mental hospital in 1939 in Baltimore where he spent three years. After being released from the hospital in Baltimore Capone spent the rest of his life in Miami with his wife while his health rapidly declined until he died of cardiac arrest on January 25, 1947 (Ocean View Publishing).

Not even a month after Capone’s death the media was swarming the mobster’s death with one New York Times headline proudly boasting “ End of an Evil Dream.” (History. com). With the majority of newspapers and media sources writing about Capone as an evil man that ran the most treacherous crime organization America had ever seen no matter how you saw Alphonse Gabriel Capone before his death, the media made it impossible to ever think that he was anything other than evil ever again.

The Italian Mafia in Chicago is a network of organized-crime groups that operated within Chicago with the most notable being within the 1920s into the 1930s. The most infamous Italian Mafia’s network was the Chicago Outfit branch that was the head Italian Mafia group in Chicago and is most famous

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for its seven years when it was run by Al Capone (americanmafiahistory.com). During its time being run by Capone, the Italian Mafia shifted from an organization that was mostly within the shadows doing their dirty work while trying to stay out of trouble into a group that took pride in everything they did while quickly becoming notorious for their bootlegging, gambling, and prostitution operations (fbi.gov).

An important part of the Italian Mafia no matter who ran it during the 1900s was violence, especially during prohibition. While prohibition was in place there was a lot of competition for bootlegging and the business that it brought that in turn led to a lot of rivalries and hatred toward other people that could be possibly stealing one's business and profit. That being said, this led to an excessive amount of violence and murders within Chicago with Capone being famed for sending flowers to his victim's funerals and upholding the tradition of wine and dine before killing his victims (Biography.com)

After Capone's death, there were still many people that felt harshly about him and the things he did while at the same time there were those that still had a place for him in their hearts due to the things he did within the Chicago community such as the soup kitchen for the poor and homeless he opened up:

" Capone's was at times both loved and hated by the media and the public. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, some in the public felt that Capone's and others' involvement in selling liquor had been vindicated. But Capone was a ruthless gangster responsible for murdering or ordering the

assassinations of scores of people, and his contemptible acts of violence remain at the center of his legacy. Capone's image as a cold-blooded killer and quintessential mobster has lived on long beyond his death in the many films and books inspired by his life as the most notorious gangster in American history." (History. com)

This quote from History. com does an exemplary job of explaining the public's view of Capone shortly after his death with the majority of the country believing he was an evil man that worked as a crime boss and a ruthless murderer. However, in Chicago, there was still a small number of people that didn't hate the famous mobster thanks to the effort he put into improving and making the Chicaogian community a better place. NO Conclusion Yet.

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