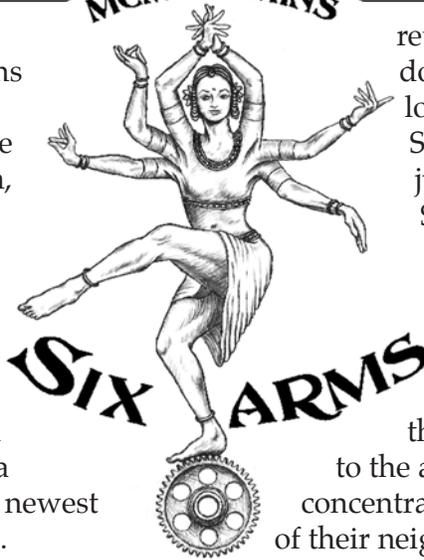


Great art, plumbing sculptures and music are hallmarks of the Six Arms pub, but its most alluring feature may be the floor-to-ceiling windows that line its walls. Just on the edge of downtown, Six Arms' picture windows are ideally suited for an afternoon of happy-hour people watching. While they nicely frame one of Seattle's hippest neighborhoods, that, of course, was not their intended purpose. The huge panes of glass were originally intended to allow passers-by to peer *in*, to catch a glimpse of the showroom floor and the newest automotive technology on display here.

Cars and car accessories were the focus of this building for decades, but well before the auto industry made inroads into Capitol Hill, before it was even *called* Capitol Hill, this area was actually an early residential community. From the city's original 1850s waterfront settlement, development spread steadily up the slopes of the surrounding hills so that by 1895 there was a large house on this site. The house was elevated above street grade and must have commanded an incredible view of the city, framed by Elliot Bay. For most of its brief existence the house was the residence of Benjamin and Catherine Sheets, and their large family.

The Sheets seemed to be a close family. How close? Benjamin and Catherine traveled from Kansas to Seattle with their seven kids in 1889. Ten years later, in 1900, Benjamin and Catherine still had five of their kids living with them--the oldest was 31 years old--plus two boarders. A decade later Benjamin had passed, but Catherine was not lonely as 8 kids and grandkids, plus 4 boarders all lived in the family home. Not only did the Sheets live together, many of them worked together too. Four of Catherine's boys ran the Sheets Brothers Cigar Manufacturers, a



retailer and producer of both Cuban and domestic cigars. Their shop was initially located downtown at 1410 Second Street, although later listings have them just up the street from here at 614 Pike Street.

Beginning in the early 1900s the Sheets would have witnessed the gradual--but dramatic--evolution of this neighborhood into Seattle's "Auto Row." Since the advent of the automobile, businesses related to the automotive industry began to concentrate along Pike. As more and more of their neighbors became ventures catering to some aspect of cars, it's not hard to imagine that the Sheets' affection for their spot on the hill waned. The present brick commercial building replaced the house in 1917.

By then, this stretch of road, from about 8th Avenue to Broadway, was dense with dealerships, repair garages, machine shops and parts stores. Even one of the city's first motorcycle dealerships, Hirsch's Harley-Davidson Motorcycle and Bicycle Co. was located just across Pike Street from the Six Arms.

The new building at Pike and Melrose was ideally situated to take advantage of the auto boom of the teens and twenties. It was located on the border of two rapidly up-and-coming neighborhoods, First Hill to the south and Capitol Hill to the north. Additionally, it sat squarely on the route of one of Seattle's main streetcar lines. The grade on Pike Street was more favorable than Union or Pine, and by the turn of the century, streetcars regularly clamored up the hill from the central business downtown district up to Broadway and beyond. By 1920, there were as many as five streetcar routes that went right by the storefront here.

