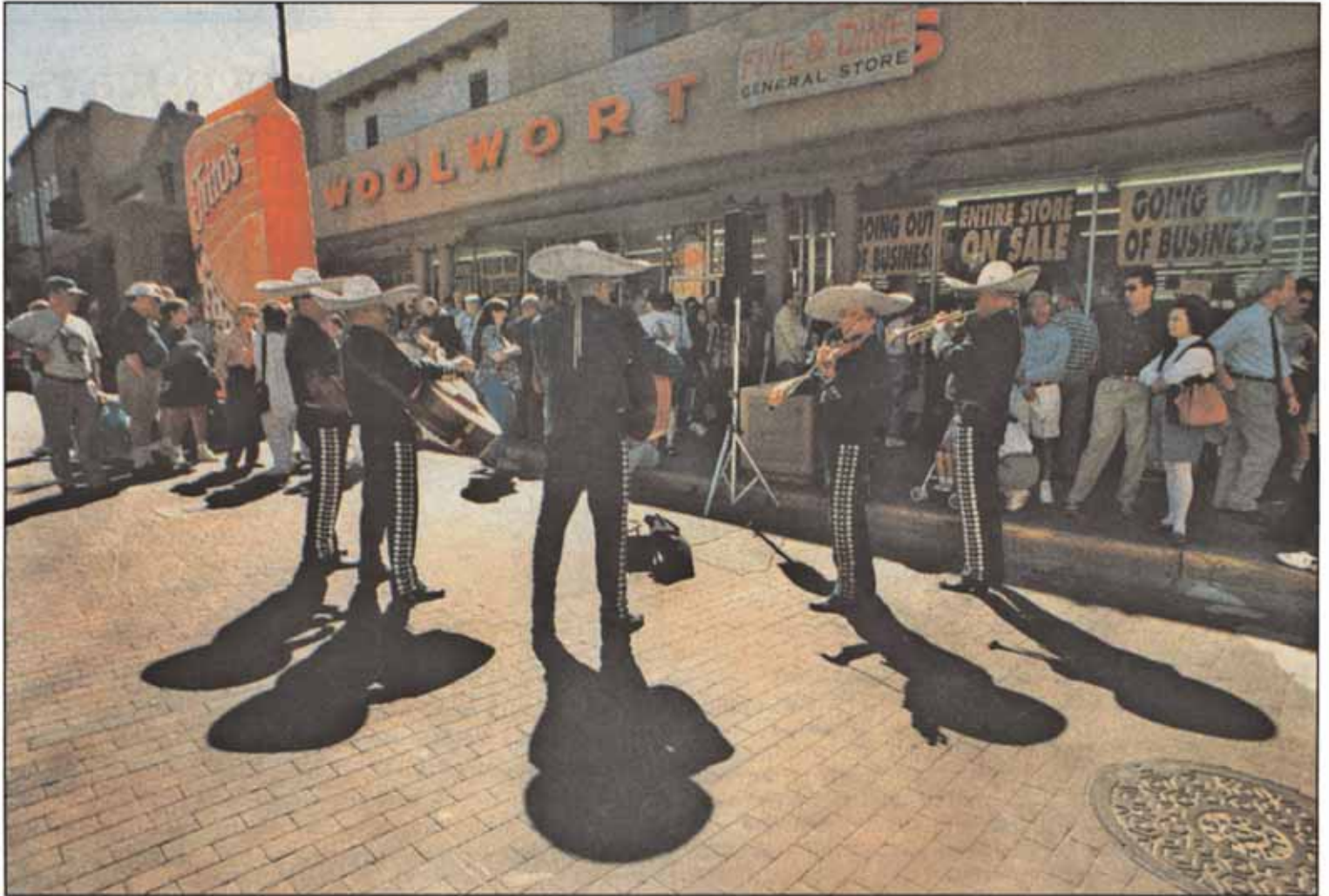


Five-and-dime coming back to the Plaza



Photos by Clyde Mueller/The New Mexican

Mariachi Alama plays in front of a sign proclaiming Santa Fe's new Five & Dime General Store during a celebration Thursday announcing the opening of the store that will take the place of Woolworth's.



To celebrate the occasion, Bernice Stout, left, a Woolworth's employee for 32 years, presents a Frito pie to Winifred Braden, part owner of the Woolworth's property.

