



The Newsletter of the

2020

GRATEFUL DEAD STUDIES ASSOCIATION



President's Column

In the early 1970s, as the U.S. continued to grapple with the issues that defined what historians call the long sixties, the Grateful Dead faced their own set of challenges, from business and finances to the deaths of Pigpen and three band members' parents. Yet the Dead not only persevered, they emerged with new music and a renewed commitment to their craft, reaffirming their vision for their project. Phil Lesh, who lost his father to cancer while they were recording *American Beauty*, put it best when he wrote, "Thank the Lord for music; it's a healing force beyond words to describe."

That example has been very much on our minds as the Executive Council worked to complete the launch of the Association in a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, wildfires scorching the West, and storms battering the Southeast. Those tragedies affected us all, and made us especially thankful for the many friends and colleagues who pitched in to help us get the Association underway.



A View of Boston from the Square

That support made possible the progress we can report here. In May, the Popular Culture Association approved the creation of a Grateful Dead area at their annual conference, where the Association will meet; on August 1, we launched the websites for the Association (www.deadstudies.org) and our journal (www.gratefuldeadstudies.org). We began enrolling members then, and we thank you all for your participation. We are especially grateful to our Charter Members, whose generosity provides additional support as we build our infrastructure.

That infrastructure supports many efforts, including our conference meeting, scheduled for Boston, June 2-5, 2021 (p.2), and the Grateful Dead Studies archive at Northwestern University Library, which will also host the Association's records (p.3). Those efforts are part of the larger conversation of Grateful Dead studies, which is the focus of our New and Noteworthy (p.4).

As we approach winter, the challenges facing the nation and the world make the solace that music provides all the more important, as those who gathered to hear Bob Weir and Ratdog perform on the night of August 9, 1995, understood. Critics wondered if the show would be cancelled, in deference to the passing of Jerry Garcia, but Deadheads knew better. As Weir said when he walked out on stage, "If our good friend taught us anything, it's that music can make a bad time a little better."

So can our conversation about that music. On behalf of the Executive Council, thank you for your support! We look forward to seeing you in June.

Nicholas Meriwether



In This Issue

President's Column

First Annual Grateful Dead Studies Association Meeting Set

Curating the Dead: Building the Grateful Dead Studies Archive at Northwestern University

New and Noteworthy: Recent Highlights in Grateful Dead Studies



Boston, from the Harbor

Boston 2021!

First Annual Meeting Set for June 2–5, 2021

Mark your calendars! The first annual meeting of the Grateful Dead Studies Association will be held in conjunction with the Popular Culture Association conference, June 2–5, 2021, at the Boston Marriott Copley Place. We invite all members to celebrate this landmark event with us in a city whose rich and deep history makes it a particularly fitting location for the Association's inaugural meeting.

GDSA fulfills that request, affirming his belief in Grateful Dead studies as an important voice in the vibrant scholarly conversation about popular culture.

"Securing an area at the PCA is a recognition that Grateful Dead studies has earned its rightful place in the academy," Jan Wright, Secretary of the Association, observed. In the increasingly competitive environment of pop culture studies, this achievement demonstrates that Grateful Dead studies has established itself as a viable and vital field of study.

"This is an exciting time in Dead studies," noted Beth Carroll, a professor at Appalachian State University and Treasurer of the Association. "The formation of a Grateful Dead area at a major national conference is a sign of both the sophistication and the maturation of the discourse."

The conference location has a particular resonance for the Association. In addition to its premier reputation as an academic and intellectual hub, Boston holds a revered place in Grateful Dead history as well. The band played 51 shows in the city from 1967 to 1994, the majority at the Boston Music Hall and the Boston Garden, providing the recordings for three *Dick's Picks*, one *Dave's Pick*, and contributing to three box sets. Those concerts made it clear that the Dead's music and approach complemented the city's rich history, from its celebrated role in the American Revolution to its more colorful esoteric currents, which emerged early in the city's history. Those continued well into modern times, even playing a role in Boston's own countercultural history in the 1960s, when the city first hosted the Dead.

Originally scheduled for the spring, the conference was pushed back to June in an effort to make an in-person meeting possible. Organizers are monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and if health concerns remain, the conference will be held online, but we hope to welcome all of our members in Boston to celebrate the start of an exciting new chapter in Grateful Dead studies.

