

Crucibles of Crime: The Shocking Story of the American Jail



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Reviews

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(Ivah West)

CRUCIBLES OF CRIME: THE SHOCKING STORY OF THE AMERICAN JAIL

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Literary Licensing, LLC. Paperback. Book Condition: New. This item is printed on demand. Paperback. 298 pages. Dimensions: 9.0in. x 6.0in. x 0.6in. For fifteen years Joseph F. Fishman was a federal jail inspector, and in that role he visited over 1, 500 American jails, giving him considerable insight into the challenges of local corrections at the turn of the 20th century. He called jails human dumping grounds and in this book he painstakingly described facilities he had inspected throughout the United States: antiquated, overcrowded, filthy, and with few comforts for the inmates-most of whom had not yet been convicted of any crime. Fishman's descriptions of inmates with late-stage syphilis, morphine addictions, and those with mental illnesses are contrasted against sheriffs and jailers, whom he accused of corruption as well as indifference, immorality, and abuse. During this era, local jails held a variety of inmates, from juveniles who had run away from home to adult career criminals, and Fishman described how men and women, the young and old, as well as the innocent and depraved were often housed in the same cell for months. Throughout his book, Fishman expressed his frustration with local jailers, who kept inmates idle; observing that jails often became schools of crime where relatively minor offenders were admitted but were discharged as hardened criminals. Initially published in 1923 this book was well received by critics of the day, who saw this expos as a way of increasing public attention for jail reform. While current jail conditions are more humane than those reported in this book, it is ironic that many of the challenges confronting jail administrators and staff today (including chronic under-funding, overcrowding, and the need to care for special needs inmates) are the same that Fishman identified almost a century ago. This item ships from La Vergne, TN....

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