Locals: We'll be happy to have it back

By **BRUNO J. NAVARRO**
The New Mexican

The Frito pie is here to stay.

And Santa Fe residents are pleased that there will still be a place on the Plaza to buy those inexpensive, everyday items sold by the soon-to-be-closed Woolworth's.

"As long as they're keeping Frito pies, I'm happy," said Monica Montoya, director of the Small Business Development Center at Santa Fe Community College. She

added, however: "I've conducted more business over Icees than Frito pies."

The Five & Dime General Store, a new, locally owned company, will occupy one-third of the San Francisco Street space where Woolworth's has stood since 1935.

"Hopefully, we'll get something as wonderful in the other two-thirds of the space," Montoya said.

The new owners intend to retain much of the Woolworth's character, including Frito pies and the employee who brought them to town, Teresa Hernandez.

"It's my bread and butter, so I plan to do a good job," said Hernandez, 66, who will also have part-ownership in the new store.

Hernandez began working at the store in 1953 and is credited with bringing the Frito pie to the 62-year-old store.

"This is the only place I ever worked," she said.

Locals and out-of-town visitors

rummaged through sparse, discounted merchandise and stood on line before noon Thursday for a free celebratory bag of Frito corn chips doused in onions, cheese and red chile Hernandez made the night before.

"I finished making chile at midnight," she said after the last of nearly 200 servings were doled out.

Santa Fe County Sheriff Benjie Montaño, who attended St.



Michael's High School when it was nearby on Old Santa Fe Trail, said he was "very happy" to hear the news.

"We used to go there for lunch, even though it was a closed campus," he chuckled. "What I used to like was getting a cheese sandwich and a Coke. I'm glad to see it."

Graham Murrough, a Santa Fe resident for four years who picked up a couple of body pillows Thursday at 40 percent off, hoped the new store would keep prices close to the discounts offered in Woolworth's waning days.

"This is the way the city should be — much more affordable," he said.

"I think it'd be great," said Josh Riebsomer, a local resident accompanying Murrough. "It'll definitely keep the Plaza spirit."

But for many people passing through the store, there was a nostalgia for an era when a pocketful of change offered a world of possibilities.

Bev Ryan, visiting from Austin with her husband, George, fondly recalled the five-and-dimes of her youth.

"We used to take a dollar on a Saturday, and we'd spend all day," she said.

Anthony Fuentes, of Kansas City, Mo., watched with surprise the mariachi band performance that accompanied the announcement of the new store's arrival.

"You don't see many five-and-dimes in the nation," he said. "It makes you feel like home."

Jackalope owner Darby McQuade said he saw the move as an opportunity for the downtown area to prosper, despite the existence of large retail stores.

"Santa Fe's downtown didn't get creamed by malls," he said. "The businesses that are at risk are the malls. They've become the ones getting eaten."

McQuade added that public perception may change in time.

"I would predict that 10, 20 years from now, we'll be reading about how good the food used to be in the food court in the malls and be nostalgic, missing that good cuisine."

**'the Frito pie Lady,'
hand out free Five &
Dime General Store
T-shirts Thursday.**

Clyde Mueller
The New Mexican

Woolworth's is still going out of business, but another general store selling Frito pies will take its place

By **BOB QUICK**
The New Mexican

Fear not, Frito pie lovers: The Five & Dime General Store is on the way to the Plaza and owners will keep both the original pie and the woman who first brought the treat to Santa Fe.

Santa Fe attorney Earl Potter, his wife, Deborah, and a small group of investors Thursday announced a plan to create the locally owned Five & Dime in part of the space occupied by Woolworth's.

The store will carry many of the same items that Woolworth's does, including health and beauty aids, tourist souvenirs, snacks, film and, most important of all, Frito pies.

Among the investors are Mike Collins, the current manager of Woolworth's, who will manage Five & Dime, which is expected to open in February; and Teresa Hernandez, "the Frito pie lady," who came up with the popular dish and retired from the store after more than 40 years working there. She will be a part-time employee at the new store.

The new store will employ many Woolworth's employees who have either retired or will be losing their jobs when the Woolworth's closes in mid-October after 62 years in downtown Santa Fe.

The closing was the result of F.W. Woolworth Corp.'s decision in July to phase out all of its general merchandise stores around the United States.

