

# **The Gambino Family**

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## The Gambino Family

### **Abstract**

The research paper will talk about the life and events of the Gambino crime family. It will go into detail about the origins of the crime family as to how they made it to America. The numerous illegal activities the family committed during its reign of terror. The key members of the organization and what became of the members over the years. Finally, the research paper will conclude with the whereabouts and activities of the present day family and what has become of them.



## Introduction to the Gambino Family

The Gambino crime family is one of five crime families that dominated the organized crime families in New York City, United States of America. The early origins of this family started in 1910 when Italian immigrants came to New York City. They formed crime families based entirely off Italian Americans. The Gambino family name comes from Carlo Gambino who became the boss of the family in 1963 after the McClellan hearings. The family is involved in a large number of illegal activities which range from racketeering, gambling, money laundering, loan sharking, fraud, hijacking and prostitution.

## History

The family was founded after the aftermath of the Castellammarese War between 1930 to 1931.

“In 1931, following decades of turf warfare, Brooklyn bootlegger Salvatore Maranzano established the leaders of New York City's five largest Italian American criminal organizations and declared himself *capo di tutti capi* — the "boss of all bosses.” **Tim OTT (2012)**

Maranzano was soon killed off by the members of the five families as they preferred to share the territories rather than it be headed by one individual. One of those families was later to be known as the Gambino family. It was founded as part of five families after the ending of the war. The five families were headed by a “Boss” with the Gambino family (formerly known as Mangano family) headed by Vincent Mangano. Mangano controlled the family until he was murdered by his rival Anastasia. Anastasia ruled the family for over 20 years until he too was murdered by his rivals. After his death, Carlo Gambino took control of the family.

## The Gambino Family

### **Structure of Mafia Families**

Mafia families have a very organized structure that is seen in all the five crime families of New York City. There is a Boss who is the head of the family. The second in command is the Under Boss who looks after the family if the Boss is not available. Below the Boss, he also has a consigliere who acts as an advisor or counselor. The consigliere is also the personal hitman of the Boss as well as his protector should the Boss be under attack from his enemies. Below all of this structure are the capos or the captains. These captains run the crew of soldiers who are involved in running the operations of organized crime. The soldiers are the lowest ranking members of the Mafia family and do not need to be Italian American to join the family.

However, they must all take an oath before joining the family as well as proving themselves by performing tasks before they can be called as a member of the mafia family.

### **Criminal Activities of Carlos Gambino**

The family has had a long list of organized criminal activities. They were able to do these activities without impunity. Carlos Gambino was able to eliminate rivals with no repercussion for his actions. In 1964, Joseph Bonanno, the head of the Bonanno crime family, and Joseph Magliocco, the new boss of the Profaci crime family had both conspired to kill Carlos Gambino and his allies. Joseph Colombo, the man entrusted to carry out the killing instead revealed the entire plot to Gambino. Due to this revelation by the assassin, Gambino forced Joseph Magliocco to resign and hand over his crime family to Joseph Colombo. Joseph Bonanno on the other hand fled New York. This move made Carlos Gambino the most powerful leader of the "Five Families".

## The Gambino Family

In 1971, Carlos Gambino used his power to orchestrate the shooting of Joseph Colombo. The reasoning behind this was that Gambino and his allies were unhappy that Colombo had a high public profile. This profile made him a target for law enforcement agencies that would question the lifestyle and ultimately would look at his business associates namely Carlos Gambino and his associates. Joseph Colombo was killed by Jerome Johnson on the orders of Carlos Gambino on June 28, 1971 at the second "Italian-American Unity Day" rally. Jerome Johnson was tentatively linked to the Gambino family, but no one else was charged in the shooting and there was no other evidence that could tie the Gambino family to the shooting. Joseph Colombo survived the shooting, but remained paralyzed until his death in 1978.

Gambino's influence also stretched into behind-the-scenes control of the Lucchese crime family, one of the other major five crime families in New York City which was led by Carmine Tramunti.

In 1972, Gambino had allegedly picked Frank Tieri to be front boss for the Genovese crime family. He also had allegedly ordered the murder of Tieri's predecessor Thomas Eboli. This was done after Eboli had failed to repay a \$3 million loan to Gambino. There were other sources who believed that Eboli was killed by his own crime family for his erratic ways.

