

Las Vegas Was Such A Teeny Tiny Place: Bugsy Siegel and the Creation of Las Vegas

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Sin city, gambling or entertainment capital of the world, most commonly Las Vegas, is a place where many believe you can get away with almost anything. Las Vegas has an interesting history, and most of it has a tie to gambling, which also has a history. Gambling's history has to deal with the mafia, mostly. Due to the fact most of Las Vegas was created by the mafia. One of the most well-known mobsters that was involved with Las Vegas was Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. He was the one that put Las Vegas on the map, and made it what it is today. He took a stand for immigrants that were deprived of a sense of acceptance. He came from a family of immigrants, and felt a need to improve the new immigrants home. Benjamin Siegel took a stand by being involved in the creation of Las Vegas.

There were three major countries that were in a war from 1939 till 1945. This war made immigrants realize how unwelcome they were in their "home." It made them realize this, because in World War II, if they were a certain race, or had a certain belief they were killed, or forced to live in concentration camps. This war made America grow into the superpower it is today. Immigration had been around for decades before. Most immigrants in America were from Europe, and they ended up making up a large part of the country. They migrated more west, which allowed more people to come from overseas, and start a new life.

With all the immigrants that were coming to the new visionary country, there were downfalls. There weren't enough jobs, and they weren't treated the way they thought they would be. The people coming here thought they were going to be treated with kindness, and to be allowed to start over. Books said the streets were paved with gold, and everyone was rich (Vilson). These weren't true they were laughed at, and forced to conform to what the countries standards were then. Due to that, some of them got creative, and came up with different ways to get by. The way that some of them made their money was by interacting with illegal affairs.

Some of the gangs that had operated out of Chicago were Dillinger's Gang and Al Capone's, which was called The Chicago Outfit. Dillinger's was more about theft, while Capone's was more about bootlegging.

Siegel's parents were Max Siegel and Jennie Riechental. There was a discrepancy about where they came from due to lack of records kept, but most think that it is a place that was called Letychiv, Podol'ye Provintsiya of the Russian Empire, which is in modern Ukraine. Siegel was born on February 28, 1906 in Brooklyn. He had four siblings: Maurice, Ethel, Bessie, and Ester. They were not the wealthiest family, and Siegel was determined to make a better life for his family, future, and current. With him thinking he had to be a mobster, he started at an early age to get somewhere quicker later on. His first interaction with the jobs was intimidating push cart peddlers at age fourteen. Siegel's method was saying that they needed to pay him for protection, and when they didn't do this he set their carts on fire. By the time he had finished his teen years he had a record of rape, robbery, and murder. This had been steps to the top, because the more on their record, the better they were thought to be. His intention was that by this he would meet someone who could help later.

Siegel had made a partnership out of meeting Meyer Lansky. Lansky had been doing these type of activities for a while. One of their most successful activities together was the Bugs and Meyer gang. It had mainly operated in New York, and New Jersey, and they mainly did bootlegging jobs. This was a gang that they made for not just one ethnic group like most others. The Bugs and Meyer gang had done so well that they had made it into to the Big Seven. The Big Seven were the seven major gangs that operated in that area.

Siegel had worked for an organization called Murder Incorporated. This was a name given to a group of mobs that had connected organized crime from New York, to most of the rest

of the country. It was mainly made up of Jewish, and Italian-American mobs. His main job there was as a hitman, someone who is hired to kill someone else. Murder Incorporated was believed to be responsible for between four hundred to one thousand contract kills, and it's a good chance that a lot of these were due to him. Siegel also worked for the National Crime Syndicate, which was an organization that had Italian-American, Jewish, African-American, Irish-American, and Polish-American members. This was not that most common thing to see. This group was made by Meyer Lansky, and Johnny Torrio at a conference in Atlantic City in May of 1929. Siegel also ran a horse race wire service on the west coast. This was one of the first betting systems at the tracks. Siegel did this, because he wanted to make more money off of gambling for later situations.

Along the way to the top, he made some rivals, and some allies. One of his best-known allies was Virginia Hill. Virginia, the Queen of the Mob, has a long history. Virginia was abused at a young age, she got married at age fourteen, and most likely had multiple personality disorders, also worked for the Chicago Outfit, and was contacted to be with Siegel to keep an eye on him, and his activities (Mob Museum). They had been together after he was married to Esta Krakower, and he had two children. Virginia was the cause of Siegel's divorce, and inspired the name for the casino. Another one of his allies was Charles "Lucky" Luciano, who was Siegel's boss once or twice. He was an expert in this field since he started at age ten. Lucky was convicted of sixty two to about ninety charges of compulsory prostitution. This landed him thirty to fifty years in prison. Then there was Mickey Cohen, who started at age nine, and worked his way up. At age fifteen he had moved to Cleveland to pursue a dream of being a professional boxer, and succeeded at winning multiple matches. Cohen had been Siegel's

bodyguard for a while, including the night Siegel was murdered. Lastly is Jack Dragna, he had moved to America when he was seven, and was frequently arrested.

In the 40's Las Vegas was nothing special, there were only two casinos on the strip. They were the El Rancho and Last Frontier Hotel. Their style was very traditional in the sense of them not being innovative with their designs, and they didn't use a wide palette of bright vibrant colors, so the hotels blended into the desert. The hotel, and casinos would have shows with some of the most recognized artists. Siegel stayed at the Last Frontier Hotel while building The Flamingo.