Perhaps the first tenant to occupy the Six Arms' spot was the once prolific Keaton Tire & Rubber Co., a West Coast chain that stretched from LA to Seattle. The pioneering tire manufacturer boasted a unique design, described as "scientific non-skid." The company slogan was "Where Others Slip, Keatons Grip." To prove the claim in 1917--likely the same year the company moved into this building--a Keaton-equipped Packard made the eighty mile trip, from Akron to Cleveland and back through snow and ice. Newspapers and tire men of the day praised the feat. Unfortunately, the



In 1909, the corner of E. Pike St. and Melrose Ave was dominated by the Sheet's family home. *UW Special Collections Lee 56.*





A look west down E. Pike St. from Minor Ave. in 1921 affords a clear view of the Six Arms' building. *UW Special Collections, SMR 304*

business did not retain its grip with the public, and by 1925 the company had been absorbed by another and closed its Pike Street store. Shortly after, Peerless Motor Car moved in to the Six Arms space.

Peerless autos were high-end, limited-production luxury automobiles, one of the most expensive cars sold in the United States. During the teens and twenties, Peerless helped set the standards for auto engineering and was responsible for many of the innovations we take for granted today, including a hood covering the engine, an accelerator pedal, an electric starter and electric rather than oil headlights, to name a few. An early Peerless car even set the world land-speed record.

When Peerless cars first filled this showroom they had just restyled their entire line to reflect the trendy and chic "Roaring Twenties." The new, less-

conservative styling was intended to expand their market share. Similarly, their choice of this specific location on Auto Row was made likely because it was just across Melrose from one of Peerless's major competitors, Packard Autos. Packard and Peerless had been fierce rivals in the high-end auto market for more than two decades, and one can only imagine the competition between the dealers here at Pike and Melrose as potential buyers hopped off the streetcars!

NEW!
the Beautiful
1929
Six-81

It's here! And what a car! All those fine ideas you instinctively associate with Peerless have been tangibly expressed. Here's a car true to Peerless tradition—a car far in advance of its day. Build the way Peerless knows how to build for quality, sturdiness, long life . . . With clear, vivid beauty that is clearest of truth, marvelous performance.

Swift, eager power . . . Sure-footed mastery of the road . . . Smooth, silent, luxurious travel, all have revealed the ultimate in this 1929 Peerless.

The creative genius that has won hosts of friends for Peerless is summed up in the new Six-81. We know that no one can drive this car without paying spontaneous tribute to its transcendent worth.

Grand models, \$100 and up at factory.

PEERLESS MOTOR CAR CORPORATION - Cleveland, Ohio

P E E R L E S S
ALL THAT'S THE NAME IMPLIES

The old Packard building is now the Utrecht Art building and still commands much of the view out of Six Arms' windows.

Because of its successes during the '20s, Peerless unveiled a prototype all-aluminum V-16 engine in 1931 to power their next generation of cars. But the market crash of 1929 and the growing economic depression made it increasingly difficult

to survive in the luxury auto business. Late in 1931, Peerless pulled out of the auto business—and out of the Six Arms' building—and began, of all things, to brew beer. In late 1933, coinciding with the repeal of Prohibition, a retooled Peerless car factory in Cleveland, OH, began brewing Carling Black Label beer with the same president, directors and stockholders as the automobile manufacturer formerly known as the Peerless Motor Car Company.

After Peerless vacated to swap brakes for beer, the building remained tied to the auto industry as a series of tenants occupied the building. From 1933 to 1950 it was Gallagher's Used Cars, then Smith Grant Motors from '50 to about 1965. After decades of displaying used cars, an auto body shop moved in. Damaged cars were followed by an engine rebuilding service, and then finally a machine shop. The transition from luxury vehicles to used cars and eventually a machine shop mirrored changes in the auto industry, but it also reflected on the neighborhood itself. By the early 1980s, as a sign of the evolving role of E. Pike Street, an architect, landscape artist and eventually a flower shop moved into this building. In 1995, McMenamins Six



By 1937 used cars were the features seen through Six Arm's windows.

Arms became heir to the building's rich automotive heritage.

Fast-talking dealers and lumbering streetcars are no longer the scene out of the picture windows; nor is this neighborhood considered "Auto Row" any longer. Still, many of the modern-day sights viewed through these windows are no less interesting. Come take a seat at one of the booths, enjoy a handcrafted (like the limited-production Peerless!) ale brewed on site and imagine you are in the bench seat of a shiny, brand-new Peerless Motor Car, a marvel of cutting-edge, gas-powered technology!