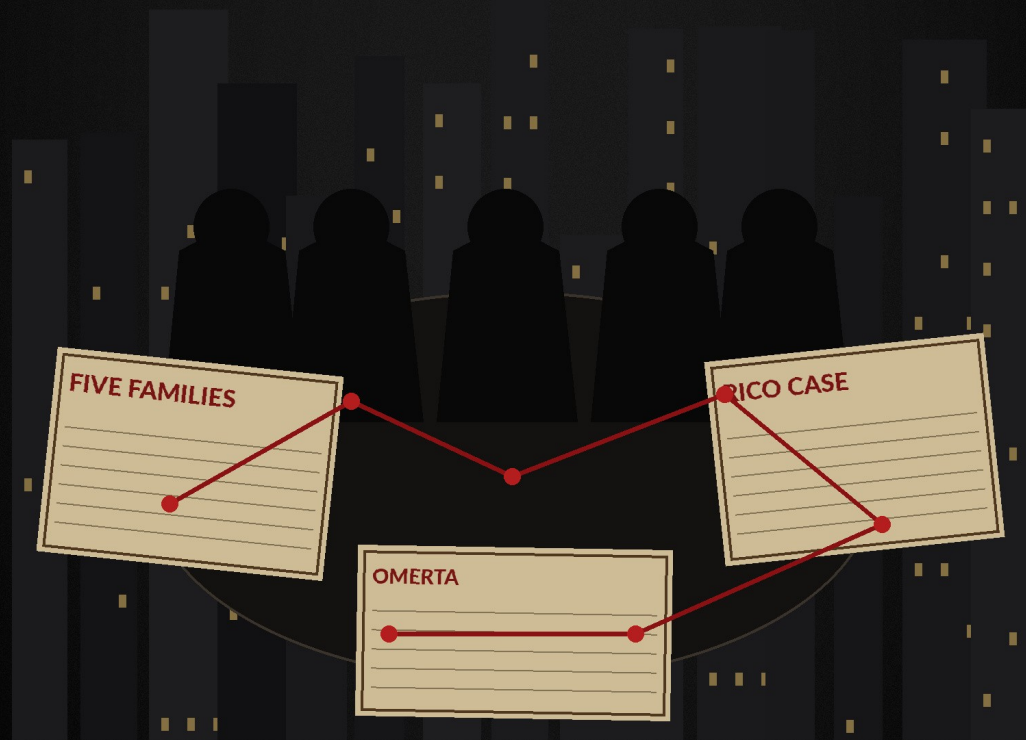


THE TRUE CRIME FILES

BOOK 17

THE MAFIA FILES

BOSSSES, FAMILIES, CODES, RACKETS AND THE
CRIMINAL EMPIRE OF LA COSA NOSTRA



ALDEN M. CORVALE

THE TRUE CRIME FILES

THE MAFIA FILES

Bosses, Families, Codes, Rackets and the Criminal Empire of La Cosa Nostra

BOOK 17

Alden M. Corvale

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This book is a work of true-crime history and organized-crime education. It does not glorify criminal organizations or provide operational instruction for crime. Case summaries are based on public historical and law-enforcement records.

The term Mafia is used carefully. Where possible, this book distinguishes American La Cosa Nostra from Sicilian Cosa Nostra and from other organized-crime groups. Status and organizational descriptions are historical and may change over time.

Introduction - Behind the Myth

The Mafia is one of the most mythologized criminal institutions in modern history. Films and novels have made its rituals, language and personalities familiar even to people who have never read a court record. But the real organization was not built from cinematic honor. It was built from rackets, fear, corruption, violence, secrecy and the dependable collection of money.

In the United States, La Cosa Nostra developed into a network of geographically based crime families. The best known are New York's Five Families - Bonanno, Colombo, Gambino, Genovese and Lucchese - but important organizations also operated in Chicago, Philadelphia, New England, Detroit, New Jersey and elsewhere. Their influence was never identical from city to city, and the word Mafia is often used too loosely for criminal groups that are not part of La Cosa Nostra at all.

This book follows the American Mafia from its early formation through the Commission, Apalachin, the Valachi hearings, RICO prosecutions, the Mafia Commission Trial, the Pizza Connection case and the age of high-profile cooperating witnesses. The emphasis is on how the organization worked: hierarchy, tribute, rackets, labor influence, violence, secrecy and the investigative methods that eventually exposed its structure.

The purpose is neither admiration nor demonology. Organized crime succeeds when it looks ordinary enough to hide inside legitimate commerce and intimidating enough to discourage resistance. Understanding the Mafia means understanding that combination - and the long institutional struggle required to break it.

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Chapter 1 - What the Mafia Actually Is

The word Mafia is used in everyday speech for almost any secretive criminal network, but investigators use narrower terms. In American federal law-enforcement writing, La Cosa Nostra refers to a specific Italian-American organized-crime tradition that operates through families, crews, made members and associates. The FBI has historically described it as a nationwide alliance of criminals linked by conspiracy and, in some cases, kinship.

The distinction matters. Street gangs, cartels, outlaw motorcycle clubs and Eastern European or Asian organized-crime groups can be highly structured, but they are not automatically Mafia families. Even within Italy, Cosa Nostra in Sicily is distinct from the Camorra, the 'Ndrangheta and Sacra Corona Unita.

The American Mafia became powerful because it combined continuity with flexibility. It could run illegal gambling one decade, infiltrate unions or construction another, and partner with legitimate businesses when useful. The recurring feature was not one particular crime but a durable organization designed to generate revenue and protect itself.