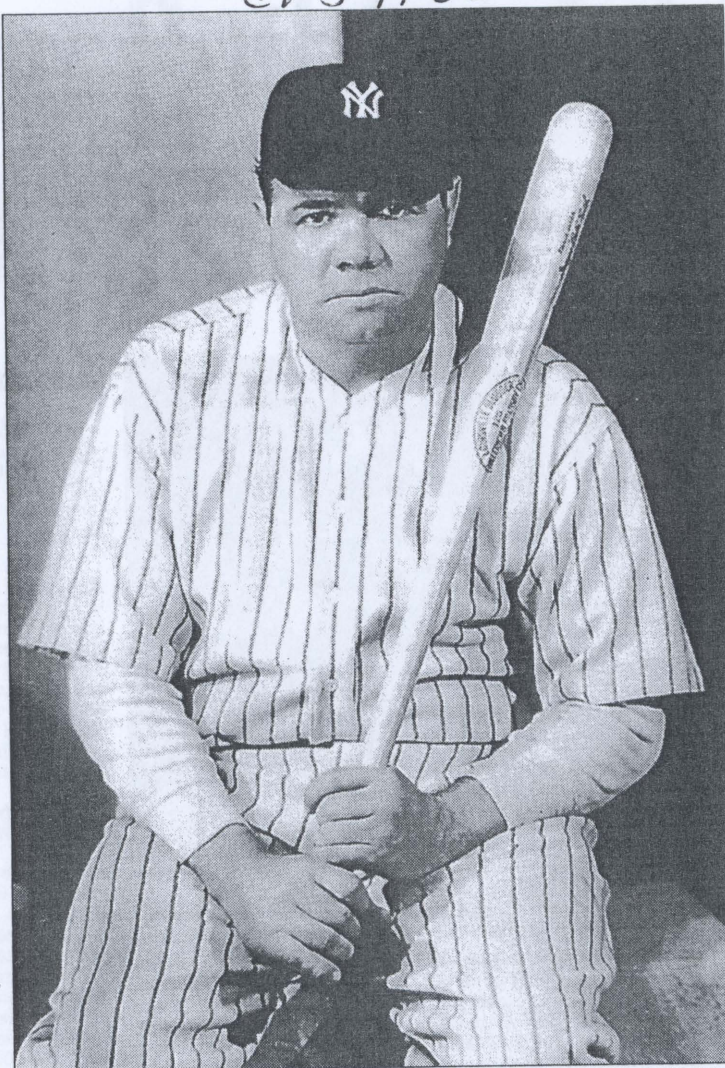


CV 5-14-06



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY

Babe Ruth's official Yankee portrait in 1926.

Babe Ruth's
home run hit
here in 1926

by John J. ...

On Oct. 22, 1926,
Babe Ruth hit his
first home run in
the Yankees' home
stadium, the Polo
Grounds, in New
York City. The
home run was hit
off the pitcher's
hand, and it was
the first home run
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the Polo Grounds.

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Babe Ruth's mighty hit in W-B's Artillery Park

Baseball great made home run history here in 1926

By William C. Kashatus
Contributing Writer

On Oct. 12, 1926, Babe Ruth visited Wilkes-Barre's Artillery Park to play in an exhibition game between Hughestown and Larksville.

Suiting up for Hughestown, the Yankee slugger challenged Larksville's hurler Ernie Corkran to throw him his best stuff — a fastball right down the heart of the plate.

Corkran obliged and Ruth crushed the pitch into deep right field.

When the ball cleared the fence, a good 400 feet away from home plate, it was still rising. It finally landed in Kirby Park on the far side of a high school running track.

Ruth was so impressed by his feat that he asked for his homer be measured. Originally estimated at 650 feet, the prodigious blast is considered to be the longest home run in baseball's storied history.

Bill Jenkinson, a historian



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY

The Babe with his biggest fans, the kids.

for the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), made the determination last year after studying old newspaper accounts of the event and aerial photographs of Artillery Park as well as taking on-site measurements of the field.

"I've personally researched

more than 1,000 home runs hit by Babe Ruth and this is the only time he asked someone to measure how far it went," insisted Jenkinson. "Immediately after he hit it, he declared it to be the farthest home run he had ever hit."

Babe Ruth was both a product and a catalyst of the Roaring Twenties. Outgoing and boisterous, Ruth loved being the center of attention. His image appeared on everything from advertisements for men's underwear to baseball cards. He starred in silent films and rodeos, and he quickly won over the hearts of youngsters, beginning a cult of hero worship that continues to this day.

Ruth had a special affection for children, probably because he was raised in an orphanage and was denied the love of a mother. He lavished his attention on youngsters, signing autographs, playing pick-up games, and visiting hospitals.

In fact, during his visit to Wilkes-Barre, Ruth paid a visit to Mercy Hospital where he shook hands with many patients, including a few youngsters. According to one newspaper account, the experience was emotional for Ruth, who had a special fondness for children.

During the off-season, the Babe went on barnstorming

excursions, playing in exhibition games in small towns across the country. Northeast Pennsylvania was one of his favorite stops. He spent considerable time fishing and hunting near Blakeslee, where he kept a cabin.

Ruth also had many friends in the area, including Mike Gazella of Olyphant, a utility infielder for the 1927 Yankees, and Buck Freeman of Wilkes-Barre, one of the premier sluggers of the Dead Ball Era. Ruth allegedly modeled his own uppercut swing after Freeman's. In fact, Freeman's single-season tally of 25 home runs in 1899 stood as a major league record until 1919 when Ruth clouted 29 round-trippers.

