Detroit did not issue uniform numbers until 1931, making them a bit of a late adapter. Most teams permanently adopted uniform numbers in the late ’20s or early ’30s. There were earlier cases of teams experimenting with numbers for a few games (the 1916 Indians, 1923 Cardinals, even a few 19th century teams) but most teams in Cobb’s era did not use them. Finally in 1929, the Indians and Yankees started issuing numbers, and most teams started doing it within a few years. As for Cobb, he played for Detroit 1905-26, and played for the A’s 1927-28. Thus, he never in 24 MLB seasons appeared on a team that issued uniform numbers.