

City Beat

There are eight million stories in my albums. This is one of them...

Frequent advertiser in the *Town Crier* was Rippe's Cafe—and the May 17, 1919 edition of the Seattle paper was no exception. Rippe's touted itself on being "a small house with a big reputation."

Frank Rippe, having worked at the Saltair Restaurant in Salt Lake City, wanted to start his own restaurant in Seattle. And in 1910, he did. There were a few stools lining a counter and a stairway that lead to a balcony where tables for ladies were available. The restaurant was, a critic wrote, "just that chummy sort of cafe where foods are carefully prepared." The place prospered. He doubled his seating capacity at 314 Pike Street.

He moved his restaurant to 1423 Fourth Avenue. He decided to make the eatery more elegant. There was mahogany woodwork throughout, a long lunch counter, booths on the lower floor and balcony and a separate room for ladies. The restaurant had white tablecloths, heavy silver, and fancy menus (including oysters Rockefeller). Seattle's elite had many a meal there, as did luminaries from far afield. President Calvin Coolidge ate at Rippe's. So did Hollywood starlet Jean Harlow.

Rippe passed away in 1934. His widow Pearl continued to run the cafe until 1940 when she closed its doors. "The competition," she said, "of corner drugstores, quick-lunch places and one-arm tables forced us to close while still in good financial condition."

The restaurant was sold to theater magnate John Von Herberg who changed the name from Rippe's to Von's. Von's Cafe was open 24 hours, had over 700 items on their menu (there were ten preparations for crab alone on the menu), and was popular amongst Seattle's hoi polloi until 2013 when it, too, closed.

Under different ownership, it moved and reopened as Von's 1000 Spirits on 1st Avenue. There now, it touts itself as a Seattle sourdough scratch kitchen with small batch house crafted spirits.