The Sultan of Swat went on to revolutionize the game with his power hitting, being the first player to hit 30, 40, 50 and 60 home runs in a season. Because of his hitting exploits, the Yankees were perennial contenders, if not World Series champions, during the 1920s.

Although Ruth's legendary home-run totals — 714 in his career and 60 in 1927 — are no longer records, the one he hit at Wilkes-Barre's Artillery Park in 1926 has stood the test of time.

"I think the people from this area can rightfully claim that the longest ball in competitive baseball history was hit here," said Jenkinson.

"I think we can fairly conclude that this ball traveled well over 600 feet. There's no question about where the ball landed. There are several accounts that say the ball landed on the far side of the running track. It's just a question of whether or not the running track and home plate are in the same location.

"No matter what direction this thing takes from this point on, we are going to find out that this ball traveled well over 600 feet. I don't think that there is any way that it didn't."

William C. Kashatus teaches history at Luzerne County Community College. His latest book is titled, "Money Pitcher: Chief Bender and the Tragedy of Indian Assimilation" (Penn State Press). He can be contacted at bkashatus@luzerne.edu

RECORD HERALD

WAYNESBORO, PA
SATURDAY 9,500
AUG 9 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES

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Baseball historian rules Ruth's Wilkes-Barre homer the longest

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Most baseball fans are familiar with Babe Ruth's "called shot" home run in the 1932 World Series. Same goes for the 1926 homer he hit as a promise to a bedridden New Jersey boy.

Even so, a little-known long-ball crushed decades ago in Pennsylvania might be among his most significant.

Bill Jenkinson, a prominent baseball historian, has measured a homer that the Great Bambino clobbered after a 1926 exhibition game in Wilkes-Barre as having traveled at least 600 feet and says he believes it to be the longest home run ever hit.

"The significance here is not in the competitive nature of the blow. It's more of a scientific phenomenon. It tells us what this man was physically capable of doing," said Jenkinson, an expert on long-distance home runs and member of the Society of American Baseball Research, who measured the distance at Artillery Park on Thursday.

Ruth was participating in an exhibition game in Wilkes-Barre on Oct. 12, 1926, when he hit the home run. After the game ended with Ruth failing to get a hit, the Sultan of Swat challenged a local pitcher to throw him his best fastball. The pitch was launched over a wire fence and onto an athletic track in an adjoining field, according to news reports at the time.

Ruth, apparently awestruck by the feat, is said to have remarked that the ball was the longest he had ever hit, Jenkinson said.

"It would seem ridiculous to assume that a man born in 1895 could hit a ball farther than Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa or Mark McGwire," said Jenkinson, who has studied more than 1,000 of Ruth's home runs, including those during postseason play, exhibition games and spring training. "But the record clearly indicates that this man could and did."

Using aerial photographs of the ballpark, where the Wilkes University baseball team still plays, a 300-foot measuring tape and eyewitness accounts, Jenkinson on Thursday determined the distance of the homer to be at least 600 feet — though he's quick to admit that "there's no way to know with absolute certainty." The geometry of the field also has shifted, with the track where the ball once landed now sitting further from the

baseball diamond.

Jenkinson said he has no plans to approach the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y., with his research, but will include it in a book he is writing.

He and other baseball experts say home runs distances are hard to document precisely, though it's fitting that the larger-than-life slugger might have the longest homer.

"That's a Ruthian shot, as they would say," said Greg Schwalenberg, curator of the Babe Ruth Museum in Baltimore, when told of the home run.

"That seems pretty far-fetched, but if it's been documented, it's hard to dispute it," he added.

John Odell, a curator of history and research for the Hall of Fame, said he was interested in the home run, but acknowledged that it might not have the same meaning since it was hit in exhibition play.

GAZETTE WEEKEND

BEDFORD, PA
SATURDAY 19, 100
AUG 9 2003



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Historian says Babe Ruth's homer in Wilkes-Barre is longest ever hit

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But, he added, "Whether it could be conclusively proven or not is definitely a tough thing, given that this is 80 years ago now."

MILFORD DAILY NEWS

MILFORD, MA

SATURDAY 12.145

AUG 9 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES TK

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Did the Bambino reach 600?

Historian measures 1926 blast
to have traveled long distance

203NW

By Eric Tucker
ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

ROCKFORD, IL
SATURDAY 77,000
AUG 9 2003



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LA

Historian: Ruth's exhibition home run called longest ever

203NW
The Associated Press

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SEATTLE TIMES

SEATTLE, WA
SATURDAY 219,265
AUG 9 2003



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BETWEEN THE SEAMS / *The Sultan's biggest swat*

RUTH'S LEGEND GROWS

203NW
◆ AT AN EXHIBITION game in 1926, Babe Ruth may have hit the longest home run in baseball history.

