Craig Brandon: Biography

Craig Brandon is the author of five books on popular history and a frequent radio and television contributor. For 20 years he was a reporter and editor for several newspapers in upstate New York, including the Observer-Dispatch and Daily Press in Utica and the Times Union in Albany.

Among his most recent books is Monadnock: More than a Mountain, (Surry Cottage Books, 2007) the first history in 70 years of Mount Monadnock, the most hiked mountain in North America. The book is the biography of a mountain that has been celebrated by writers, poets, artists, and musicians for nearly 200 years.

He is also the author of Murder in the Adirondacks (North Country Books, 1986), the story of the Chester Gillette-Grace Brown murder case that Theodore Dreiser used as the basis for his novel An American Tragedy and also inspired the 1951 movie “A Place in the Sun.” The murder took place on Big Moose Lake in the Adirondacks on July 11, 1906.

Brandon later edited a sequel to that book, Grace Brown's Love Letters (Surry Cottage Books, 2006), that contains the exact words of the Grace Brown-Chester Gillette correspondence in 1905 and 1906 along with an introduction and footnotes explaining the letters’ significance. He also edited The Prison Diary of Chester Gillette, (Couper Press, 2007), the murderer’s last words, from a document that was hidden from the public for nearly a century.

Another book, The Electric Chair: An Unnatural American History (McFarland and Co., 1999), traces the history of the electric chair as it evolved from the idea of a Buffalo dentist in 1881 through the heyday of its use in the 1920s and the 1930s to the present day when only three states employ it as the sole means of capital punishment.

Brandon’s writing has won awards sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Education Writers Association, New York State United Teachers, Gannett and the Associated Press. He has served as a consultant for PBS, Unsolved Mysteries, and the History Channel, and has been interviewed by The New York Times, the NPR radio show, “All Things Considered,” and various other radio and television stations. He is a frequent lecturer at libraries, museums, historical societies, and colleges on the topics of the Gillette case, Mount Monadnock, and the electric chair.

He maintains a web site that includes links and information about his books at http://www.craigbrandon.com.

All Are Welcome:
Old Friends  New Friends
New Members  Prospective Members!

Big Berkshire Bash

Saturday, November 1, 2008
5:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

A fantastic evening of dining and entertainment.
Special guest will be Craig Brandon, author of Monadnock: More than a Mountain.

Social Hour • Cash Bar • Dinner • Annual Meeting
Volunteer Recognition • Author Craig Brandon

Summit View Banquet House
555 Northampton Street (Route 5), Holyoke, MA
413-538-7431

Advance Reservations Required
The postmark deadline is October 25. (Sorry, no walk-ins.)

For Directions and More Information
please see amcberkshire.org or
call Deb Levine at 413-584-6065

Please use the reservation form on page 6.

Outdoor activities during the day;
please visit trips.outdoors.org or see AMC Outdoors
Highlights of Upcoming Chapter Events

For complete listings of all Chapter events, please see AMC Outdoors or visit trips.outdoors.org

Sat., Oct. 4. Appalachian Trail Day
Please see page 3.

Sun., Oct. 12. Family Hike to Rattlesnake Knob
Meet at 10 AM and hike 2.5 miles. Optional lunch afterward. Rattlesnake Knob, part of the Holyoke Range, is a smaller peak just east of Mount Norwottuck. Open to families with children of all ages. Steady rain cancels. Leader: Nancy Weld (familyprograms@amcberkshire.org; 413-256-8728). Co-Leader: Jon Hanauer.

Fri.–Sun., Oct. 17–19. Day Hikes from the Highland Center, NH
Hikes flexible depending on weather and participants, but likely to be lower Crawford Path Saturday (4–6 miles) and Mt. Willard Sunday (3 miles). Both hikes are fairly easy and afford great views of Crawford Notch and Whites. Cost of $145 includes two nights at Highland Center; 2 breakfasts, 2 dinners. Great views from the rooms. Cozy ambiance of the common room with fireplace! Don’t miss this great fall trip to the Whites! Payment due in advance. Leader: Sabine Prather (413-949-3914).