Siegel came to Las Vegas in late 1945, and wanted to make something important. Siegel made The Flamingo, because he had wanted to make a place where everyone was accepted, and was appreciation of being different. It made them feel this way, because it was different externally, and by the people that were there. The people who were mostly there were famous actors, gangsters, and mobsters that had at one point been in their shoes. These people were able to relate to each other, and help them understand that they are useful, and not worthless.

The process of building The Flamingo which started in 1945 was long and complicated. During the building, the workers would bring supplies to the site in the morning, and throughout the day they'd steal it back. This made Siegel purchase more materials than he needed which led to him spending almost six times the amount he estimated to build the casino. It took a year to complete the build, and cost his allies six million dollars. The style of The Flamingo was different than the other two casinos that were on the strip, because The Flamingo had bright vibrant colors, and had rooms set aside for gambling. To many people, this hotel, and casino didn't seem like it was from that time. There was a king's room that was for high-end gamblers, and the hotel had actually been one of the first places that had a special for specific days in the

week. This was groundbreaking, because it is something that is still around today, and very well might not have been around if not for him. High rollers are people that pay an entry fee of 50,000 dollars or more. Along with the chance of higher winnings you get competition like a free room, and drinks.

Siegel is known for saying “We only kill each other.” This may be true for his murder (DeMatteo). Siegel was murdered on June 20, 1947 in the living room of Virginia Hill’s home. The cause was multiple gunshots fired in through the window from a 0.30 caliber. There are multiple theories about why he had been killed. According to The Mob Museum the theories of his death was that he had been killed by David Berman’s gang associates due to a statement of there having been two walking into The Flamingo, and stating that they were in charge. Another theory was that Virginia’s brother had killed him due to claims of abuse in the relationship. There is one other theory, and it is that he had been in a love triangle with Moe Sedway, Virginia. Even with all of these different theories, they had suspects that didn’t match those stories, Jack Dragna, since he got Siegel’s wire race service back after Siegel was murdered; Virginia Hill, because she had gone to Europe the night before he was killed, for no reason; Mickey Cohen, since he got control of the west coast gambling after Siegel’s death, and he was supposed to be protecting him that night; and Lucky Luciano, because he never got paid back for The Flamingo. I think that he had been killed, because of The Flamingo. Yes, he may have been wanted dead before he had created the casino, but I think that The Flamingo being built fasten the process. That is, because he had owed people money, and hadn’t payed them back at the rate they would have liked, and The Flamingo had potential to make money. The case is still open.

Along with the impacts his death had on other gangsters, and mobsters, it impacted The Flamingo. The Flamingo had a complete change in the event of Siegel’s death. After he died,

The Flamingo was turned over to the control of Gus Greenbaum. In his first year of being in control of The Flamingo, it had turned a profit of four million dollars. Before, there was mainly gambling, but after Siegel died they changed it to where there were more performances with better-known artists than the other hotel and casinos. That is partly due to them now having more money to work with, since Siegel had spent more than he had to build the casino.

Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel was an infamous mobster that was from a poor Russian family. He had experienced harder times than some of us could imagine, but so did others in his position. He went between different gangs and mafia jobs. Siegel was different from others, because he didn’t want to it just for the money. Siegel’s thought that the best way of supporting his family was to take contract kills. When Siegel hit the age of about forty he knew that it was time for a change. Since he had saw the difficulties that immigrants were going through he thought that he could at least try to help. Siegel took a stand, and made a difference by creating The Flamingo. Along with his casino being a safe haven for all immigrants it had changed, and inspired many things in the coming years, like how casinos are ran an designed. Along with the average business people that came to build casinos, more mobsters, and gangsters came. They came, because of the potential Las Vegas had for gambling due to Siegel. People built other casinos, and hotels that were similar to his. Without his casino there wouldn’t have been the modern day casino, and hotel. Siegel was often feared, because of his job, but there were people that thought he was a good man. Benjamin Siegel took a stand by working with the creation of Las Vegas.

Now there are over forty-two casinos on the Las Vegas strip, and there are one hundred three casinos in the city. They all have different themes, some are like zoos; others are always having performances. Just, because they all have different themes doesn’t mean that the way they were designed is necessarily different. They are still basing their overall ambiance of their

casino off of Siegel's Flamingo. Las Vegas is said to have jump-started the twenty first century. This is partially due to him building the casino that made Las Vegas famous. I believe that based on all of my research the reason why there are people that say this is, because of the designs. That would due to a great deal of the architecture methods that we have today are from the years of The Flamingo, and before. This would mean that most of the designs of buildings, and their interior designs a\were most likely inspiration for today's casinos. Though there were two other casinos on The Strip, they weren't all that well-known. Siegel had made the first casino that made people want to go to Las Vegas. He presented the setup for the atmosphere, and the ambiance that casinos have now. Siegel made the experience, what it is today.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics had a study done, and ranked each state based on their unemployment rate. Nevada was tied for 35th place. I infer that do to that they have no income tax. However the state still has a 8.15% sales tax. There was another study done by a different group, and it showed that sales,production, transportation, and construction, maintenance are the most popular occupations (Best Places). Also they have a future job growth of 39.87 which is 1.89 higher than America's. If I had to infer what would have happened to Las Vegas if Siegel hadn't become involved with it, I would have to say that it most likely would have been changed by a different person in a different way. I think that Las Vegas would have become a hide away for someone from something, because I found that there were a lot of people that thought Las Vegas had potential for something.

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