BY ERIC TUCKER
The Associated Press

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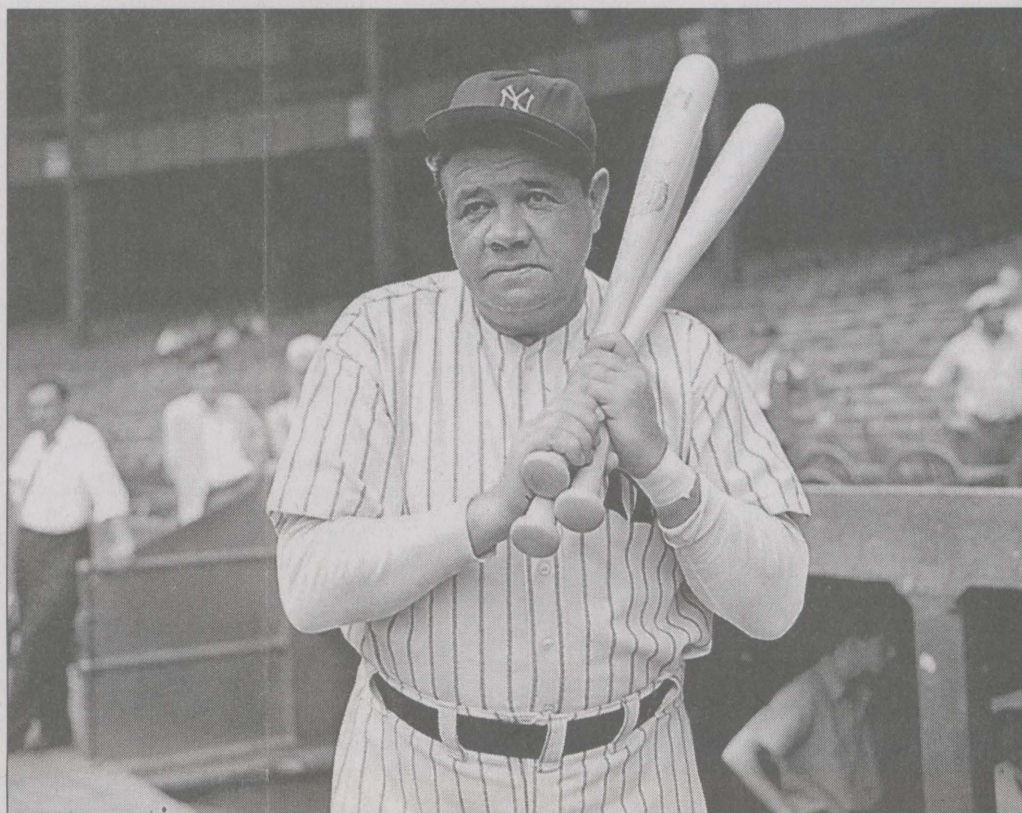
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TOM SANDE / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

An historian says Hall of Famer Babe Ruth, shown here before a hitting exhibition at Yankee Stadium in 1942, hit a home run in a 1926 exhibition game that traveled at least 600 feet.

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COURIER - JOURNAL

LOUISVILLE, KY
SUNDAY 287,177
AUG 10 2003



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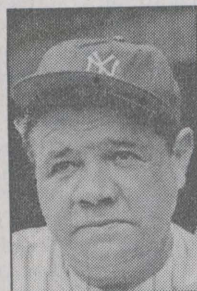
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QF

It might be, it could be ... the longest ball ever hit

The heck with that "called shot" in the 1932 World Series. A home run **Babe Ruth** blasted after a long-forgotten 1926 exhibition game in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., might have been his most astonishing feat.

Baseball historian **Bill Jenkinson** has calculated that the ball traveled at least 600 feet.



Ruth

"The significance here is not in the competitive nature of the blow. It's more of a scientific phenomenon. It tells us what this man was physically capable of doing," said Jenkinson, a member of the Society of American Baseball Research.

After Ruth failed to get a hit in the Oct. 12 exhibition game, he challenged a local pitcher to throw him his best fastball. According to news reports, the Bambino launched it over a wire fence and onto an athletic track in an adjoining field.

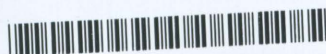
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Using aerial photographs of the ballpark, where the Wilkes University team still plays, a 300-foot measuring tape and eyewitness accounts, Jenkinson determined that the ball flew at least 600 feet — though he's quick to admit that "there's no way to know with absolute certainty," in part because the geometry of the field where it landed has changed.

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PRESS-ENTERPRISE

RIVERSIDE, CA
SATURDAY 169,444
AUG 9 2003



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Ruth homer longest ever?

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The geometry of the field also has shifted, with the track where the ball once landed now sitting further from the baseball diamond.

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TRIBUNE CHRONICLE

WARREN, OH
SATURDAY 34,436
AUG 9 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES

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Babe Ruth's longest home run came in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. in 1926.

Tribune file

Baseball historian credits Ruth with longest blast ever

By ERIC TUCKER
The Associated Press

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Did Ruth's Wilkes-Barre home run go 600-feet?

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REPORTER

LANSDALE, PA

SATURDAY 20,000

AUG 9 2003



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Historian: Wilkes-Barre homer by Babe Ruth is longest ever

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press Writer

225 FF
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EXPRESS-TIMES (LEHIGH
EDITION)

EASTON, PA
SATURDAY
AUG 9 2003



Burrelle's
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Babe Ruth's Pa. homer reckoned longest ever

Baseball historian says swatter's 1926 hit in Wilkes-Barre traveled at least 600 feet.

Associated Press

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RIDGWAY RECORD

RIDGWAY, PA
SATURDAY 3,238
AUG 9 2003



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BASEBALL

Most Ruthian homer yet

P225FF
■ Ruth's homer
in Wilkes-Barre
may be
longest ever

By Eric Tucker
Associated Press Writer

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DAILY ITEM

SUNBURY, PA
SATURDAY 25,750
AUG 9 2003



Burrelle's
INFORMATION SERVICES

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■ BASEBALL HISTORY

Was Ruth's Wilkes-Barre homer longest ever?