Sat., Nov. 1. Long Mountain and Mt. Norwottuck
Join us for a pre-Big Berkshire Bash challenge! This approx. 5 mi, slow/mod. pace, intermediate difficulty hike has many steep ups and downs with spectacular views. We will spot cars and have an early start to finish hiking in time for folks to get ready for the Big Berkshire Bash in Holyoke. Sturdy boots, warm layers, rain gear, and liquids a must. Rain cancels. To register, contact Leader prior to Oct. 30. Leader: Christine Fogarty (978-857-7078 before 9 PM) Co-Leader: Mike Milewski.

Sat., Nov. 1. Big Berkshire Bash
Please see page 1.

Wed., Nov. 5. Potluck and Open House
We want you to come check us out. This is the perfect opportunity to see what our organization offers. Pack demo and Q&A time available. Hadley Senior Community Center, 46 Middle Street, Hadley, MA. Dinner: 6–7, Program: 7–8:30. Bring a potluck dish, and also your reusable plate and cutlery. Members and non-members always welcome. Diane Furtek (413-589-5530). Other Helpful Contacts

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee

– 2009 Nominees –

Chapter Chair: Deborah Levine; Vice Chair: vacant; Treasurer: Kelly Druzdzky; Secretary: Pat Stevenson

Appalachian Trail: Jim Pelletier; Berkshire County Representative: Jim Wells; Berkshire Exchange: Jon Hanauer; Canoe & Kayak: Charlie Camp, Connie Peterson; Conservation: Patricia Lukas; Family Programs: Nancy Weld; Membership: Diane Furtek; Mountaineering: Bill Fogel, Jim Van Natta; Noble View: Rob Robertson; Nominating: Rob Robertson; Outings: Bob Napolitano; Past Chair: Jon Hanauer; Public Relations: (TBA); Trails: Patrick Fletcher; Training & Education: Christine Fogarty; Website: Bob Bergstrom; Young Members: Wendy Barbour, Paxton Berardy

Berkshire Chapter Executive Committee

– 2008 –

CHAPTER OFFICERS
Chair: Jon Hanauer (chapterchair@amcberkshire.org; 413-588-0990)
Vice Chair: Deborah Levine (vicechair@amcberkshire.org; 413-584-6065)
Treasurer: Kelly Druzdzky (treasurer@amcberkshire.org)
Secretary: Pat Stevenson (secretary@amcberkshire.org)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Appalachian Trail Committee:
Cosmo Catalano (cosmo@amcberkshire.org; 413-458-5349)
Jim Pelletier (wander0011@yahoo.com; 413-454-4773)

Berkshire County Representative:
Jim Wells (berkshirecounty@amcberkshire.org; 413-329-2742)

Berkshire Exchange Publisher:
Jon Hanauer (newsletter@amcberkshire.org; 413-368-0990)

Canoe and Kayak Committee:
Charlie Camp and Connie Peterson (paddling@amcberkshire.org)

Conservation Committee:
Pamela Lucas (conservation@amcberkshire.org; 413-233-5711)

Family Programs:
Nancy Weld (familyprograms@amcberkshire.org; 413-256-8728)

Membership Committee:
Diane Furtek (membershi@amcberkshire.org; 413-589-5530)

Mountaineering Committee:
Bill Fogel (mountaineering@amcberkshire.org; 413-427-1693)
Jim Van Natta (mountaineering@amcberkshire.org)

Noble View Committee:
Rob Robertson (oberobertson@comcast.net; 413-549-4963)

Nominating Committee:
Rob Robertson (oberobertson@comcast.net; 413-549-4963)

Outings Committee:
Bob Napolitano (nappyofma@comcast.net; 413-534-8955)

Past Chair:
Rob Robertson (oberobertson@comcast.net; 413-549-4963)

Public Relations Committee:
Bess Dillman (publicity@amcberkshire.org; 413-667-5178)

Trails Committee:
Patrick Fletcher (hiker@comcast.net; 413-342-9885)

Training and Education Committee:
Christine Fogarty (learning@amcberkshire.org; 978-857-7078)

Website Committee:
Wendy Barbour and Paxton Berardy (ymbarchair@amcberkshire.org; 413-589-9998)

Young Members Committee:
Wendy Barbour and Paxton Berardy

Other Helpful Contacts

Membership in a Bottle:
Berkshire Exchange

– September 2008 –

Editor: Maureen Flanagan (berkeditor@amcberkshire.org)
Assistant Editor: Gail Blackhall (prooferader@amcberkshire.org)

Submissions (to the Publisher):
Jon Hanauer newsletter@amcberkshire.org; 413-588-0990

Berkshire Exchange, 29 Answorth St., Westfield, MA 01085-1541

Address Changes:
AMC, 5 Joy St., Boston, MA 02108; 800-372-1758

Title image:
Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho

Need a phone number?
If the person you want to contact by phone has no number listed, please call the Chapter Secretary, Pat Stevenson, at 413-625-2709.
Celebrate Appalachian Trail Day on Saturday, October 4!

