

Baker, Old-Time Slugging Champ, Dead at 77

Star Swatter Performed on 100-G Infield

By FREDERICK G. LIEB
PHILADELPHIA, Pa.

John Franklin Baker, Maryland farm boy whose nickname — Home Run — was as well known to the fans of a half-century ago as are the names of Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle today, has joined his illustrious comrades of the Athletics' great "\$100,000 infield"—Eddie Collins, Jack Barry and John (Stuffy) McInnis—in the league from which there is no recall.

The former Athletic and Yankee slugger, who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955, died, June 28, at his home in Trappe, a hamlet in the Maryland Eastern Shore farm country, at the age of 77.

He was hospitalized shortly after his return to Trappe from Coopers-town, N. Y., where he attended the Hall of Fame installation of Max Carey, a fellow star of his day, in August of 1961. He seemingly improved, but suffered a sharp relapse several months later and early last month was stricken with another stroke.

Baker won his nickname, Home Run, back in the old dead ball days more than half a century ago.

Bombed Giants' Stars

The third sacker's 52-ounce bat wrecked the two New York Giant pitching aces, Rube Marquard and Christy Mathewson, with homers on successive days in the 1911 World's Series between the Philadelphia Athletics and John McGraw's proud and cocky New Yorkers.

After the Giants won the first game, 2 to 1, Marquard and Eddie Plank, Athletic southpaw, were engaged in a 1 to 1 pitching duel when Baker struck in the sixth.

With Eddie Collins on first base, he banged one of Marquard's fast balls over the right field fence at Shibe Park, now Connie Mack Stadium, for the homer that won the game for the Athletics, 3 to 1.

The next day, in another pitching duel between Mathewson and Jack Coombs in New York's Polo Grounds, Matty was within two putouts of a 1 to 0 shutout when Baker struck again with his big bat.

With one out in the ninth, he hammered a solo homer into the right field seats, tying the score at 1 to 1.

The A's eventually won, 3 to 2, in the eleventh and took the Series, four games to two.

