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## Prison and Baseball in the Southern Labor Archives?

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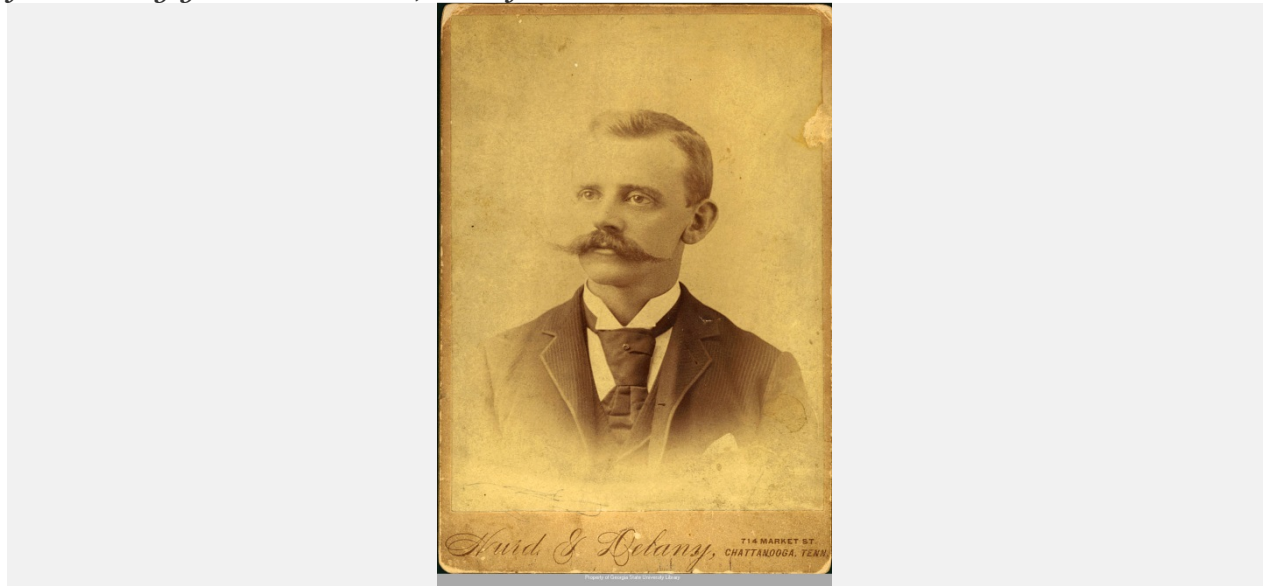
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## Prison and Baseball in the Southern Labor Archives?

Posted on [March 27, 2013](#) by [Traci JoLeigh Drummond](#)

*Jennifer Williams, a Graduate Research Assistant currently working with the Southern Labor Archives photograph collection, has found some interesting (and unexpected) things while preparing photographs for inclusion in Digital Collections. This blog post was inspired by images found in the Andrew P. McElroy papers. Thanks for sharing your discoveries, Jennifer!*



Andrew P. McElroy, 1890

One of the most significant challenges in archives, for both the archivist and the researcher, is access. Researchers must find the time and funding to visit a research facility in a different city, state, or country, while archivists strive to make their collections available to the greatest number of people. A giant step forward in this process has been the digitization of archival collections which allows access to documents and images from virtually any location, and makes great strides toward solving the problems for the archivist and the researcher.

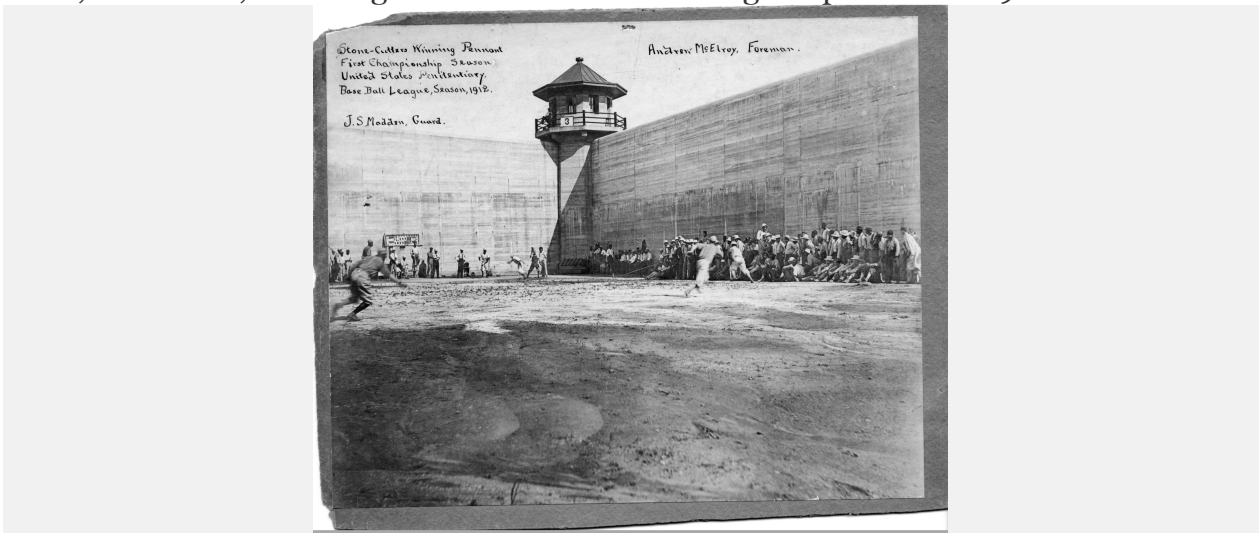
The [Southern Labor Archives](#) at [Georgia State University Library](#) is increasing efforts to make more of its material available online. This digitization project is not the Archives' first, but it will provide access to a large number of photographs previously accessible only in person. The photographs come from a wide variety of collections, and each set has its own story to tell. One set has proved particularly intriguing: photos from the [Andrew P. McElroy, Sr., papers](#).



The United States Penitentiary, Atlanta, Georgia

Andrew McElroy (1863-1921) was a Scottish immigrant and stone cutter who lived in Tennessee and Georgia after coming to the United States in 1882. He was an active participant in union life, and was in fact commissioned to cut the cornerstone for the [Atlanta Labor Temple](#) in 1910.

McElroy's other important achievement as a stonecutter was being put in charge of all stone work for the [United States Penitentiary in Atlanta](#) between 1903 and 1917. His involvement with the prison is visually documented in the papers through photos of its construction, workers, and one other area: its baseball teams. Oddly enough, the United States Penitentiary system had a baseball league. One photograph depicts McElroy's team, the Giants, defeating the Pirates to win the league's pennant in 1912.



Federal penitentiary baseball game

Along with covering some genuinely interesting topics, the Andrew P. McElroy collection lends itself to commentary on why digitization is so important. Topics like prison construction, prison recreation, and unconventional sporting events are all covered in the McElroy photographs, but a person researching those subjects would likely never travel to a labor archives in search of these resources. Digitization of the photographs allows the researcher to much more easily find what they're looking for, especially when it's in an unlikely place!

*Look for these photographs and more in the [Southern Labor Archives digital collection](#) (part of GSU Library's [Digital Collections](#)). More photos will be added this spring!*