The AMC Berkshire Chapter’s Appalachian Trail Management Committee is sponsoring 14 hikes on all sections of the AT in Massachusetts.

Hikes vary in difficulty and length. Please contact the appropriate trip leader for more info and any changes in rendezvous time/location. For general information about AT Day, contact Jim Pelletier at 413-454-4773 or at@amcberkshire.org.

For all hikes, wear suitable clothing, bring plenty of water, as well as lunch or snacks for longer hikes. Hikes will go rain or shine.

AS = easy
B = 5 - 8 miles
C = average
D = strenuous

The final letter indicates the kind of terrain:

A = very strenuous
B = moderately strenuous
C = average
D = easy

The AMC Hike Ratings

Hikes are rated according to their distance, pace, and ruggedness. A typical rating might be “B3C.” The first letter indicates the hike’s distance:

AA = over 13 miles
A = 9 - 13 miles
B = 5 - 8 miles
C = under 5 miles

The number in the middle indicates the pace the leader expects to set (on average terrain):

1 = very fast (2.5 mph or faster)
2 = fast (2 - 2.5 mph)
3 = moderate (1.5 - 2 mph)
4 = leisurely (less than 1.5 mph)

The final letter indicates the kind of terrain:

A = very strenuous
B = moderately strenuous
C = average
D = easy

If there are two letters at the end (for example, “B3BC”), it indicates the terrain is somewhere between the levels indicated by either of the letters alone. As always, if you have any questions about what the hike will be like, call the trip leader or hike contact person.
We have some deeply disappointing news to report concerning the bathhouse project.

We were not able to complete and obtain certificates of occupancy for the bathhouse potable water supply and septic systems prior to the May 1, 2008 change in regulations governing these systems. That means our existing well is too close to the buildings under the new regulations, and must be abandoned and decommissioned. We can no longer use the design for the proposed septic field for which we blasted in May, 2007.

We are now in the process of evaluating the percolation rate of the soils in the facility zone (that portion of the property on which development is not prohibited by the conservation restriction) so that a new septic field can be designed and permitted. Once we’ve resolved the septic system issue, we’ll drill another well that we hope will yield enough water for the proposed level of occupancy and use at Noble View. We’ll then be in a position to move forward with the other aspects of the bathhouse project.

Given these challenges, it’s likely that we will not be able to complete the bathhouse in 2009. We’ll keep you posted as events unfold.

On a more positive note, Gary Forish has done a tremendous job of landscaping this summer. We’ve removed the stumps and debris from the fire buffer zone areas, and graded and prepared the soil for seeding with a native grass mix that will provide food and habitat for wildlife. We’ve installed tons of gravel in the parking area to the southwest of the barn.

Our fabulous volunteers have worked hard to rebuild the stone walls to the north of the buildings. There’s lots more stone wall work to do, so look for work days to be posted online.

Dave Conley and Ed Watson are moving forward with trail work and GPS mapping. Dave emails his trail work information to the Tuesday Hikers listser, and will gladly welcome your company and assistance. Also, we’re ready to work on trail blazing and signs over the fall and winter. If you’re interested in helping out, please contact Dave, Ed or me. Soon it should be impossible to get lost on the trails, unless you really make an effort!

Finally, we hope to have a new website up this fall. If you have great Noble View photos, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Robertson
Noble View Chair
cerobertson@comcast.net
413-549-4963

Volunteer Opportunities at Noble View

**Guest Greeter Needed**

We’re looking for someone local who is available to welcome Noble View’s overnight guests. You’d drive up to Noble View (gas stipend available), meet our guests, provide them with information about the facility and the area, and answer any questions. These visits shouldn’t take very long, and typically would occur on Friday evenings or Saturday mornings. For more information, please call Gary at 413-519-3251.

**Woodcutting Days**

**Sat. & Sun., Nov. 15–16**

Many hardy, handy, and helpful folks are needed to get in a supply of firewood for the coming year. Bring gloves, a sense of humor, and clothes suitable for the weather. A large supply of wood will be available for splitting and piling into the wood shed. Water and lunch will be provided. Please call Gary at 413-562-6792 to RSVP for lunch.