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STANDARD-JOURNAL
WEEKEND ED.

MILTON, PA
SATURDAY 5,364
AUG 9 2003



Burrelle's
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AROUND THE HORN



Ruth's Wilkes-Barre shot may be longest in game's history

BY ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press writer

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DAILY AMERICAN

SOMERSET, PA
SATURDAY 14,000
AUG 9 2003



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Baseball historian says Ruth's Wilkes-Barre homer is longest ever

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KANE REPUBLICAN

KANE, PA
SATURDAY 2,750
AUG 9 2003



Burrelles
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TRIBUNE REVIEW

GREENSBURG, PA
SATURDAY 116,346
AUG 9 2003



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NOTEBOOK

Historian: Ruth HR in Wilkes-Barre longest ever

By The Associated Press

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BELL WILL BE JUST DAD FOR NOW

Jay Bell has sent his wife and three children back to their Phoenix home after a summer in New York City.

Soon, he will move back, too, quietly calling it a career after 15 major league seasons, the final one as a seldom-used utilityman with the Mets.

The 37-year-old infielder might get into coaching full time and would like to manage some day, but first he plans to spend a lot more time with his family.

"The next step for me is to come home and be dad," Bell said Friday in his first trip to Bank One Ballpark as a visiting player. "After that, we'll see."

A fixture at shortstop for the Pirates from 1990 through 1996, Bell was Arizona's first big free-agent acquisition, signing a whopping five-year, \$34 million contract in 1998, before the expansion franchise had played a game.

Bell's career was up-and-down in Arizona. He batted .289 with career-highs in home runs (38) and RBI (112) in 1999. He is featured in a huge photo overlooking the main plaza outside Bank One Ballpark, celebrating after scoring the winning run against the New York Yankees in the ninth inning of Game 7 of the 2001 World Series.

Bell's role steadily diminished though, and he was left off Arizona's postseason roster last year. He surfaced as a late signing by the Mets, and has played sparingly through New York's difficult season. Entering last night's play, Bell was hitting .183 with just three RBI in 82 at-bats.

His main role has been as tutor to the Mets' young players, including 20-year-old shortstop Jose Reyes.

His wife, daughter Brianna, 12, and sons Brantley, 8, and Brock, 5, flew back to Arizona on Monday to prepare for next week's start of school.

ROYALS GET ABBOTT FROM D'BACKS

The Kansas City Royals acquired pitcher Paul Abbott from the Arizona Diamondbacks for minor league left-hander Aric Leclair yesterday.

Abbott was assigned to Triple-A Omaha, but Kansas City hopes to put him in its starting rotation in the near future. The right-hander has a 39-24 record in 132 career games, including 85 starts.

National League

at Washington, FOX-PT, WJPA-FM (95.3)

Frontier League

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Regional Final, ESPN2

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TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

JOHNSTOWN, PA
SATURDAY 43,682
AUG 9 2003



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Baseball historian contends Ruth's homer is longest ever

By **ERIC TUCKER**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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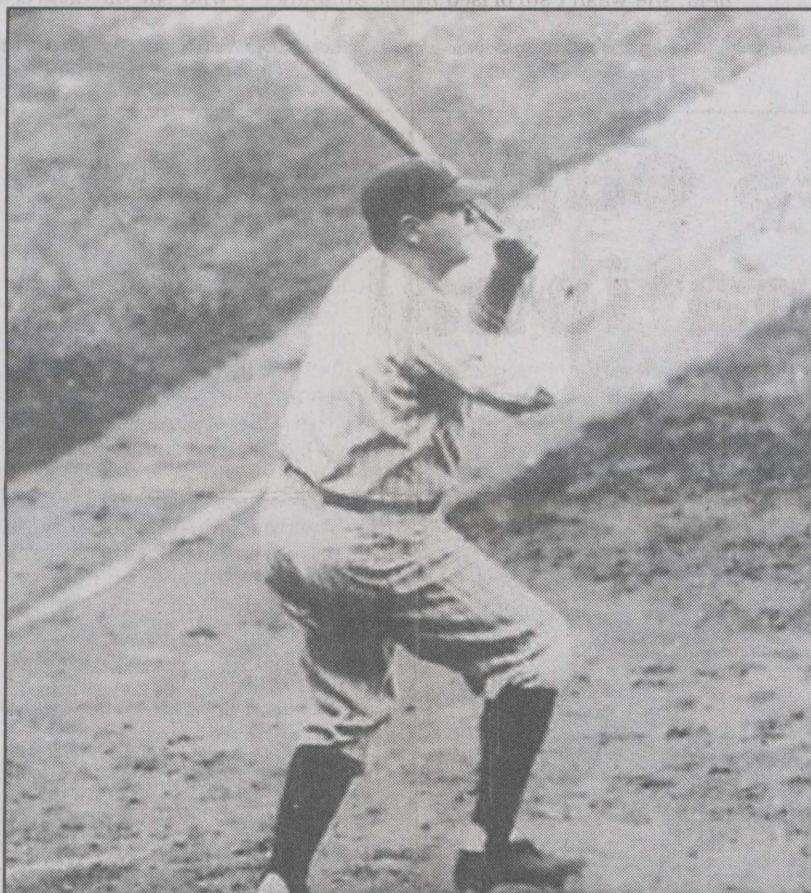
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THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Legendary home-run hitter Babe Ruth follows through his swing.

