



Fifty Years in Sing Sing: A Personal Account, 1879-1929 (Excelsior Editions)

Alfred Conyes

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A fascinating personal account of life at this infamous prison during a bygone era.

Written more than eighty years ago, *Fifty Years in Sing Sing* is the personal account of Alfred Conyes (1852–1931), who worked as a prison guard and then keeper at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, New York, from 1879 to 1929. This unpublished memoir, dated 1930, was found among his granddaughter’s estate by his great-granddaughter Penelope Kay Jarrett. Near the end of his life, Conyes told his story to family member Alfred Van Buren Jr., relating, in detail, harrowing and humorous accounts of what prison life was like from his perspective and how prison conditions changed over the course of a half century. The book covers prison hardship, cruel punishments deemed appropriate at the time, daring and clever escapes, the advent of death by electricity, Prohibition, doughboys, and prison reform.

“A one-of-a-kind—and vital—contribution to understanding prison life.” — *Hudson River Valley Review*

“The book, anecdotal in style, brings the prison’s history vividly to life from one man’s perspective.” — *New York Researcher*

“Incredible and compelling! Penelope Kay Jarrett opens the door to a Sing Sing of one hundred years ago. Through the eyes and words of her great-grandfather, we are taken back to a time of pain, sorrow, and compassion inside the walls of this world-famous prison.” — Guy Cheli, author of *Sing Sing Prison*

“Throughout it all, the character of the keeper/narrator emerges as a straightforward, stand-up person who still cared, despite—or perhaps precisely because of—all that he experienced (and explained in his memoir). Read it and then reflect on how you’d emerge after such a half century.” — Thomas C. McCarthy, New York Correction historian

Penelope Kay Jarrett is Biological Technician for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Education Coordinator at the Mound House in Fort Myers Beach, Florida.

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