

Las Vegas builds a museum of the mob

Las Vegas is building a museum dedicated to the notorious mobsters that helped make it America's gambling capital, and the FBI is supporting the project.

The mob museum will acknowledge the role played by figures such as Benjamin „Bugsy“ Siegel, his banker Meyer Lansky and casino boss Frank „Lefty“ Rosenthal, and how they gave the city its image of dissolute glamour during the 1940s and 50s.

„This is more than legend, it's fact,“ said Oscar Goodman, the city's mayor and a former lawyer whose clients once included Lansky and Anthony „Tony the Ant“ Spilotro. „This is something that differentiates us from other cities.“ The project not only has the backing of the FBI, it is being overseen by one of its former agents.

The bureau says it is involved because the story of the mobsters would not be complete without details of the agents who pursued them. „This is a way to connect with the public and show the results of our work,“ said an FBI spokesman.

Ellen Knowlton, the former chief FBI agent in Las Vegas, heads the non-profit museum organization. She said that FBI officials had offered to share photographs, transcripts of bugged phone conversations and details of efforts to crack down on organized crime throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

„Despite the sort of edgy theme, this museum will be historically accurate and it will tell the true story of organized crime,“ Miss Knowlton said. „The plan is to give people a kind of gritty taste of what it would have been like to be not only a person involved or affiliated with organized crime, but also what it would have been like to be in law enforcement.“

The USD 50 million museum is expected to open by 2010 in a former federal building that in 1950 hosted hearings by Tennessee senator Estes Kefauver's special investigating committee into racketeering.