# History of casinos

## Introduction

Casinos have become rampant in the modern society, especially in the metropolitan areas. In fact, casinos have an impact on both social and economic aspects of the modern day society. However, one of the most pressing questions for anyone who intends to find out more about casinos is where the idea of casinos came from. The casinos, as they are in the modern days, are not the same as they were in the beginning. This is an indication that casinos have greatly evolved over the years. The evolution might have taken decades but the casinos that people enjoy today are as a result of the simple steps that were taken by the industry ever since its introduction to the state that it is in today. This paper discusses the history of casinos. This paper will focus on the landmarks of the history of casinos as there are numerous occurrences in the many years of the existence of Casinos that cannot be discussed in this paper.

## The beginning of casinos

Gambling was a part of the society long before casinos came into existence. In essence, gambling and the history of humanity at large are inextricably related since in most cases when a group of individuals came together a form of gambling practice was sure to take place. Most of the societies had different gambling activities with the same intentions. The gambling activities that take place in casinos have their origin in various parts of the world. Initially, gambling was considered to be a great pass time for members of the society and was never considered to be something that was to be done for commercial purposes. The first formally recognized gambling den was created in 1638. This is considered to be the first documented casino, and its name was Casino di Venezia. Casino di Venezia was located in Venice. Casino di Venezia was initially an idea by the local leadership during the carnival season. The intention of opening the Casino di Venezia was to make sure that gambling was organized and peaceful during the carnival. It was part of the plan by the leaders to make sure that the carnival did not disrupt the normal operations of the town.

Surprisingly, Casino di Venezia still exists. It was not until the 18th century that the word casino was formally used with reference to gambling halls. Casinos that involve high spending such as those that are seen in Vegas were first built in Germany. Soon, such casinos started emerging in other parts of the world such as Monte Carlo. These casinos were specifically meant for the affluent gamblers. At that moment, most of the members of the society considered these buildings look like palaces and were too good to be used for just gambling. In the US, large casinos did not exist until the emergence Las Vegas as a gambling city.

## The emergence of Vegas as an attraction for gamblers

Looking at the history of casinos, it becomes evident that Vegas has played an important role in its history. Vegas is a desert city that attracts many visitors every year. The emergence of Vegas as an attraction, especially for gamblers, can be traced back to 1900s. During these years there was a group of workers who were involved in building tracks that were supposed to connect the city to other cities. The workers would look for places with appropriate activities to spend their leisure time. At this moment Vegas was already popular for drinking, gambling, and prostitution.

However, the government was determined to make sure that the activities that Vegas was famous for were prevented from taking place. In fact, gambling was illegal in the state of Nevada between 1910 and 1913 (Land & Land, 2004). Despite the prohibition, the workers were heavily involved in gambling activities because they considered them a relief from their physically demanding work that they had to put up with on a daily basis. As a result of this trend, the casinos that were considered to be illicit at that time of history grew in popularity. By the time the state legalized gambling in 1913, the casinos were already popular in Vegas and were widespread throughout the city. Despite the fact that the Golden Gate was the first legally known casino in Las Vegas, it was not until 1941 that the first big casino was opened in the city. The first casino in the city had a [craps](https://www.888casino.com/blog/top-8-craps-tips/) table, two blackjacks, around 70 [slot machines](https://www.888casino.com/slots/), and a roulette wheel.

However, it was not until after the end of World War 2 that Vegas really started to blossom as a global attraction for gamblers and other visitors. However, it initial rise got attention from the wrong group of people: the mafia. As a result of the involvement of the Mafia, many of the gambling activities that took place in the casinos at the initial stages involved many criminal activities. The Mafia was determined to have utmost control of the revenue associated with gambling in the city. This is the period that the city was hugely controlled by drug lords and mobsters such as Bugsy Siegel. His legacy lived long after he had died and his contribution is highly attributed to the development of Vegas to a casino capital.

## Commercializatio n of casinos

It would be improper to discuss the history of casinos without bringing in details on when they were commercialized. The actual commercialization of casinos can be dated back to 1966. Howard Hughes checked himself into a hotel and ended up buying the hotel. In addition to the hotel, he also bought some of the most popular names in the town in Nevada desert costing him a total of $300 million. Hughes had the intention of propelling the businesses that he had acquired to the next level. It is believed that this act by Howard Hughes marked the beginning of the commercialization of casinos.

The first huge casino was opened in Las Vegas in the 1980s at a hotel that was owned by Steve Wynn. This marked the begging of the facing out of what had initially been known as casinos. The traditional and less attractive buildings and halls that were referred to as casinos were replaced by what can simply be referred to as good looking buildings that were built by the wealthy with the intent of earning money from gambling. It was a new concept because the new casinos offered more than just gambling spaces (Fur, 2001). They were places where people could go and have fun, take meals, have drinks. The introduction of these aspects to the casinos is believed to have revolutionized casinos to the multi-billion industries that we know today.