The Grateful Dead Studies Association will hold its own events along with the larger PCA conference, which will host the group's sessions as part of its Grateful Dead area. Participants will have access to all of the events of the PCA conference, which will provide a larger venue for the work of the Association, highlighting the discourse of Grateful Dead studies and presenting it to an international audience. "The establishment of an area at the Popular Culture Association represents a milestone for the scholarly dis-

course on the Dead," Granville Ganter, President-Elect of the Association remarked. "This achievement puts the work of the Association on a national stage." The Grateful Dead area will also be open to all members of the Popular Culture Association, which celebrates its fiftieth year in 2021. That anniversary makes the launch of the area especially appropriate: Ray Browne, one of the founders of the PCA and a preeminent voice in popular culture studies, was impressed with the Grateful Dead sessions he saw at the joint meeting of the PCA and the Southwest PCA in 2011, and he encouraged the establishment of a Dead area at the national conference. Ten years later, the formation of the

Boston 2021 At A Glance:

- 4 days, June 2–5, 2021
- Held at the historic Boston Marriott Copley Place
- Full schedule of sessions, speakers and events
- Proposals due *November 16*
- Early (reduced fee) Registration closes *December 31*

Curating the Dead: Building the Grateful Dead Studies Archive

Scholars have longed for well-curated archives to facilitate their research in Grateful Dead studies, a theme sounded in conference papers and articles for years, yet only recently have good university repositories recognized the significance of the Grateful Dead's achievement and impact. Now, prominent institutions have begun to show interest in the Dead's legacy, as Stanford University's recent acquisition of John Perry Barlow's papers shows.

With the support of the Grateful Dead Studies Association, Northwestern University has joined this effort by agreeing to host the Grateful Dead Studies collection, which includes the papers of the Association as part of its wider mandate to document the scholarly study of the Grateful Dead phenomenon. As part of Northwestern's Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, the collection will provide the most extensive archive of the academic work on the Dead phenomenon ever assembled, offering scholars, students, and researchers a comprehensive survey of the development of the scholarship on the Grateful Dead in a centrally located, world-class research library.

"We're pleased and honored to have the opportunity to host the Grateful Dead Studies archive, as part of our goal to document the cultural history of the so-called "Long Sixties," Scott Krafft, curator for the McCormick Library commented. "The Grateful Dead were a groundbreaking band whose impact extends well beyond the purview of most popular music, as the scholarly work on them reveals."



Charles Deering Memorial Library at Northwestern University



View from the stacks at Deering Memorial Library

"There are a number of exciting projects and efforts the collection will be able to facilitate, and we're excited to partner with the Grateful Dead Studies Association to bring those to the public," Krafft added. Those efforts place the work of the Association in the forefront of a number of important issues in academe today, beginning with what scholars call the archival turn, launched by philosophers Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others in the 1990s. That interdisciplinary conversation about the roles and responsibilities of archives continues today, exploring political and theoretical complexities, ideologies, and lacunae in archives as well as their creativity, capacity, and continuity.

Those debates continue, even as they underscore the power of archives in shaping perception and understanding. That idea and the ethical obligations it entails are central to the establishment of the Grateful Dead Studies collection, which is why it represents one of the Association's first initiatives. Donors can support this project and others at www.deadstudies.org/donate.

Krafft, who was recently appointed to the Association's Board of Advocates, spearheaded the acquisition of the collection, which is being prepared for accession now. COVID-19 delayed the first bequest, now on track for the end of 2020 with additional accruals scheduled in 2021 and continuing until the core is completed. Two series will continue to accept accessions to allow the collection to fulfill its mission of documenting the larger discourse, which shows no signs of slowing, as the Association's work demonstrates.

The primary goal of the collection is to provide scholars and students with a complete history of Grateful Dead studies, but it also offers a wealth of insights for scholars researching a number of other fields, from the problems and potential of interdisciplinarity to the ways that discourse communities form and grow. With bound theses, periodicals, manuscripts and even artifacts, the collection comprises a range of formats and media that will also be able to support high-level, visually compelling exhibitions, both virtual and physical.