In spite of his numerous ruthless crimes, Gambino was never convicted of any major crimes. He lived a relatively peaceful life and had a tame end to his life through a heart attack which is in contrast to what happened to his predecessors, allies and enemies.

“Unlike such Mafia bosses as Lucky Luciano, Vito Genovese and Thomas Eboli, who ended their careers in exile, in prison, or as victims of underworld executions, Mr. Gambino remained immune to pressure from either his rivals or law enforcement. During more than 50 years in organized crime, he served only 22 months in jail.” **Nicholas Gage (1976)**

## The Gambino Family

### Paul Castellano

After the death of Gambino, Paul Castellano took over the crime family under the approval of Gambino upon his death. This was a shock to the crime family as it was expected that the underboss, Dellacroce would be the natural successor. However, at the time Dellacroce was in jail for tax evasion and so could not contest this change in leadership.

Paul Castellano was more of a businessman than a mobster. While working as a capo in the Mangano crime family, he and his soldiers used to earn thousands of dollars for him and the bosses above. When he took over the family, he kept himself to be in charge of the business while Dellacroce was left in charge of the traditional mob activities such as extortion and loan sharking. This created a split in the family into two factions between Castellano and Dellacroce. Dellacroce remained the underboss of the family but he and his supporters were clearly disgruntled by Castellano who was viewed as too clean and not a true gangster by the Dellacroce faction. This would further escalate upon the death of Dellacroce in 1985 due to cancer.

Dellacroce's capo John Gotti did not agree with Castellano and believed him to be just a businessman who didn't get his hands dirty on the street like a true mobster. He would also be the one to put an end to Castellano by ordering his assassination.

“To assassinate a Mob boss, permission would normally need to be given by the rest of the Mafia Commission, made up of the heads of all five New York crime families. Instead, Gotti garnered support from those at his level in the city's other crime organizations. Gotti was informed that Castellano would be meeting other members of the Gambino mob at Sparks Steak House on December 16 1985. A team of gunmen lay in wait near the restaurant entrance with a back-up

## The Gambino Family

crew further down the street. Gotti himself was watching from across the road.” **Dave**

### **Stubbings (2020)**

After the assassination, John Gotti succeeded in becoming the new boss of the Gambino crime family.

### **John Gotti**

John Gotti became the new crime boss of the Gambino family in 1985 following the assassination of Paul Castellano. Gotti was known by both the media and his associates as the "The Dapper Don". This was largely due to his taste for expensive clothes and personality in front of the news cameras. He was also later given the nickname "The Teflon Don" after he was involved in three high-profile trials in the 1980s which all resulted in his acquittal. It was later revealed that the trials had been tainted by jury tampering, juror misconduct, and witness intimidation. For years, law enforcement authorities continued to gather evidence against Gotti that eventually led to his downfall. He was charged for the murders of Castellano and his underboss in the 1985 assassination. At the height of his power as crime boss, Gotti reportedly earned between \$5–20 million per year during his tenure as Gambino family crime boss.

Gotti's reign as boss was brought down by his underboss, Salvatore Gravano who aided the FBI in finally convicting Gotti. In 1991, Gravano agreed to turn the state's evidence and testify for the prosecution against Gotti. This was done after Gravano heard his boss make several disparaging remarks about Gravano on a wiretap that implicated them both in several murders.

In 1992, Gotti was convicted of his crimes which included murder, conspiracy to commit murder, racketeering, obstruction of justice and tax evasion among other charges.

## The Gambino Family

“On April 2, 1992, John Gotti was found guilty on all counts and on June 23 was sentenced to multiple life terms without the possibility of parole. While still imprisoned, Gotti died of throat cancer on June 10, 2002.” **History.com editors (2020)**

### **Peter Gotti**

Following the death of his brother John Gotti in 2002, Peter Gotti became the new head of the Gambino crime family. At that point in time, the family fortunes had dwindled to a great extent. Peter Gotti himself was in prison in 2003 and so could not properly run the criminal activities. These activities were run by Nicholas Corozzo, Jackie D'Amico, and Joseph Corozzo with Peter Gotti as the acting boss. Eventually, all of them were convicted along with 54 members of the Gambino family in 2008 for massive indictment for murder, drug trafficking, extortion and other crimes. This led to a significant reduction in power for the Gambino family and has virtually ended their influence in New York City.