Standout in Series Play

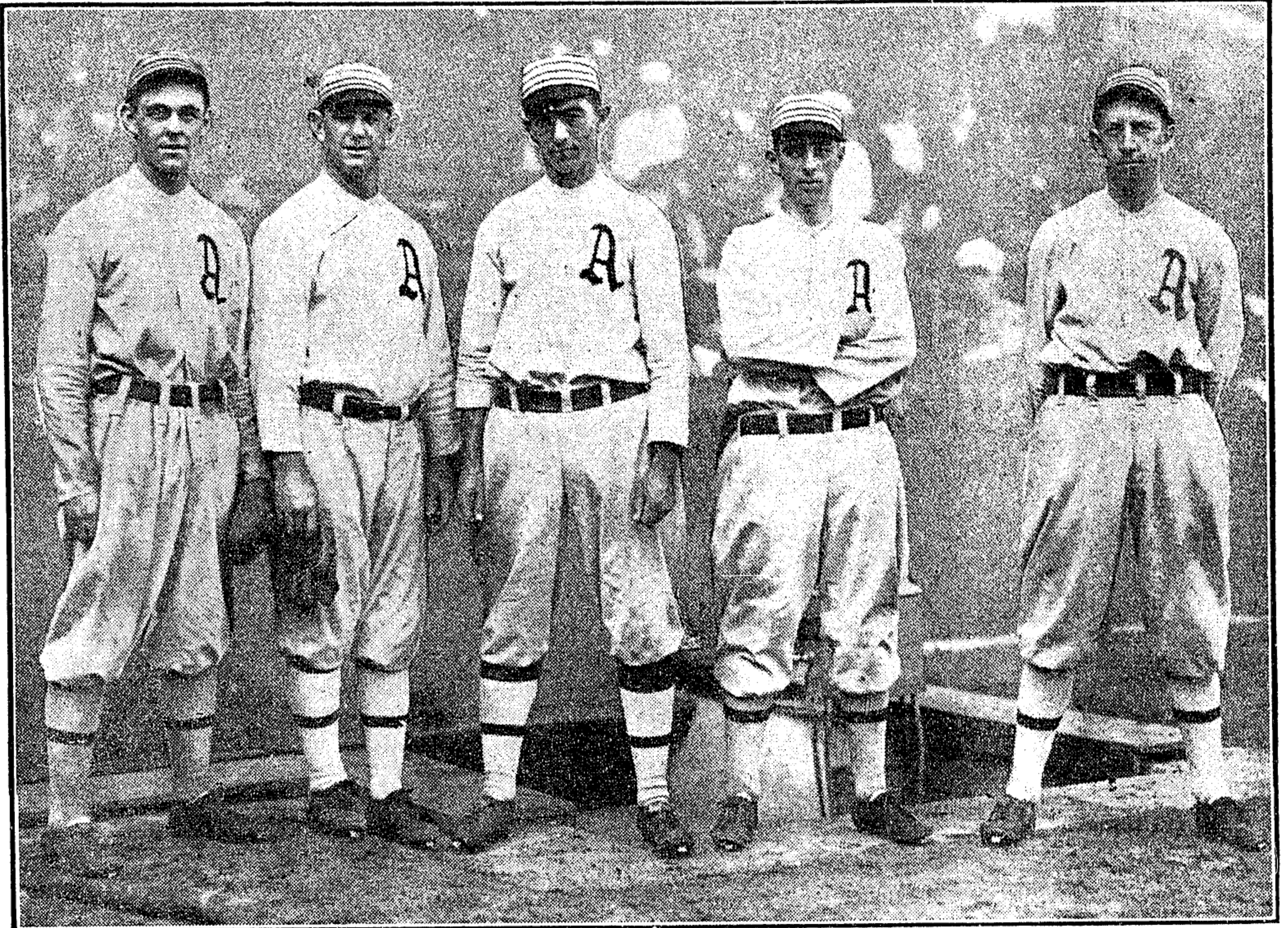
Apart from these timely and titanic homers, Baker was a painful thorn in the sides of the National League in World's Series play. He helped the Athletics defeat the Cubs of the era of Tinkers, Evers and Chance, four games to one, in the 1910 Series.

In 1911, his most spectacular Series, Frank led the regulars of both clubs with .375. When the Athletics again downed the Giants, four games to one, in 1913, Baker zoomed to .450 and garnered his third Series homer and second off Rube Marquard.

After that, Baker's World's Series averages weren't so impressive. When the 1914 Boston Braves routed the Athletics in four games, Baker's average was down to .250. He also hit .250 as a part-time third baseman for the Yankees in their 1921 Series with the Giants, and had one hitless at-bat for the New York Americans in 1922.

However, in his six Series, Baker batted a sturdy .363, 56 points higher than his lifetime mark of .307 in the American League.

While Baker's World's Series homers brought him his greatest renown, J. Franklin also led the A. L. four



FRANK BAKER was the last survivor of the Philadelphia Athletics' famous "\$100,000 infield," which probably would be rated in the \$2,000,000-class on today's market. Shown in the

1911 photo, from left, Stuffy McInnis, first base; Danny Murphy, right fielder and former second baseman; Baker, third base; Jack Barry, shortstop, and Eddie Collins, second base.

times in round-trippers, but under present-day conditions, his winning totals look ridiculously small — nine in 1911, 10 in 1912, 12 in 1913 and eight in 1914. In the latter season, he was tied with Sam Crawford of the Tigers, another Hall of Famer, for the home-run lead.

In his entire career of 12 complete seasons, Home Run Baker hit only 93 A. L. homers.

Never Expressed Rancor

However, Baker, an avid baseball fan to the end, never envied the big home-run hitters of today, nor felt any regret that he didn't get a crack at the lively ball until the twilight of his career. Nor did he try to compare himself and other sluggers of his day with the home-run hitters of today.