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Was longest ball hit in Wilkes-Barre?

A (From page 1A)

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YORK DAILY RECORD

YORK, PA
SATURDAY 43,000
AUG 9 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES

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Longest homer ever hit?

1925 FF Wilkes-Barre
■ One baseball historian
thinks Babe Ruth hit
a 600-foot home run in
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By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

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See BABE, page 4B

LONG SHOTS

Measuring home runs has historically been an inexact science with its results open for debate, but based on commonly held beliefs, here are some of the game's most accomplished long-ball hitters and their estimated longest career homers:

Mark McGwire: 545 feet, off Montreal's Livan Hernandez at St. Louis' Busch Stadium on May 16, 1998.

Frank Robinson: 541 feet, off Cleveland's Luis Tiant at Baltimore's Memorial Stadium on May 8, 1966.

Barry Bonds: 492 feet, off Colorado's Denny Stark at Coors Field on Aug. 27, 2002.

Hank Aaron: 470 feet, off the New York Mets' Jay Hook at the Polo Grounds on June 18, 1962.

Babe

Continued from 1B

adjoining field, according to news reports at the time.

Ruth, apparently awestruck by the feat, is said to have remarked that the ball was the longest he had ever hit, Jenkinson said.

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indicates that this man could and did."

Using aerial photographs of the ballpark, where the Wilkes University baseball team still plays, a 300-foot measuring tape and eyewitness accounts, Jenkinson on Thursday determined the distance of the homer to be at least 600 feet — though he's quick to admit that "there's no way to know with absolute certainty." The geometry of the field also has shifted, with the track where the ball once landed now sitting further from the baseball diamond.

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But, he added, "Whether it could be conclusively proven or not is definitely a tough thing, given that this is 80 years ago now."

• • •

What about Mickey?: New York Yankees slugger Mickey Mantle is known as one of the longest home-run hitters ever, but Jenkinson disputes reports that claim Mantle hit a handful of homers farther than 600 feet.

One story credits Mantle with a 734-foot home run at Yankee Stadium in 1963. The homer tagged the outfield

facade 370 feet from the plate and 115 feet above the ground. Witnesses contend the ball hit the facade while still traveling upward. Based on those observations, calculations were done to estimate the length of the shot had the ball not hit the facade.

But Jenkinson, in a 1996 report posted on www.baseball-almanac.com, disputes those numbers, claiming baseball fans are often victims of an optical illusion that makes the ball appear as if it is still rising, when it actually is not. Jenkinson argues, through physics and mathematics, that it would be nearly impossible for a baseball hit at home plate of Yankee Stadium to contact the stadium facade while still traveling upward.

TITUSVILLE HERALD

TITUSVILLE, PA
SATURDAY 5,000
AUG 9 2003



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Ruth's homer is longest

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Most baseball fans are familiar with Babe Ruth's "called shot" home run in the 1932 World Series. Same goes for the 1926 homer he hit as a promise to a bedridden New Jersey boy.

Even so, a little-known long-ball crushed decades ago in Pennsylvania might be among his most significant.

Bill Jenkinson, a prominent baseball historian, has measured a homer that the Great Bambino clobbered after a 1926 exhibition game in Wilkes-Barre as having traveled at least 600 feet and says he believes it to be the longest home run ever hit.

"The significance here is not in the competitive nature of the blow. It's more of a scientific phenomenon. It tells us what this man was physically capable of doing," said Jenkinson, an expert on long-distance home runs and member of the Society of American Baseball Research, who measured the distance at Artillery Park on Thursday.

Ruth was participating in an exhibition game in Wilkes-Barre on Oct. 12, 1926, when he hit the home run. After the game ended with Ruth failing to get a hit, the Sultan of Swat challenged a local pitcher to throw him his best fastball. The pitch was launched over a wire fence and onto an athletic track in an adjoining field, according to news reports at the time.

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NEWSDAY (NASSAU
EDITION)

LONG ISLAND, NY
SUNDAY 664,288
AUG 10 2003



Burrelles
INFORMATION SERVICES

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Ruth Home Run Exceeded 600 Feet

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Philadelphia — Many baseball fans are familiar with Babe Ruth's "called shot" home run in the 1932 World Series and his 1926 homer as a promise to a bedridden New Jersey boy.

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MORNING CALL

ALLENTOWN, PA
SUNDAY 170,207
AUG 10 2003



Burrelle's
INFORMATION SERVICES

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Researcher: Ruth's longest HR hit in Wilkes-Barre

9725FF
The historian measures the exhibition blast at more than 600 feet.

By Eric Tucker

Of The Associated Press

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SUNDAY REVIEW

TOWANDA, PA
SUNDAY 10,200
AUG 10 2003



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INFORMATION SERVICES

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Was Wilkes-Barre blast Ruth's longest?

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DAILY LOCAL NEWS

WEST CHESTER, PA
SUNDAY 31,316
AUG 10 2003



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Was Babe Ruth's longest home run hit in Wilkes-Barre?

Historian: Bambino's blast traveled 600 feet

By ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press Writer

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HERALD-STANDARD

UNIONTOWN, PA
SUNDAY 30,630
AUG 10 2003



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Baseball historian says Ruth's homer in Wilkes-Barre is longest ever

P225FF
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STATE NEWS SUNDAY

DOVER, DE
SUNDAY 33,500
AUG 10 2003



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Ruth homer longest ever?

