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40th Anniversary of Hank Aaron's Record Breaking Home Run

Posted on [April 8, 2014](#) by [William Hardesty](#)

Forty years ago, on April 8, 1974, Atlanta Brave Hank Aaron set the then all-time career record for home runs in Major League Baseball. The record was a significant personal

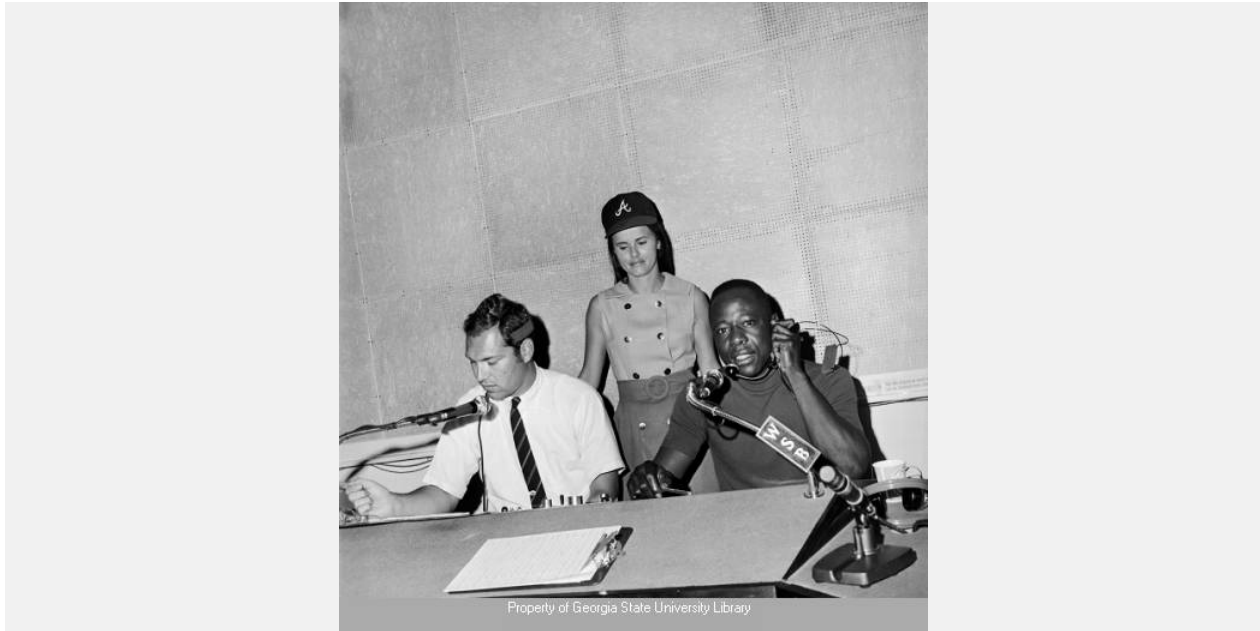


Hank Aaron's record-setting home run swing at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, April 8, 1974. Copyright Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Courtesy Georgia State University Library.

accomplishment by one of baseball's all-time great players and represented enormous change in Atlanta and the whole country.

The Milwaukee Braves moved here in 1966, making Atlanta the first “major league” city in the Southeast. Jackie Robinson had broken pro sports’ “color line” less than two decades before and the Civil Rights Movement was still a controversial topic in Atlanta and Georgia. The city has changed significantly over the past half century, with professional sports as both a reflection and an agent of that change. The Braves have been part of the [physical reshaping of the city](#) as well as – in being the cornerstone of Ted Turner’s broadcasting empire – the evolution of business in Atlanta.

Hank Aaron’s record-breaking 1974 swing has been called “the home run that changed America.” An African American born in segregated Alabama, Aaron started his career playing Negro League Baseball and became the first African American sports superstar in the South. In setting the career home run mark (surpassed by Barry Bonds in 2006), he eclipsed the record of Babe Ruth, the white New York Yankees star and one of the most famous athletes of the 20th century.



Baseball and Atlanta broadcasting: Phil Schaefer interviewing Hank Aaron on WSB Radio, 1960s. WSB Records, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library

Now 80 years old, Aaron has remained a fixture in Atlanta and Major League Baseball. In addition to the cultural symbolism of his 1974 achievement, he is honored for his personal character and, of course, great athletic skill. At Turner Field tonight, the Braves will celebrate Hank Aaron and the anniversary with a ceremony before the season's opening home game.

The Library's Digital Collections contains documentation of Atlanta's social, cultural, and physical changes, with highlights from the [Atlanta-Journal Constitution Photographic Archive](#), and resources on [broadcasting history](#) and [city planning](#) in Atlanta. There are plenty of other [Hank Aaron images](#), too.

Resources on baseball and Hank Aaron in the GSU Library collections include:

- Aaron, Hank, 1934-. [I had a hammer : the Hank Aaron story](#)
- Bryant, Howard, 1968-. [The last hero : a life of Henry Aaron](#)
- Lanctot, Neil. [Negro league baseball : the rise and ruin of a Black institution](#)
- Tygiel, Jules. [Extra bases : reflections on Jackie Robinson, race, and baseball history](#) and [Past time : baseball as history](#)
- Burns, Ken, 1953-. [Baseball](#) [10 DVDs]