



The Las Vegas Tourist Guides Guild

Takeaways – The Beginning of the Strip; the Mob in Las Vegas

The Meadows Club (casino), opened in 1931 where Fremont Street intersects with Boulder Highway, is considered the first “carpet joint” in Las Vegas. Its location made it convenient for construction workers coming from Boulder City.
<http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/meadows-club>

Know who Guy McAfee was and that he is credited with naming “The Strip,” which is a comparison/reference he made of the growing Las Vegas strip of resorts to the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles.
<http://www.onlinenevada.org/articles/guy-mcafee>

Know the first 12 resort hotels built on the Las Vegas Strip: the names, years, as well as a few facts about each. For example: the builders, financiers, number of rooms, entertainment, attractions, etc. (study Strip timeline)

In 1941 the El Rancho opened as the first resort on what was to become known as the Las Vegas Strip. It had a western theme, which fit with the overall atmosphere of Las Vegas at that time. The second Strip property, the Last Frontier, also had a western theme. The third Strip property, the Flamingo, ushered in the trend to build modern luxury properties, “carpet joints,” as opposed to western-themed “sawdust joints.”

Know the story of Billy Wilkerson, Bugsy Siegel, and the Flamingo. Who did Bugsy reportedly name the hotel after and why? Who did Bugsy report to? What were the likely reasons for his murder?

What is notable about the original Riviera hotel? What is happening to the Riviera now?

Know that the iconic Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas sign was designed by Betty Willis in 1959. She did not claim a trademark on the design which is why it is so widely copied.

There are only a few Strip hotel casinos from the 1940s and 50s still in operation today under their original names: the Flamingo and the Tropicana (Riviera 2015 closure).

Know some anecdotes about Strip property owners, showrooms and performers, and movies filmed in Las Vegas and on the Strip.

Know what famous hotels existed where current properties are now, ie. Sands/Venetian, DI/Wynn, Dunes/Bellagio, etc.



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Prohibition, the law (18th Amendment to the US Constitution) against the manufacture and sale of alcohol in the United States, began in 1920 and was repealed in 1933 (with the 21st Amendment). During Prohibition, organized crime grew as regional criminal groups took control of the sale of alcohol and other illegal activities like gambling and prostitution.

Nevada legalized gambling (again) in 1931.

The building which now houses the Mob Museum was originally the local Federal Post Office and Courthouse, built in 1933. It is now on the National Register of Historic Places.

On February 14, 1929 in Chicago, crime boss Al Capone's "gang" executed seven rival gang members in what became known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The Mob Museum displays the bullet-ridden wall that the murdered men had been lined up against.

Between May 1950 and April 1951, US Senator Estes Kefauver held hearings in 14 cities across the country, including at the Las Vegas Federal Courthouse (now the Mob Museum). The hearings were widely publicized and some were broadcast live, and resulted in public understanding and concern over the spread of organized crime. Another result of the hearings was that many illegal gambling operators ended up moving to Las Vegas where gambling was legal.

Know some of the big names and stories of organized crime in Las Vegas. Name some who became esteemed local citizens, such as Moe Dalitz.

It was Mafia head Meyer Lansky who famously remarked that the Mafia was bigger than US Steel.

Who were the real life people portrayed in the movie "Casino"? What role did former mayor Oscar Goodman play in both real life and the movie?

Know some of the factors that led to the mafia losing its control over Las Vegas casinos:

- ongoing FBI investigations of and targeting of the mafia and mafia funding (ie: Teamster's Pension Fund / Jimmy Hoffa)
- Howard Hughes and the "corporatization" of Las Vegas