Associated Press *P203NW*

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But, he added, "Whether it could be conclusively proven or not is definitely a tough thing, given that this is 80 years ago now."

Babe's 'only dumb play' came 2 days before local home run

^{TL 8-19-03}
As historical writer for my newspaper, The Times News in Lehighton, Carbon County, and an avid baseball history buff, I took particular interest in your recent article on the long ball Babe Ruth purportedly hit at Artillery Park on Oct. 12, 1926.

A remarkable sidebar to that story is the fact that the local event took place just two days after the 1926 World Series ended on a play in which Ruth

— in the opinion of many — played the “goat.” With the Yankees trailing St. Louis, 3-2, in Game 7, Ruth was on first base with two men out in the ninth and cleanup hitter Bob Meusel at bat. Amazingly, Ruth tried to steal second and was easily thrown out by catcher Bob O’Farrell.

When O’Farrell later asked him why he tried to steal, the great Bambino told him that he thought the St. Louis pitcher,

Grover Cleveland Alexander, had forgotten that he was on first base and that the way he was pitching, the Yanks could never get two hits in a row off him.

Thus, Ruth became the only player caught stealing to end a World series game. One Yankee executive later called it Ruth’s “only dumb play of his life.”

Jim Zbick
Lehighton

SPORTSFRONT

How far did it go?

Historian estimates Babe Ruth's longest home run was hit at Artillery Park

By Dom Loiacono
Citizens' Voice Correspondent

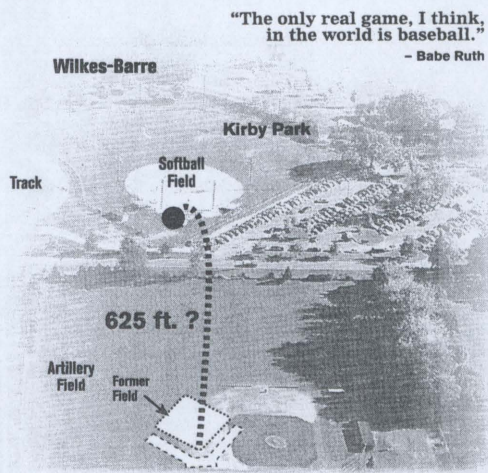
There are many myths about legendary Babe Ruth. Some claimed the Great Bambino ate 18-20 hot dogs in between games of doubleheaders. Then, there was the story about a youngster named John Sylvester, who laid in a hospital bed in Essex Fells, N.J., and received a visit from Ruth the day of a game. Ruth told Sylvester he would hit a home run for him, and woundup hitting three. Perhaps the most famous story of all was when the "Sultan of Swat" called one of his famous home runs. Ruth stepped into the batters box at Wrigley Field in Chicago during the 1932 World Series, pointed to the centerfield bleachers, then clubbed one of his 714 career homers. Fact or fiction? Nobody knows for sure, but it's now certain that Ruth hit the longest home run of his storied career right here in Wilkes-Barre.

Two days after the Yankees lost to the Cardinals in the 1926 World Series, Ruth joined a team from Hughestown on October 12 and played a series of exhibition games. Hughestown played a club from Larksville at old Artillery Park, (former home of the Wilkes-Barre Barons), and Ruth

BABE RUTH: LONGEST HOME RUN



In the year 1926, 'The Sultan of Swat', Babe Ruth played an exhibition game at Artillery Park. Hitting a home run approximately 625 feet, this may be the longest home run in baseball history.



MICHAEL HOCKENBURY/CITIZENS' VOICE

belted a home run that traveled over 600 feet.

"Everything happened through contacts so he joined fellow Yankee teammate Bob Meusel and both played for Hughestown," said Bill Jenkinson, a long-time baseball historian from Willow Grove. "An agent got in touch with a local

promoter here and Babe joined the team."

Jenkinson was in town to determine whether Ruth's home run actually carried that far. He decided to make the trip after reading a story where Ruth claimed to have hit the longest home run of his career in Wilkes-Barre.

The few media outlets at that time said Ruth's blast was in the vicinity of 700 feet. The Associated Press that day reported the ball cleared the right field fence and team officials estimated the home run to be 650 feet.

The old Scranton Republican

SEE BABE RUTH, PAGE 69

Eyewitness says Bambino's blast was real thing

By Dom Loiacono
Citizens' Voice Correspondent

Joe Gibbons remembers it like it was yesterday.

Gibbons was in the grandstands at old Artillery Park on October 12, 1926, when Babe Ruth belted the furthest home run ever hit.

"I never saw a ball hit that far in all my life," said Gibbons, 87, of the North End section of Wilkes-Barre. "I've seen hundreds of games and I'm telling you, that ball was hit like I never saw one hit before."

Ruth played in some exhibition games during the offseason

for Hughestown, and played his first-ever game at Artillery Park against a team from Larksville.

Gibbons, who was 10 years old at the time, recalls going to that particular game with his father. It was the first time he ever sat in the grandstands.

"My friends and I used to always sit in the bleachers, but I went to the game that day with my dad and I got to sit in the stands. I saw almost every game at that park and just about all the home runs that were hit went to left field. It was rare to see a home run go over the right field fence. You hardly saw that happen.

