

Lucky Luciano Biography

Lucky Luciano

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Biography

Charles "Lucky" Luciano was one of the most powerful figures in U.S. organized crime in the 1930s and 1940s. Luciano continued to prosper even after the federal government deported him to Italy in 1946. Luciano, whose original name was Salvatore Lucania, was born on November 11, 1896 in Lercara Friddi, Sicily. He immigrated with his family to New York City in 1906 and within a short time was involved with criminal activity. At age 20 he spent time in jail for selling heroin. After his release he joined a group of young men who would soon dominate organized crime on the East Coast. These men included Meyer Lansky and Frank Costello. At this time he acquired the nickname Lucky, as he showed a knack for gambling and avoiding arrest.

During the 1920s Luciano emerged as the chief lieutenant to crime boss, Joe Masseria. He became discontented with Masseria's leadership and had him killed in 1931. Within months Luciano had killed his other rivals and had become the leading crime boss in the United States. With other crime families he developed a national crime syndicate. However, by 1936 Luciano was in prison, convicted by New York prosecutor Thomas Dewey. Despite his imprisonment, Luciano continued to direct his crime empire.

During World War II Luciano used his influence to control U.S. waterfronts from sabotage. As a reward his sentence was commuted, and he was deported to Italy in 1946. Luciano continued to operate from Italy, where he coordinated drug trafficking and the smuggling of aliens. He died in Naples on January 26, 1962.