

The Electric Chair: An Unnatural American History

By Craig Brandon

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Since its first use in 1890, the electric chair has been the means of legal execution for over 4,300 individuals in 23 states. Its use in recent years has steadily declined, and in many states now the chair is used only as a museum display. This book provides a history of the electric chair and analyzes its features, its development, and the manner of its use.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal
Opponents of capital punishment have often condemned the methods of execution as vehemently as the executions themselves. Brandon (Keene State Coll., NH) contends that, in modern times, the electric chair is the most barbaric of all the methods. Ironically, although intended as a humane alternative to hanging and supported by such illustrious names as Thomas Edison, the chair has had a ghastly history of botched or gruesome executions. One must admire Brandon's extensive research. Beginning from the first execution of William Kemmler in 1890, the author furnishes detail after detail of inside information. He personalizes not only the condemned but the executioners as well. His portrait of executioner Robert Elliott, who often killed several men in one day, is priceless. Brandon never says that he is opposed to capital punishment, leaving readers to draw their own conclusions, but he does say loud and clear that electrocution should be replaced by lethal injectionAwhich he considers a truly more humane alternative. This book is certainly not for everyone, but for crime buffs with a stomach for gruesome details, it is essential.AFrances O. Sandiford, Green Haven Correctional Facility Lib., Stormville, NY
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Review
"A history of the first decade of the electric chair. Brandon tells an absorbing story...an excellent, readable work" --*Choice*

"One must admire Brandon's extensive research...essential" --*Library Journal*

"Highly readable, meticulously documented and absolutely fascinating history...an important contribution to the ongoing debate over capital punishment in this state and this country...recommended" --*Bookmarks*

About the Author
Professor **Craig Brandon** teaches writing at Keene State College in New Hampshire. He is the author of numerous articles and a book of popular history, and was a newspaper journalist for two decades. He has served as an on-air expert for PBS, NBC, and History Channel television programs, and lives in Surry, New Hampshire.

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