"Baseball just is a different game today than when I played it," he observed in a fanning bee late in life. "Our game was good and fun to play. Home runs were much rarer, but I used to get a big bang out of hitting one, and so did the Philadelphia fans.

"Now, they hit as many home runs in a day as we sometimes hit in a month, but the present game is a good spectacle, and the crowds certainly do enjoy it."

John Franklin Baker was born on a farm outside of Trappe, Md., March 13, 1886, and Trappe remained his home town until the day of his death. He was a farmer's boy, and though he had property interests and was a director of the Trappe bank, he always regarded himself as a farmer.

He took to baseball like a Maryland duck to the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and gravitated naturally to a Saturday and holiday semi-pro league, his stepping stone to a trial with the Baltimore Internationals in the fall of 1907.

He then was 21, big and strong as he ever was, but still was shy in that fast company. He hadn't quite acquired the knack of getting his brawn into his swing, and in 15 times at bat in five games he garnered only two hits, both singles, for an average of .133. In 1908, Baker played with Read-

Discovered Jimmie Foxx; Sold Him to Connie Mack

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — Frank Baker's contributions to the Athletics did not end when Connie Mack traded him to the Yankees.

After leaving the Yankees in 1922, Baker acquired the Easton, Md., team in the Eastern Shore League, where he finished his playing career. In 1924, he had a sturdy farm boy on his club, a 16-year-old named Jimmie Foxx.

Frank by this time had patched up an earlier disagreement with Mack, so he personally took young Foxx to Philadelphia and told Connie: "I want you to get this boy before the other clubs hear of him." He sold Jimmie to the A's for a pittance.

ing in the old Tri-State League. Connie Mack was rebuilding his team in Philadelphia and he brought up the farm boy for a September trial.

Mack saw enough of Frank in the early spring of 1909 to announce that the Reading acquisition would be his regular third baseman. The Athletic club, which lost the 1907 pennant to Detroit by seven points and then fell to sixth in 1908, rebounded sharply in 1909, with youngsters such as Baker, Jack Barry and Eddie Collins in the infield, and fought Detroit for the pennant down to the last week of the season.

Worth \$2,000,000 Today

During the height of the Athletics' greatness (world's champions in 1910, 1911 and 1913), their infield of Baker, Jack Barry, Eddie Collins and Stuffy McInnis proudly was spoken of as "The Hundred Thousand Dollar Infield." Today, those players would be worth nearer \$2,000,000.

Even when Mack was forced to break up his infield as the result of the Federal League war, he got \$50,000 from the White Sox for Collins and \$35,000 from the Yankees for Baker. During the Federal League fight,

Famed Slugger's Lifetime Log

Born, March 13, 1886, at Trappe, Md.

Height, 5.11. Weight, 173. Threw right and batted lefthanded. In World's Series, Baker scored six runs in five-game series, 1910; made nine hits in five-game series of 1910 and 1913; hit home runs to win games, October 16, 1911 and October 7, 1913; accepted 25 chances in four games at third base, 1914, ten putouts and 15 assists. Manager, Easton, Eastern Shore League, 1924-25. Named to Hall of Fame in 1955.