Get the very latest event listings!

http://trips.outdoors.org

Just select BERKSHIRE in the Chapter field (the other fields can be left blank). Then click the SUBMIT button.

Don’t forget to check in at home!

http://amcberkshire.org

LATE-BREAKING NEWS & IMPORTANT CHAPTER INFORMATION
SOLO Wilderness First Aid
Sat. & Sun., Nov. 22–23, 2008
WFA addresses the medical and logistical issues that arise where there is no ambulance, no roof or walls for shelter from the elements, supplies are few, and the length of the wait for help is unknown. Lectures and discussions are supplemented by hands-on scenarios. An emphasis on long-term care and evacuation complications in the backcountry makes this course unique. Fee of $135 with optional lodging available for $15/night. For info or to register, contact Gary Forish at 413-519-3251 or forgary@comcast.net.

SOLO Advanced Wilderness First Aid
Sat. & Sun., Dec. 6–7, 2008
Current Wilderness First Aid certification is a prerequisite for this course. Advanced Wilderness First Aid (AWFA) builds on the skills taught in WFA, providing more in-depth information on topics already covered such as medical and environmental emergencies, and presents new skills such as litter improvisation and litter-carrying techniques. More hands-on practice with greater emphasis on leadership is a key element. Practical simulations and scenarios provide practice in backcountry leadership and rescue skills. Fee: $145 with optional lodging available at $15/night. For info or to register, contact Gary Forish at 413-519-3251 or forgary@comcast.net.

Berkshire Chapter Leadership Training
Sat. & Sun., Oct. 25–26, 2008
Whether you’d like to become a Chapter leader or just want to improve your outdoor skills, you’re invited to attend. Training emphasizes group dynamics, leaders’ responsibilities, trip planning/management, weather emergencies, incident/accident scene management, leader awareness, and decision-making. The $25 fee covers day training and materials. Fee is refundable to Berkshire Chapter leaders once you’ve completed your three co-leads and have led your first event for the Berkshire Chapter. Overnight lodging available for $15. Advance payment requested. Please contact Christine Fogarty at 978-857-7078 or learning@amcberkshire.org.
BIG BERKSHIRE BASH
— RESERVATION FORM —
Event is Saturday, November 1, 2008
Members and non-members welcome!
ANNUAL MEETING • CASH BAR • DINNER • SPEAKER

PLEASE HAVE YOUR REGISTRATION POSTMARKED BY OCTOBER 25!

Name(s): _____________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________

City, State, Zip: ________________________________________

Phone: _______________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________

Number of persons attending: _______
At $25 each

Total amount enclosed: $________
Please make check payable to Berkshire Chapter AMC.

Mail completed Reservation Form and your check to:
Diane Furtek, 152 Wedgewood Drive, Ludlow, MA 01056

Questions? Need directions? Call Deborah Levine (413-584-6065).

MEMBERSHIP IN A BOTTLE
For the cost of your annual membership, you will receive:
A Nalgene® water bottle • A $10 gift certificate good for AMC books, lodging, and workshops • An AMC window decal • A subscription to AMC Outdoors • Our quarterly newsletter, the Berkshire Exchange • A new member packet with a welcome letter, information brochure, and member ID card.

Please mail completed form with check to:
Chris Ryan, PO Box 9369, North Amherst, MA 01059
bottles@amcberkshire.org

— AMC Berkshire Membership Form —
I wish to purchase:

☐ Individual "Membership in a Bottle" kits ($50 each).
☐ Family "Membership in a Bottle" kits ($75 each).
☐ Senior "Membership in a Bottle" kits ($25 each, age 60 and over). Age: _______.
☐ Young Member "Membership in a Bottle" kits ($25 each, up to age 30). Age: _______.

I have enclosed a check for the total amount of $________ made payable to Berkshire Chapter AMC.

Please mail the kits to:
Name: _____________________________________________
Street: _______________________________________________
City, State, Zip: _______________________________________;
Phone: ______________________________________________
E-mail: ______________________________________________

Is this a gift membership? ☑ Yes ☐ No
(Bottles will be sent to the address above, and the membership recorded in that name, unless you indicate otherwise.)

Note: This offer is for new members only. Not for renewals, please. Thanks.