With the introduction of commercialized casinos, the owners of the huge casinos saw the need for the introduction of new games so that they could increase the range of people that they could attract. This is a factor that led to the globalization of gambling. Countries started borrowing gambling games from each other. This was because casinos had become more than just spaces for people to come and gamble. The owners started seeing the casinos as a business venture so they had to include as many activities as possible so that they could get the people coming to gamble to spend their money there, not only through gambling, but also through the provision of other services such as entertainment, accommodation meals, and many others

Because of the commercialization, people started recognizing gambling as an industry in the 1960s. The industry started offering job opportunities to thousands of people. Furthermore, the government started monitoring and controlling engagements in the industry so that there would be order. They were taxed and governed by commercial rules just like any other businesses. However, there was the emergence of issues relating to the involvement of casinos in illegal activities such as money laundry leading to the need for an increase in the engagement of the government in the industry with the intent of ensuring sanity in the industry. This was the time when casinos were stereotypes to be dens for criminals who seek avenues for laundering their illegally acquired money.

## Introduction of blackjack

Blackjack is among the easiest games that one can play when they visit a casino. The intention of any player is to get a hand of cards whose total values are as close to 21 as possible. Only the values of the card counts and not the suits matter when playing blackjack. There has never been consensus on the origin of blackjack. However, most of the sources agree that blackjack was first used in a casino setting in France in 1700. It was by then commonly referred to as *Vingt-et-Un.* The French version is the commonly used 21 blackjack game. An almost similar version was popularized in Spain years later and was referred to as *One and Thirty'* under which players had the goal of reaching 31 with a minimum of three cards. However, both the Spanish and French versions of blackjack were not as popularized as the American version because gambling was soon banned in both countries.

Despite the fact that blackjack was not invented in the US, it gained popularity in the US in the 19th century because of the popularity of gambling and the commercialization of gambling. Most of the sources assert that Eleanor Dumont, who was French by birth but relocated to the US, was responsible for the popularization of blackjack in the US. Eleanor Dumont was such a skilled dealer that her popularity spread throughout the state of Nevada (Dahl, 2000). She made a living by dealing and moved from place to place and evidentially opened a gambling parlor in Vegas and named it Vingt-et-un. Vingt-et-un only admitted the affluent members of the society and women were not allowed in. Men from various part of the US traveled to Vegas just to face Eleanor Dumont, a factor that highly contributed to her popularity and popularity of the game in the US.

The legalization of gambling by the state of Nevada further contributed to the popularity of blackjack in the state. Some of the dealers in Vegas even introduced payouts with the intent of attracting more people to play the game because it was not as popular in the US in the 1930s as it is in the modern society, especially among the gambler. Despite the fact that there is no evidence that blackjack was at particular time conceived by a particular individual, there is sufficient evidence that the game has significantly evolved over the many years that it has been played.

## Roulette Wheel

The roulette wheel is a game common in the casinos and can trace its background from France since roulette stands for ‘little wheel’ in French. The game traces its root in this country since the 18th century. Although this date is widely recognized, it is possible that Balise Pascal initiated the game unknowingly in his experiment with a perpetual motion machine back in 17th Century (Băboianu, 2008). Later in the year, the game was invented partially. It became a hybrid incorporating Biribi – lottery – related French’s game (Epstein, 2009). It got the present form in Paris since 1796 and it maintained that until to what is commonly available in casinos today.

The game gained popularity so that it began getting attention from writers such as the authors of novels and article news. Some changes and readjustment had to be made to clear some confusion. For instance, the green color was adopted on the wheel in the 1800s after realizing that it confused people on zeros representation – single black for one zero and two blacks for two zeros (Epstein, 2009). After a while, there was a readjustment to the numeric zero to offer competition to those who used colors. It was not long before the Americans decided to add an American eagle to the roulette to indicate the liberty and to distinguish the game from the French’s (Băboianu, 2008). Once the numeric zeros were adopted on the wheel, the makers of the game ceased using the colors and the game used numbers all through. By the mid-19th century, the popularity of roulette had spread not only through Europe but also in most parts of the US casinos (Epstein, 2009). By the 20th century, it had become like a rule to have roulette as part of casino premises opening up in both Europe and America. Today the game is popular globally and many casinos consider it a fundamental game.

## The beginning of Slot Machines’ Use

The most popular automated vending machine used to be referred to as slot machine. It was until the gambling devices came into the picture and they took over the name in the early twentieth century. Charles Fey was the first person to show interest in making a slot machine in 1895 when he took his mechanical skills to another level (Epstein, 2009). He named it Liberty Bell and he painted a spade, a diamond and a heart as symbols on reels. The player would spin the machine and when there were three winning bells then one was considered a winner (Bellis, 2017). The payoff when the bells rang was fifty cents and was the highest payoff then. For the purpose of getting an income, Fey decided to hire his machines to the saloons and the bars in terms of half split on every income generated in every premise.

