

the five families history

The five families history is a captivating subject that delves into the intricate world of organized crime in America. The term often refers to the notorious Mafia families that rose to prominence in the 20th century, particularly in New York City. These families became infamous for their involvement in various illegal activities, including extortion, racketeering, and murder. Understanding the history of these families provides valuable insights into the socio-economic conditions of the time and the evolution of organized crime in America.

The Origins of Organized Crime in America

The roots of organized crime in the United States can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A combination of factors contributed to the emergence of organized crime, including:

- Mass immigration from Europe, particularly from Italy, which brought a wave of individuals familiar with the Mafia's code of silence and loyalty.
- The Prohibition Era (1920-1933), which outlawed the sale of alcohol and created a lucrative black market.
- Economic hardships, such as the Great Depression, which led many to seek illegal means of income.

These factors created a fertile ground for the establishment of organized crime syndicates, which would eventually develop into the five major families.

The Five Families of New York

The five families that dominate the narrative of organized crime in New York City are:

1. Gambino Family
2. Genovese Family
3. Lucchese Family

4. Bonanno Family

5. Colombo Family

Each family has its unique history, structure, and notable figures. Understanding their individual stories provides a clearer picture of the overall organized crime landscape.

The Gambino Family

The Gambino Family is perhaps the most famous of the five families, largely due to the prominence of figures like Carlo Gambino and John Gotti. Established in the early 20th century, the family gained power during the 1950s and 1960s.

- Carlo Gambino: Known for his strategic mind, Gambino led the family from 1957 until his death in 1976.
- John Gotti: The "Teflon Don," Gotti became infamous in the 1980s for his flamboyant lifestyle and public persona, which ultimately led to his downfall.

The Gambino Family was involved in various criminal activities, including labor racketeering, loan sharking, and murder. Despite numerous law enforcement efforts, the family maintained a resilient presence in organized crime.

The Genovese Family

The Genovese Family is known for its secretive nature and has a reputation for being the most powerful of the five families. Founded in the 1930s, it became prominent under the leadership of Vito Genovese.

- Vito Genovese: After returning from a prison sentence, Genovese took control of the family and expanded its influence significantly.
- Current Leadership: The Genovese Family has been led by a series of underbosses and acting bosses, maintaining a low profile to evade law enforcement.

The Genovese Family's activities include drug trafficking, extortion, and racketeering. Its ability to operate under the radar has allowed it to remain a formidable force.

The Lucchese Family

The Lucchese Family, named after its founder, Tommy Lucchese, was established in the 1930s and is known for its involvement in labor unions and the garment industry.

- Tommy Lucchese: Lucchese was a shrewd businessman and a key player in the family's rise to power.
- Current Status: The family has faced significant challenges in recent decades due to law enforcement crackdowns but still maintains a presence in organized crime.

The Lucchese Family has engaged in a variety of criminal enterprises, including drug trafficking, extortion, and illegal gambling.

The Bonanno Family

Founded by Joseph Bonanno in the early 20th century, the Bonanno Family is known for its turbulent history and internal conflicts.

- Joseph Bonanno: The family was led by Bonanno until the infamous "Bonanno War" in the 1960s, which led to significant losses in power.
- Rebuilding: The family has gone through phases of decline and resurgence, adapting to law enforcement challenges.

The Bonanno Family has been involved in various criminal activities, including narcotics trafficking and racketeering.

The Colombo Family

The Colombo Family is unique among the five families due to its history of internal strife and leadership struggles.

- Joseph Colombo: Founded in the 1920s, the family gained notoriety under Colombo's leadership in the 1960s.
- Internal Conflicts: The family has experienced numerous power struggles, leading to violent confrontations.

The Colombo Family has been involved in various criminal enterprises, including racketeering, extortion, and illegal gambling.

The Impact of Law Enforcement on the Five

Families

Law enforcement efforts to combat organized crime have led to significant changes within the five families. Key factors include:

- **RICO Act:** Enacted in 1970, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act allowed law enforcement to prosecute entire organizations rather than just individual members.
- **High-Profile Trials:** Trials of key figures, such as John Gotti and other bosses, have weakened the families' structures.
- **Witness Protection Program:** The program has led to a number of mobsters turning informant, providing crucial information to law enforcement.

These efforts have drastically changed the landscape of organized crime in America, leading to the decline of certain families while others have adapted to remain relevant.

Conclusion

The history of the five families is a complex tapestry woven from ambition, crime, and survival. Each family has its unique story, filled with powerful figures and notorious events that have shaped America's organized crime landscape. As law enforcement continues its efforts against these criminal organizations, the future of the five families remains uncertain. However, their legacy serves as a reminder of the intricate relationship between crime, society, and the law. Understanding this history is essential for anyone interested in the dynamics of organized crime and its impact on American culture.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the five families in the context of organized crime in the United States?

The five families refer to the five major Mafia families that dominate organized crime in New York City: the Genovese, Gambino, Lucchese, Colombo, and Bonanno families.

When did the five families first emerge as a significant force in organized crime?

The five families began to emerge as significant forces in organized crime during the early 20th century, particularly during Prohibition in the 1920s.

Who was Charles 'Lucky' Luciano and what was his role in the history of the five families?

Charles 'Lucky' Luciano is often credited with being the architect of modern organized crime in America. He played a key role in establishing the Commission in 1931, which helped to regulate the relationships between the five families.

What was the Commission, and how did it impact the five families?

The Commission was a governing body formed in 1931 to mediate disputes and oversee the operations of the five families, thereby helping to maintain order and reduce violent conflicts among them.

How did the Apalachin Meeting in 1957 affect the five families?

The Apalachin Meeting, where numerous Mafia leaders gathered, resulted in a police raid that exposed the extent of organized crime and led to increased law enforcement scrutiny on the five families.

What role did law enforcement play in the decline of the five families?

Law enforcement agencies, particularly the FBI, launched extensive investigations and operations such as 'Operation Donnie Brasco' and 'The Commission Case' in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to numerous indictments and convictions of key leaders in the five families.

How have the activities of the five families evolved in recent years?

In recent years, the activities of the five families have declined, with many traditional rackets being replaced by more sophisticated and diversified criminal enterprises, including drug trafficking, cybercrime, and human trafficking.

What cultural impact have the five families had on media and entertainment?

The five families have had a significant cultural impact, inspiring numerous films, television shows, and books, including classics like 'The Godfather' series and HBO's 'The Sopranos,' shaping public perception of organized crime.

[The Five Families History](#)

The Five Families History

Related Articles

- [the holy koran of the moorish science temple of america](#)
- [the fall of the house of usher play](#)
- [the kodaly method i comprehensive music education 3rd edition](#)

[Back to Home](#)