

## **Emil Sick's Seattle Rainiers were a big hit**

By Rich La Susa #609

Many breweries have had business relationships with minor league teams, but they mostly were limited to sponsorships, including radio and TV commercial spots and stadium signage.

In 1938, Seattle beer baron Emil Sick, owner of Sick's Rainier Brewing Co., purchased the Seattle Indians of the Pacific Coast League. Sick had made millions selling his Rainier Beer in the West.

He changed the nickname from Indians to Rainiers, and the team played in the new Sick's Stadium, financed mostly by Sick's fortune and revenues from his thriving brewery. The Rainiers were perennial contenders, winning the PCL championship in 1939-1941, 1951 and 1955.

After Sick died in 1964, his numerous heirs renamed the stadium Sicks' (possessive form) to reflect multiple ownership. They then sold the team in 1965. The new owners later renamed the team the Seattle Angels because it had become an affiliate of the Los Angeles Angels of the American League.

The stadium, which was sold to the city of Seattle, had a major claim to fame—or infamy—that had nothing to do with the team. For one season, 1969, it was home to the American League's new Seattle Pilots. The franchise, plagued by financial problems, was sold in bankruptcy court after the season, moved to Milwaukee in 1970, and became the Brewers. Miller High Life would become its major sponsor.

Emil Sick wasn't the first brewer to own a minor league baseball team. That honor goes to Col. Jacob Ruppert. In 1931, as the first step in building a "farm system" to develop players for his Yankees, he purchased the Newark Bears of the International League—and promptly rechristened the ballpark (named Davids' Stadium after the team's original owner, Charles L. Davids) as Ruppert Stadium. The Bears played there from 1926 to 1949, after which the team moved to Springfield, MA.

Photo Caption

*This holiday postcard celebrates the Seattle Rainiers' 1951 Championship season.*