"I saw Babe Ruth hit home runs in Yankee Stadium, but the one he hit that day was the furthest," remembers Gibbons.

"If I was sitting in the bleachers, I never would have seen where it landed because they weren't as high as the stands."

Gibbons' has recollections of where the ball finally touched down.

"They used to have a little zoo outside the stadium," he said, knowing that the same area is now occupied by a walking track. "There were about 8-10 cages with animals lined up along the one fence way past right field and I remember the

ball Ruth hit took one big bounce before hitting off the bear cage. It was the longest hit ball I ever saw."

Gibbons is an avid baseball fan and has seen his share of great moments. He said there is no doubt that Babe Ruth was the strongest player in the game during his generation.

"He had a lot of power and could hit them out with no problem," remarked Gibbons. "It's not like today where the balls are lively. Back then, the baseballs were really dead but it never bothered Babe Ruth."

BABE'S BLAST: "I think the people from this area can rightfully claim that the longest ball in competitive baseball history was hit here."

TL 8-8-03

FRONT PAGE



TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTO/FRED ADAMS

Baseball historian Bill Jenkinson uses a tape measure in an attempt to calculate the distance of a hit by Babe Ruth at Artillery Park in 1926.

Long Gone?

Baseball historian puts Ruth's '26 Artillery Park shot to the test

By DAVE KONOPKI
davek@leader.net

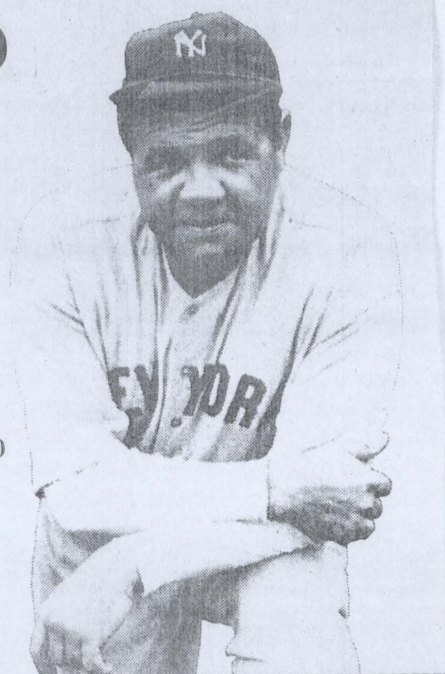
WILKES-BARRE — Armed with an old aerial photograph of the area, newspaper accounts, and a tape measure, Bill Jenkinson was hoping to answer a 76-year-old question regarding Babe Ruth.

The baseball historian left an hour

later with a stunning conclusion about a baseball "The Bambino" hit on Oct. 12, 1926, at Artillery Park — it traveled "well over 600 feet."

"I think the people from this area can rightfully claim that the

See BABE, Page 12A



Babe Ruth: Hit long home run at Artillery Park

FROM PAGE 66

said the shot carried close to 700 feet. Jenkinson said he found it intriguing the way it was reported.

"I don't see him hitting a ball that distance, I just don't find it credible. Something didn't add up."

If Ruth did hit such a titanic shot, it would have carried over street behind the the right center-field fence in new Artillery Park, and continued to sail across the fence surrounding the the track, (a total of 496 feet from home plate), before landing just short of the other side of the track, which would have made the home run exactly 825.2 feet.

"No way," Jenkinson said. "Babe said the longest home run he ever hit was in Wilkes-Barre, and judging by the length of many of his home runs, he's right.

"But not even he can't hit them 800. Judging by Babe's track record, he always hit balls over 500 feet."

After measuring the distance, Jenkinson made it official that the ball did travel over 600 feet.

"There is enough accurate data to prove it went over 600 feet, and I can fairly conclude that," acknowledged Jenkinson. "I suspect no matter what distance, the ball did travel over 600 feet. I don't know of another bat-

ted ball hit that far, but Babe's home run did go the distance measured and that is the longest home run on record."

Jenkinson has been researching Babe Ruth for 23 years, and added he is a bit disappointed



Ruth

that he couldn't get an accurate measurement on the home run.