### **Frank Cali**

Frank Cali took over the reign of the family in 2008. At this point in time the family was down to just over 150 members and 1000 associates. Frank Cali tried to revive the family by going into the preferred family business of white collar crime of gambling, loan sharking, fraud, racketeering and money laundering. A number of members were also released from prison in 2009 following the 2008 convictions which helped strengthen the power of the family once more. However, in 2019 Frank Cali was shot dead outside of his home. His assassin was a 24 year old Anthony Comello who allegedly killed him over a personal dispute rather than a mob hit. Nevertheless, it was the first murder of a mob boss since 1985 following the death of Paul Castellano. The hit also showed that the family was no longer to be feared as they once before.

## The Gambino Family

“The night of March 13, the New York Times reports that alleged boss of the Gambino crime family, 53-year-old Francesco Cali, was fatally shot outside his house in Todt Hill, Staten Island.” **Amanda Arnold (2019)**

### Current Leadership

Following the death of Frank Cali, the family is now run by Lorenzo Mannino. As of yet his criminal activities are not known about yet. Allegedly, the family is now moving towards the international drug trade with the Mexican cartel. Nevertheless, the family is now a shadow of itself when compared to the height of its power during the 1980s-1990s under Castellano and John Gotti. The latest news is that a number of the members of the Gambino crime family have been caught in a racketeering conspiracy which further illustrates the decline in power of the family.

“One captain and ten other members of New York’s Gambino crime family have pleaded guilty to a variety of offenses including racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering as part of an ongoing case against the criminal group.” **David Klien (2021)**

### Significance of Gambino family on America

The Gambino family has had a significant impact to American culture as well as to the fiction. There have been movies made out of the Gambino family based on its real life stories and origins. The most famous movies “The Godfather trilogy” is based upon the family of a Sicilian mafia who have immigrated to America to take part in organized crime. The movies depict the real life terminology of mafias where it shows a boss, an underboss, a consigliere, capos and soldiers. The movie shows the dealings done by the family in organized crime which includes gambling, extortion, loan sharking among other types of crime similar to what the Gambino

## The Gambino Family

family operated during its tenure. The Gambino family has also shown as to how powerful families can be and how powerless law enforcement agencies were during this time. Carlos Gambino in his 50 year reign as a mobster only went to jail for 22 months and that too for a minor crime. This showed the type of influence the family had over the agencies when they were at their powerful peak in the 1970s-1990s.

### Legacy

The rise and subsequent decline of the Gambino family is an example of how empires got too big for themselves. Just as every great dynasty has its highs it ends up eventually falling with notable examples being The Mughals, The Mongols, The Romans and other dynasties. The Gambino family was a force to be reckoned with in the 1970s-1980s when they controlled most of the illegal activities in New York. However, once the law enforcement agencies got their act together and started cracking down organized crime then slowly the family started to crumble. There was too much infighting amongst the family as seen with John Gotti killing Castellano which highlighted a power struggle and divided the family into two factions. Even after that incident there were attempts on the life of John Gotti which further worsened the problem as it got the law agencies involved who would eventually use that infighting in order to gain witnesses to turn over their enemies in the family. Today, the family does not have the protection as it once did with people being less afraid to speak out against the family in order to see them in jail.

## The Gambino Family

“They don’t have the power they had in the ’80s or the early ’90s,” said J. Bruce Mouw, a former FBI special agent who headed the investigations into former mob boss John Gotti and the Gambino family for two decades. “The important, influential guys went to jail,” Mouw said, echoing a theory voiced by a number of experts: that the federal government’s targeting of organized crime starting in the 1980s effectively knocked out not only the existing leadership of the Mafia, but also the next echelon of soldiers who otherwise would have ascended to power in their crime families.” **Tom Jackman (2019)**

### Conclusion

The Gambino family had a long and illustrious reign throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in New York City. Their empire saw them gain a large amount of wealth through their illegal activities.

However, like all empires they eventually crumbled. This was by and large due to information about the family over the years by law enforcement agencies, internal power struggle among the family and in general successors who were not as ruthless or calculating as their predecessors.

The Gambino family is now a pale comparison to what it once was in the last century and serves as an example to all that no one stays on top forever.

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## The Gambino Family

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