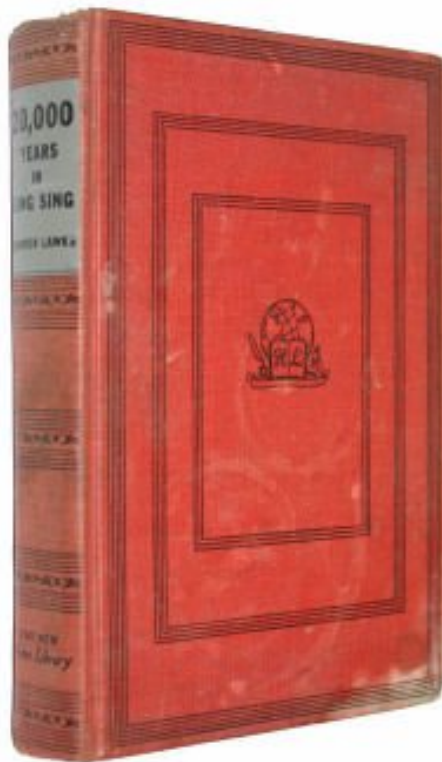
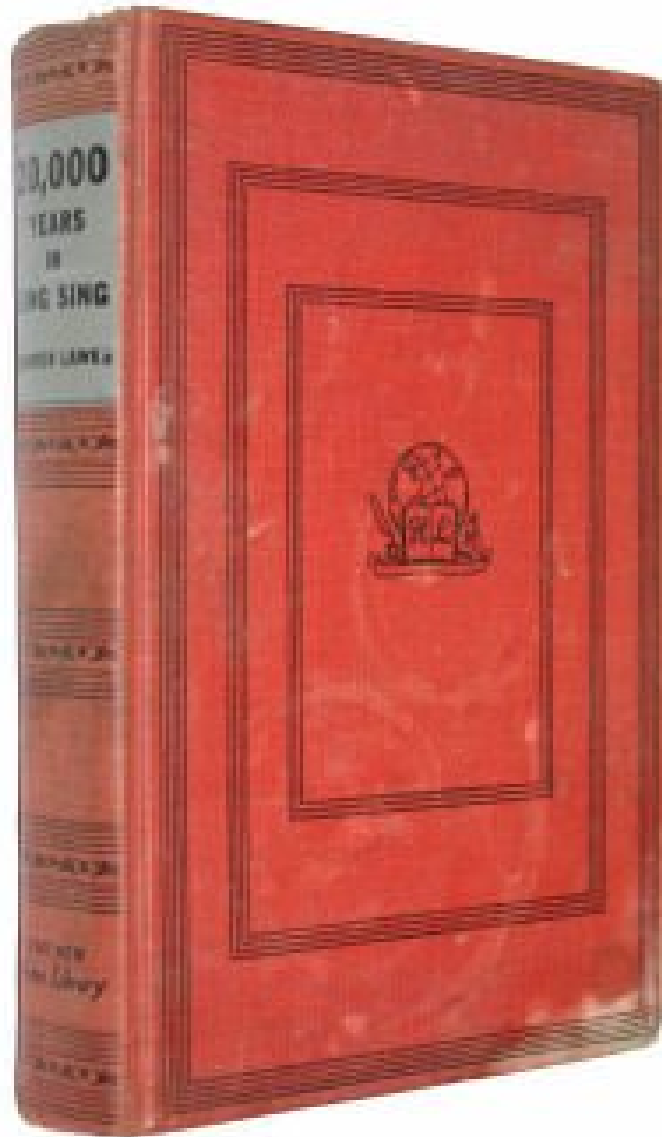


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20,000 YEARS IN SING SING BY WARDEN LEWIS E. LAWES PDF

The author's account of his tenure as a prison guard.

- Sales Rank: #1363576 in Books
- Published on: 1942
- Binding: Hardcover
- 412 pages

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A rare man before his time.

By C. DeGray

Warden Lawes showed early interest in penology. He lived in Elmira, NY near the NY State boys Reformatory, and would watch the 'bad' boys working around the school, and their weekend exercising and Band playing. They looked neat, clean, they laughed and talked with each other, and did not appear 'bad'.

Lewis Lawes apprenticed at several Reformatories and prisons around the State beginning in the early 1900's. In 1915 he was given the job as overseer of NYC Reformatory for men. It was eventually called the Prison without Walls. When asked to define it he said "We have morale. It's more effective than your strongest walls" Now this was still in the early 1900's. Warden Lawes had prison inmates guarding his home and family, consisting of his wife and 2 daughters. The 'guards' slept in the cellar. From the start on his new Job at the Reformatory he instituted the Honor System. Unknown in most other institutions. In another extraordinary experiment - a film company - this was in 1916 - approached him about making a film in the grounds. They needed 150 men as soldiers. Prisoners were used. Every bit of equipment, arms, (blank) ammo was returned and the filming was enjoyed by all. The movie was called "Brand of Cowardice" and starred Lionel Barrymore.

This did more to establish morale in the institution than anything. Trust. Thereby the name "Reformatory without Walls". In Jan. 1920 Lewis Lawes arrived as the new Warden of Sing Sing Prison. He would bring his values and ideas on prison reform with him. Hence his new name, the "Reform Warden of Sing Sing".

My mother's maiden name was Lawes, Lewis Lawes was a cousin, the family originated in England.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

first-person stories showing inmates as people, told by the reform warden of the most notorious prison of his day

By Kelly Taylor

The book is a fascinating survey of what is possible in the fallen human condition, and a treatise on recognizing the humanity in others in order to preserve the humanity in ourselves. It does not claim that all people are redeemable or trustworthy, but it does claim that we cannot say a prisoner is less human than ourselves by the simple fact that he got caught.

The book is full of stories of individuals who were worth knowing and understanding, even though they were

behind bars. The author tells us of Mike the Rat Catcher, who taught the author that although everyone had written him off as incorrigible and unable to live unsupervised, no one had ever actually given him a chance to survive in the meantime. The book even tells us eventually what happens to Mike.

There are plenty of death row inmates, the worst of the worst - some 'human' in demeanor, and some not.

In the end, the book is an examination of ourselves. Wherein lies our sense of superiority? We are no different, and cannot justify treating prisoners as animals. But we must be cautious not to leave them in charge, either.

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