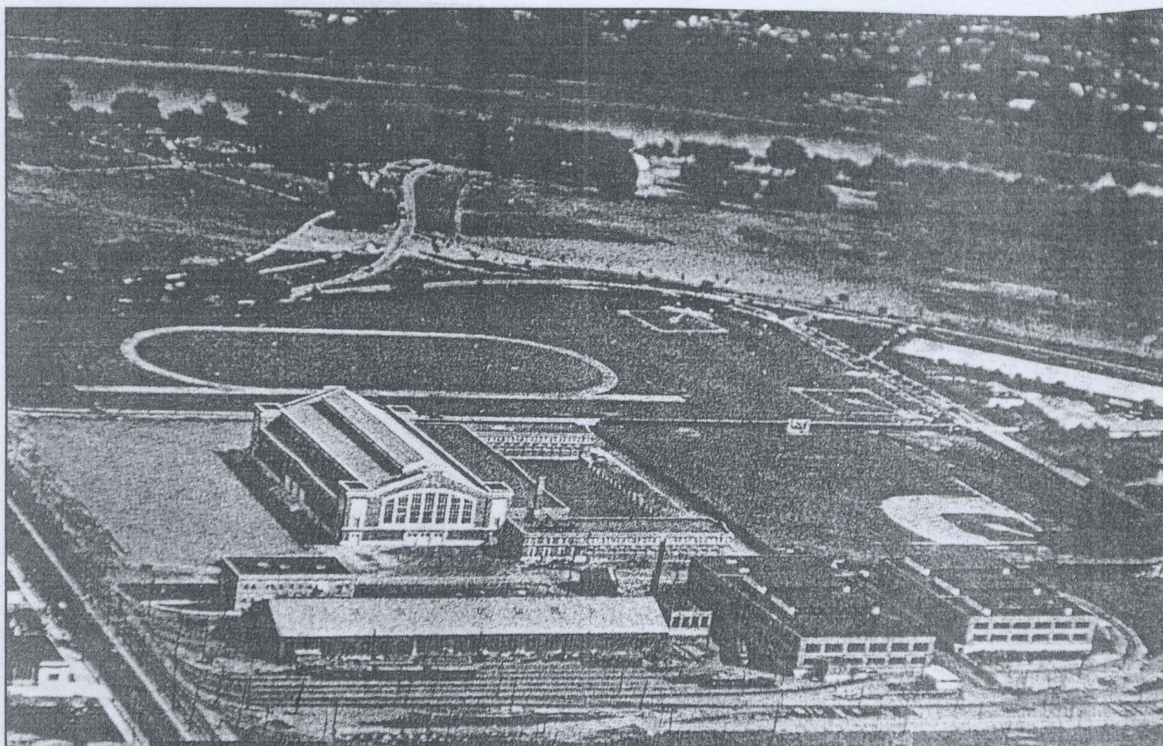
"I'm slightly dieheartened because I would have loved to know exactly how far it was hit. Babe took

his power for granted but when you think about today's player, with all the training, computerized bats and the chemical substances, Babe still tops them all."

Ruth was no stranger to the area. He made frequent visits to hunt and fish and developed many friendships with local residents.

"Babe loved the people in this area," Jenkinson said. "He spent a lot of time here and had good friends in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area.

"If anything, the people from this area can say the longest baseball ball ever hit was right here in their own backyard."



New York Yankee slugger Babe Ruth belted a towering home run from home plate of Wilkes-Barre's Artillery Park, bottom right, over to the running track of Kirby Park, center, at the conclusion of a 1926 exhibition game. Baseball historian Bill Jenkinson came to town Thursday to measure the distance. This aerial view by the Ace Hoffman photo studio dates from the early or mid-1930s, just a few years after the event. The track in this photo might be in a slightly different location than it was in 1926.

BABE

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longest ball in competitive baseball history was hit here."

Or can they?

Ruth hit the ball after playing in an exhibition game between Larksville and the Hughesstown Colts. Playing for the Colts, Ruth went 0-for-2 during the six-inning exhibition.

Afterward, with a crowd of more than 1,200 watching, he challenged pitcher Ernie Corkran of Pittston to "throw his fastest pitch over the plate" — bringing the "competitive" aspect of the event into question.

Nonetheless, one day later, an Associated Press story gave the most descriptive account of the blast.

"(The) ball cleared right field fence 400 feet from the plate by more than 40 feet and was still ascending. The ball landed on the far side of the running track of a high school athletic field in Kirby Park. Officials estimated the length at 650 feet."

No one ever provided the exact distance of the blast and Jenkinson was hoping to calculate the distance Thursday morning. But after using the photo and the newspaper accounts, the Philadelphia resident came up with an unbelievable distance of 825 feet, 8 inches.

"I don't believe anyone, including Babe Ruth, can hit a baseball 800 feet," said Jenkinson. "I think we can fairly

conclude that this ball traveled well over 600 feet. There's no question about where the ball landed. There's several accounts that says the ball landed on the far side of the running track.

"It's just a question of whether or not the running track and home plate are in the same location. I think we're going to find the running track was moved back from where it was in 1926."

After hitting the ball, Ruth said it was the farthest he'd ever hit a ball. He asked club officials to measure the shot and let him know the exact distance, a rare request for Ruth.

"I've personally researched more than 1,000 home runs hit by Babe Ruth and this is the only time when he asked someone to measure how far it went," said Jenkinson, who has been researching home runs for the past 23 years.

"I think there are two things that make this particular home run unique. It was the only time Ruth asked for the home run to be measured. And immediately after he hit the it, he declared it to be the farthest ball he'd ever hit."

Jenkinson says Ruth had a special place in his heart for the Wilkes-Barre area. After the exhibition game, Ruth made an unannounced visit to Mercy Hospital. He visited patients, including some in the children's ward, and went from bed to bed shaking hands with the patients. Newspaper accounts said Ruth was emotional when leaving the hospital.

"Babe Ruth loved the people in this area," Jenkinson said.



TIMES LEADER STAFF PHOTOS/FRED ADAMS

Bill Jenkinson stands at home plate at Artillery Park in Wilkes-Barre and points in the direction of the hit by Babe Ruth.

"He came here to hunt and fish during the off-season. This was one of his favorite off-season destinations. He had a lot of good friends here."

Jenkinson, who is writing a soon-to-be published book about home runs, is hoping a local resident with extensive knowledge of the area can help determine the exact distance of the shot.

But even if that never hap-

pens, Jenkinson says Artillery Park will have a place in baseball lore.

"I think no matter what direction this (research) takes, we're going to find out that the ball traveled well over 600 feet," he said. "I don't think there's any way it didn't. All of the data clearly points in that direction. I don't know of another batted ball in the history of the sport that's gone this far."