

WARNING: THIS VIDEO CLIP CONTAINS HISTORIC FOOTAGE OF AL CAPONE AND INCLUDES INTERVIEWS (AND COMMENTARY) REGARDING HIS CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES. SOME OF THE CONTENT IS UNSUITABLE FOR VIEWING BY CHILDREN. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

Al Capone was the son of immigrants from Naples. His parents - Gabriel and Teresina Capone - settled in Brooklyn where their son, Alphonsus was born.

Their life in Brooklyn was difficult. Living near the Navy Yard, the Capones wanted to get away from the waterfront. When Al was ten, his parents - both respected, religious people - moved to a different part of town. Despite their best efforts, all four of their children became criminals.

Al dropped out of school when he was eleven (after hitting a teacher). Learning more on the streets than he had in school, the youngster became known as a kind of "Robin Hood" who helped people intimidated by ruffians.

Working at various jobs - in a munitions factory, at a bowling alley and for a bookbinder - Capone helped to support his family. Then, in a life-changing move, he worked as a Coney Island bar bouncer at the Harvard Inn (owned by Frankie Yale).

It was at the Harvard where Al first met gangsters and ended up with a badly slashed left cheek (after paying a poorly worded compliment to a female patron). At age 18, Capone had a nickname he always despised - "Scarface."

At about that time, Al became friends with Johnny Torrio who was seventeen years older. When Torrio moved to Chicago, so did Capone. As Prohibition neared, Torrio and Capone became excited about all the money they could make in the illegal alcohol business. Bootlegging - for them, and many others - seemed like a sure ticket to tax-free wealth.

Only nineteen, Al was already a father and a husband. He and Mary "Mae" Coughlin were married on December 30, 1918. The couple had a baby son, Albert Francis Capone (whom everyone called "Sonny").

When the federal government outlawed liquor, in 1920, alcohol still flowed - and Al Capone made sure he was at the center of the illegal enterprise. Johnny Torrio remained impressed with his protege.

Although Torrio originally came to Chicago to help "Big Jim" Colisimo run his business, the two men disagreed on how to profit from Prohibition. Colisimo liked things as they were and saw no need to expand into the bootlegging trade. Torrio disagreed.

Historians believe that Torrio called on Al Capone to arrange the death of Colisimo. He tapped his old friend, Frankie Yale, to do the job. No one was ever charged with Big Jim's murder.

Torrio wanted Capone to improve himself and insisted that he attend night school. Recognizing that he could benefit from additional education, Capone agreed.

People who knew him - such as dancers at Colisimo's Restaurant - liked Al. Years later, some of them recalled it wasn't Capone who killed folks - it was the people who worked for him.

This clip, from "Al Capone - Scarface," a 1995 documentary, includes historic film footage and interviews with people who knew Al Capone. It is narrated by John Mahoney.

See, also:

[Al Capone - Takes on Chicago](#)

[Al Capone - Head of "The Outfit"](#)

[Al Capone - The Final Years](#)

Credits:

Clip from the documentary, "[Al Capone - Scarface](#)" (1995), an episode of the A&E "Biography" series. Online, courtesy A&E and YouTube. Copyright, A&E, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the documentary.

Narrator:

[John Mahoney](#)

Writer:

Judy Cole

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Al-Capone-Early-Years0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Al-Capone-Early-Years0>