With time, the popularity of the machine spread in many parts of the country so that Liberty Bell was unable to meet the risen demand. Despite the efforts by some investors to buy manufacturing and distribution rights, Fey could not give in and expected people to wait on their machines one at a time (Epstein, 2009). Because of necessity, it led others to creatively borrow inventor’s ideas and began constructing comparative prototypes. As such, Herbert came into the picture and took a share of the demand on slot machines by constructing a slot machine but used fruits (Lemons, cherries, and plums) replacing the symbols used on the earlier slot machines (Bellis, 2017). Playing slot machine depends on the luck of the spinner to get three similar symbols after a single spin. For that reason, the machine is made with three reels which have ten different symbols. The machine has a lever pull to propel the rotations. With the advancement in technology and electricity, inventors saw it fit to invent newer machines. By 1975, inventors brought on board the all-electronic slot machine made by Fortune Coin Company (Bellis, 2017).

## Introducing Casino Craps

Craps is a popular casino game in the US and it is played using two dices. It is believed that the game can be traced from the French. The player places a bet of certain money then he or she roles the two dices after predictions. One can lose out on the money on the first roll or can be allowed to roll severally before losing or winning from the placed bet (Casinocashjourney.com, n.d). From the recent developments, craps is played on streets, casinos and online. It is believed that this game was extracted from a game known as ‘hazard’ which was commonly played by the English people. It is believed that Crusaders invented this game where Sir William and his knights found this a better way to pass time as they waited to lead a siege (Casinocashjourney.com, n.d).

Some of the terminologies used in the game include ‘to roll the bones’ which traces the game back to players during Roman Empire. The European experienced the spread of the game during the Medieval. Its popularity can be traced by the way literature was written by authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer accommodating it in literature (Casinocashjourney.com, n.d). The French people were the reason the game gained popularity in the US. They settled in the country mostly in Louisiana and one of the cultures was playing craps game. Eventually, it gained popularity among the locals. With time, the game was modernized. Some of the people who influenced the final product included John H. Winn (Epstein, 2009). Finally, gambling was legalized in the 1930s and craps became a popular game in the betting facilities. Not only did craps become legal, it was developed to become a popular online game after the invention and spread of the internet.

## Internet and Casino Industry

Just like the creativity that led to electronic gambling machines, the internet caused many people to become creative in gambling. After the first invention, newer ideas are used in gambling whereby not only are the casinos available but other means of gambling such as poker and sports betting (Dragicevic & Tsogas, 2011). One of the renowned internet gambling was an established online casino in 1994. Afterward, the spread of online gambling evolved and spread globally since the internet made the world a global village. Depending on the laws established by different countries, the limitation to online gambling exists differently per country. There are some countries that regulate on the age at which one is permitted to do gambling while some countries eliminate it completely. The limitations are dependent on the fact that it is never sure to tell who is doing online gambling. It is also unnecessary to introduce the young generation to online gambling sites. They do not only get negatively influenced by gambling addictions but it hinders them from becoming responsible adults in their future.

In addition, internet gambling has been taken to individuals’ palms. Different companies use the internet to distribute gambling applications that are designed to assist users to perform gambling at the comfort of their homes. Today’s mobile devices are smart gadgets that can be installed with smart application software that use the internet. On the same note, banking is also online so that all debit or credit cards are used for the online transaction (Parry, 2011). With the developments, gambling is now smarter and people are doing it despite distance limitation to physical casino facilities. In addition, the limitations that exist for the casino users are eliminated by online gambling. It means that one does not have to belong to a certain class for the rich to be able to gamble. Online gambling platforms allow users to gamble despite financial limitations. Despite the fact that online casinos and gambling has led to economic expansions in most states, some individuals tend to oppose the idea, especially those who feel threatened by competition. This has led to campaigns with an initiative to stop the growth of the industry and its online legalization with an aim of having the genie back to its bottle.

## Conclusion

Earlier development on casinos was not for the purpose of making money. Instead, people were gaming to pass time or as a way of recreation. It was initially a way of relaxing leisure time. However, with time people developed means towards commercializing the games and it led to the development of casinos premises. Eventually, it led to the growth of cities like Vegas and the introduction of popular games like blackjack. Each game has its background and a history of what it became in the casinos today. These games are roulette wheel, slot machines, and casino craps. As earlier noted, the casinos adopted the electronic technology to advance the services. With the recent technological developments, the industry has managed to expand casinos business to online platforms. As a result, it has led to other forms of gambling such as sports betting and poker. It is important to note that the roots of Casinos go way deep in time and recently spread beyond to different parts of the world. In essence, with the presence of online gambling, the industry has enabled people to play and win money even at the comfort of their homes. As a matter of fact, the industry is yet to grow with the increased technological advancements at hand.

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