

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.

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From the 1890s to the 1900s (decade) in New York City, the Sicilian Mafia developed into the Five Points Gang and were very powerful in the Little Italy of the Lower East Side. They were often in conflict with the Jewish Eastmans of the same area.