Year	Club	League	G.	AB.	R.	H.	2B.	3B.	HR.	RBI.	B.A.	P.O.	A.	E.	F.A.
1907	Baltimore	East.	5	15	0	2	0	0	0	0	.133	0	5	2	875
1908	Bonding	Tri-State	119	451	65	135	11	12	6	4	.299	*174	246	27	340
1909	Philadelphia	Amer.	9	31	5	9	3	0	0	4	.290	12	22	0	1,000
1910	Philadelphia	Amer.	148	541	78	165	27	19	4	39	.305	*200	*277	42	920
1911	Philadelphia	Amer.	146	561	83	150	25	15	2	73	.283	*207	*313	45	920
1912	Philadelphia	Amer.	138	592	96	198	10	11	9	115	.331	*217	*274	30	942
1913	Philadelphia	Amer.	149	577	116	200	40	21	10	*133	.347	*217	*221	34	941
1914	Philadelphia	Amer.	149	585	118	190	34	9	*12	*126	.336	*233	*279	45	919
1915	Philadelphia	Amer.	150	570	81	182	23	16	8	97	.319	*221	*292	24	955
1916	Philadelphia (a)	Amer.	100	360	46	97	23	4	10	52	.269	133	210	22	940
1917	New York	Amer.	146	553	57	156	21	2	6	70	.282	*202	*317	28	948
1918	New York	Amer.	126	504	65	154	24	5	6	68	.300	*175	*282	13	972
1919	New York	Amer.	114	567	70	165	22	1	10	78	.293	*176	*286	22	955
1920	New York	Amer.	94	330	46	97	16	2	9	71	.294	84	173	11	959
1921	New York	Amer.	69	234	30	62	12	3	7	36	.278	68	108	7	962
1922	New York	Amer.	43	92	14	27	1	1	5	20	.293	25	45	4	944
1924	Easton	East. Shore	43	92	14	27	1	1	5	20	.293	25	45	4	944
Major League Totals			1575	5985	887	1828	315	193	90	1042	.307	2154	3154	323	942
(a) Sold to New York Yankees for \$35,000, February 15, 1916.															

(Released to report; played with Upland, Pa.)

(Voluntarily retired; played with Upland, Pa.)

World's Series Record

Year	Club	League	G.	AB.	R.	H.	2B.	3B.	HR.	RBI.	B.A.	P.O.	A.	E.	F.A.
1910	Philadelphia	Amer.	5	22	8	9	3	0	0	5	.409	0	11	2	860
1911	Philadelphia	Amer.	6	24	7	9	2	0	2	2	.275	10	10	2	909
1913	Philadelphia	Amer.	5	20	2	9	0	0	1	7	.450	6	6	1	923
1914	Philadelphia	Amer.	4	16	0	4	2	0	0	1	.250	10	15	0	1,000
1921	New York	Amer.	4	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	.250	2	3	0	1,000
1922	New York	Amer.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	0	608
World's Series Totals			25	91	15	33	7	0	3	18	.303	37	45	6	932

Baker didn't jump to the Feds as did two of the Philadelphia pitching aces, Chief Bender and Eddie Plank, nor did he threaten to jump. But he wanted a big raise for 1915. He was a holdout during the training season, but came up from Trappe for the A's opening game.

He shook hands with the players on the bench, but when he approached Mack, Connie looked in another direction.

Sadly, Baker returned to the farm. He stayed out of baseball all of the 1915 campaign.

In February, 1916, Mack sold Baker to the Yankees.

Baker started off well in New York, but in going after a foul, he cracked several ribs when he crashed into a concrete box. It idled him for 50 games, and also cost him another home-run crown. He hit ten homers in an even 100 games. His teammate, First Baseman Wally Pipp, won with 12 in 151 games.

Baker again stayed out for a full

season in 1920, this time because of the illness and subsequent death of his first wife. By the time he returned in 1921, the year the Yankees won their first pennant, his legs had lost much of their former spring.

He was a part-time third baseman on the Yankees' first two championship teams in 1921 and '22. His last appearance in big league baseball was as a pinch-hitter in the 1922 World's Series.

Attended Old-Time Fetes

Baker never lost his love of the game, and he came up from his Trappe home for all of the old-timer days put on by the old Philadelphia Athletics and the Yankees.

Frank remarried following the death of his first wife. He had two children from each marriage.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Margaret Baker; three daughters, Mrs. Fred Hooper, Mrs. James Wilmer and Mrs. Fred Wesson, and a son, J. Franklin Baker, Jr.