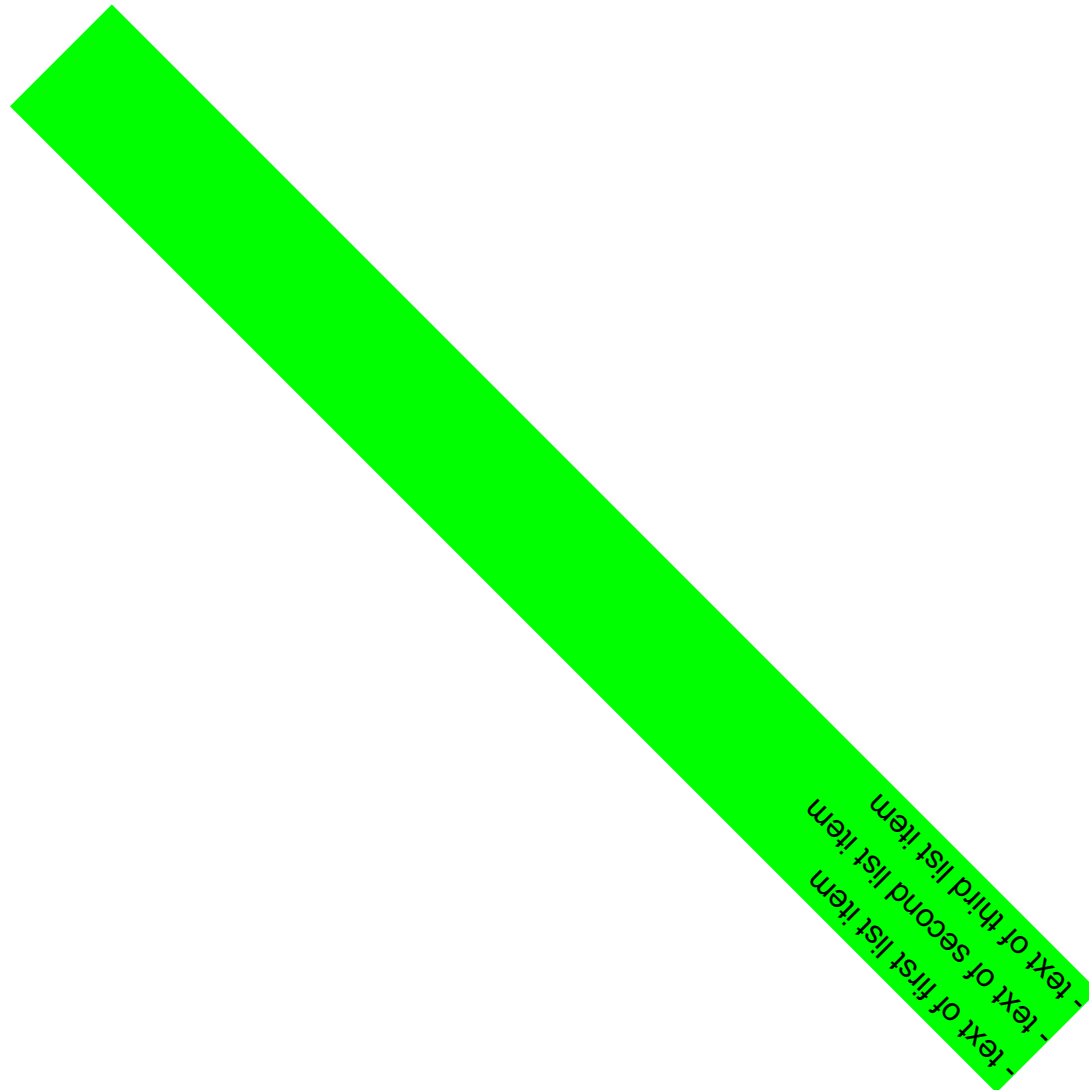


The first published account of what would evolve into the Mafia in the United States came in the spring of 1869. The New Orleans Times reported that the city's Second District had become overrun by "well-known and notorious Sicilian murderers, counterfeiters and burglars, who, in the last month, have formed a sort of general co-partnership or stock company for the plunder and disturbance of the city." Emigration from southern Italy to the Americas was primarily to Brazil and Argentina, and New Orleans had a heavy volume of port traffic to and from both locales.



Mafia groups in the United States first became influential in the New York City area, gradually progressing from small neighborhood operations in Italian ghettos to citywide and eventually national organizations. The Black Hand was a name given to an extortion method used in Italian neighborhoods at the turn of the 20th century. It has been sometimes mistaken for the Mafia itself, which it is not. Although the Black Hand was a criminal society, there were many small Black Hand gangs.