Potter announced the plan to a festive gathering of about 100 people on the Plaza. They were entertained by a mariachi band and, if they were lucky, enjoyed a free Frito pie dished out by former Woolworth's employees. But the pies ran out before the line did.

The new store "will have the same fixtures, the same lights and the same line of products," Potter said to the cheers of listeners. "It also will have two additional public restrooms."

There also will be a new back entrance leading from the store to Water Street. That entrance to Woolworth's is in a part of the building owned by Santa Fe art dealer Gerald Peters.

Potter urged people to shop at the new business. "It's like any

other new business," he said. "If you don't support it, it won't stay open."

Santa Fe Mayor Debbie Jaramillo welcomed the plan for Five & Dime, calling it "a reminder of the past as we move forward." The new store shows that "we haven't lost everything."

In an interview before the ceremony, Potter said the new store wouldn't have been possible without the help of Winifred Braden, who owns a third of the Woolworth's building and accepted less in rent than she might have made if the space had been leased to a tourist-oriented business.

"She made it possible," he said.

Braden's part of the store is a 25-foot-wide parcel running from front to back and next to Haagen-Dazs.

Potter said his group has hired local architect Richard Martinez to oversee the renovation of the store. The plan has already been submitted to the Historic Design Review Board, which oversees the exterior of buildings in the historic district, he said.

Potter said there will be minimal change made to the Woolworth building for the new store.

Peters' spokeswoman, Denise Hill, said Peters thought the new store was "wonderful."

Hill also said that Peters criteria for the part of the building that he owns haven't changed as a result of the Five & Dime. And that means any business that goes into the space will cater to pedestrian traffic, not vehicles, and draw as many locals as possible.

Hill said local architect Steve Robinson is gathering community input about Peters' part of the Woolworth building.

Potter said his group signed a 35-year lease for the Five & Dime space, but he declined to say how much the store would pay in rent, which is about 7,000 square feet in size.

Of that space, about 5,000 square feet is retail, the other 2,000 is in the building's basement and used for storage, offices and employee lockers.

Rents on the Plaza run from

\$50 to \$80 per square foot and up, depending on the location.

Braden's attorney, Harold Fabre, who is based in Portland, said previously that his client was paid \$5,000 per month in rent for the Woolworth space, or \$60,000 per year.

Potter said the investor group he and his wife put together are putting up \$500,000 to establish Five & Dime.

Potter said he and his wife came up with idea for the business one morning about two months ago over the breakfast table and then began working to put the plan into action.

Collins had already been in touch with Braden about doing something similar, and things came together rapidly, he said.

Braden, who is 80 and lives in Peoria, Ariz., near Phoenix, inherited part of the Woolworth building from an aunt back in the mid-1950s and has owned it since then.

Braden also declined how much rent she will receive from the store, but she said, "I'm sure it will be adequate for me."

As she spoke, Braden and Fabre shared a Frito pie, which, both said, they had never eaten before.

Fabre said his client had been willing to accept below-market rent for the space because she was so eager to duplicate the Woolworth store in the building.

"She wants the same relationship she had with Woolworth," Fabre said.

Collins, the manager of the new store, said Five & Dime will have a Frito pie stand but not the lunch counter the original Woolworth's did.

Nor will Five & Dime carry furniture, bedding, bicycles and other slow-moving merchandise that Woolworth's featured.

In the old store, "We generated 70 percent of our revenue with 30 percent of the items" in the store, Collins said, adding that Five & Dime is projected to have annual revenues of about \$1 million.

That is much less than Woolworth's annual revenues of \$3 million, but Five & Dime will have much lower expenses than Woolworth's did, Collins said.

STORE

Continued from Page A-1

Collins has been with Woolworth's since he started as a stocker in a San Francisco store. He has managed the Santa Fe Woolworth's for the past four years.

Earl Potter, who first came to New Mexico in 1968 as a VISTA volunteer, is a founding partner

of the law firm of Potter, Mills and Bateman.

Deborah Potter is a 20-year member of the New Mexico Democratic Party and a board member of many arts organizations on the local and national level.

The Potters are principals in

the Santa Fe Hospitality Co., which manages and has an ownership in the Hotel Santa Fe and a Sleep Inn in Albuquerque.

Other investors in Five & Dime General Store are Rick Brenner, Ron and Barbara Balzer, Mary Lee and Justin Colin, Cody Potter and Rob Higgins.