Bound theses and periodicals in the Dead Studies collection

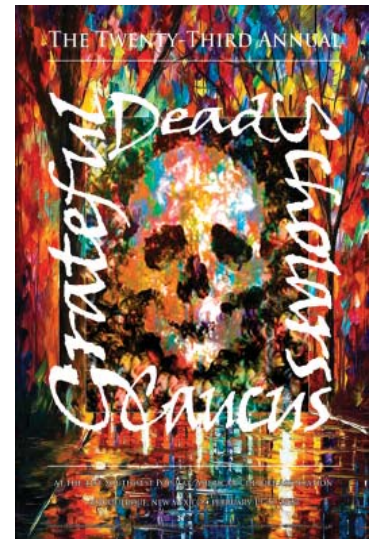
New and Noteworthy

Recent Highlights in Grateful Dead Studies

The core of the Grateful Dead phenomenon is music, and Grateful Dead Productions and Rhino have continued their groundbreaking archival efforts with quarterly titles in the *Dave's Picks* series along with annual box sets, Record Day vinyl releases, and anniversary releases of studio albums. Recent entries have added to our understanding of several eras in the Dead's performing history, including seminal shows in 1973 and 1977 as well as tours (summer 1976) and multi-year stands at historic venues (RFK Stadium), all showcasing Vault Archivist David Lemieux's meticulous production work and engineer Jeffrey Norman's superb tape restoration. Historic photographs and well-written liner notes provide context and detail that make them essential for scholars and fans alike.

These releases continue the Dead's pioneering approach to audio engineering, which earned them accolades and interest as early as 1968. Engineer Janet Furman provides a wealth of insights into the band's pursuit of cutting-edge technology in her interview for McIntosh's official podcast (www.mcintoshlabs.com/brand/news/McIntosh-Podcast--Episode-1). Furman also discusses her work with Alembic and Owsley "Bear" Stanley, including reminiscences of touring with the Dead and working at some of their most famous gigs.

Two other podcasts are bringing Grateful Dead studies to a larger audience. Susan Balter-Reitz, a professor of communication at Montana State University–Billings, is the host, writer and producer of Yellowstone Public Radio's new series "The Dead of Night," scheduled to launch in December. Her survey of the band's music and impact includes commentary and insights from scholars, artists, musicians, music industry professionals and fans.



The 2020 Caucus conference poster

Sponsored by Rhino, Rich Mahan and Jesse Jarnow's "Good Ol' Grateful Deadcast" (www.dead.net/deadcast) presents stories on a range of topics in Grateful Dead history. The well-researched and entertaining episodes provide insights into albums, songs, and themes spanning the history of the Grateful Dead, with reflections by key figures in the Dead's history along with commentary by scholars and writers well versed in Dead lore and arcana.

Literary scholar Brent Wood surveys some of that terrain in his new monograph *The Tragic Odes of Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead* (Routledge), which offers "a multifaceted study of tragedy in the group's live performances showing how Garcia brought about catharsis through dance by leading songs of grief, mortality, and ironic fate in a collective theatrical context." Blending musical, literary, and historical analysis of thirty-five songs, Wood shows how Garcia's "syncretic approach and acute editorial ear" created a soundtrack for listeners that invokes the mystery-rites of ancient Greece, Friedrich Nietzsche's Dionysus, Hermann Hesse's Magic Theater, and more.

Scholars who study the Grateful Dead view John Perry Barlow's work through the lens of his lyrics, but communication theorists and legal scholars consider his essays on the Internet, copyright, and intellectual freedom to be even more influential. The 2019 volume of *Duke Law & Technology Review* was devoted to a symposium on this aspect of Barlow's work, which also adds to the growing body of work on the band's own contribution to these issues.

In February, more than 700 scholars gathered in Albuquerque for the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association conference. This was the twenty-third year of the Dead area, nicknamed the Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus, which featured twenty-seven papers covering a wide range of topics. A prominent theme was the work of Robert Hunter, whose life was celebrated by panels discussing his songs, lyrics, poetry, and prose. The area's program featured a special section on Hunter, featuring his early poetry along with reflections from colleagues, poets, and scholars, as well as the first scholarly bibliography of his work. As the last program for the area, it marks a fitting end to the thirteen-volume series. The program is available at the Association website (www.deadstudies.org), where it can be downloaded at no cost.

Along with the Association's peer-reviewed scholarly journal, *Grateful Dead Studies* (www.grateful-deadstudies.org), the site is one of the first major projects by the Association, made possible by the generous support of our members and donors. Both sites launched on August 1, the seventy-eighth anniversary of Jerry Garcia's birth, and provide a wealth of information on Grateful Dead studies and the work of the Association.

The Newsletter of the Grateful Dead Studies Association, Volume 2 (2020).

Published annually by the Grateful Dead Studies Association.

Contents © 2020. All rights reserved. Banner photographs © Susana Millman. Used with permission. All other photographs and images courtesy the photographers or their respective rights-holders.

