



DARON.DEAN@STAUGUSTINE.COM A woman walks by a vacant building at 107 St. George St. that is soon to become a Five & Dime General Store Tuesday afternoon, November, 12, 2013.

## Five & Dime adding store in St. Augustine

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By STUART KORFHAGE

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A throwback store in the nation's oldest city almost has to be a match.

That's the feeling for executives of Five & Dime General Stores, which is opening a new outlet on St. Augustine's St. George Street.

The convenience/tourist store chain already operates in cities such as Santa Fe, N.M., Charleston, S.C. and Savannah, Ga., among other places.

"St. Augustine seemed like a very logical place," Five & Dime chairman and co-manager Earl Potter said Monday.

"(And St. George Street) is an ideal spot for us to do the same kind of store for locals and tourists alike."

The new store will be at 107 St. George St. The lease has been signed, but Potter said there will be some major renovation work required before the store will be ready to open. Potter said he hopes to open in the summer or fall of 2014.

The Five & Dime General Store company came about from the desire to preserve a Woolworth's in Santa Fe, N.M. Potter, an attorney and hotelier in town, decided to take over the store at the urging of his wife, Deborah.

The manager at the store was Mike Collins, who started working for Woolworth's as a teenager. He went on to

become a district manager but wound up the store manager in Santa Fe as the company downsized.

Potter and Collins soon formed a business relationship, and the old Woolworth's opened as the first Five & Dime in 1998. Collins is now CEO and co-manager of UTBW ("Used To Be Woolworth's"), LLC.

The fact that the nine-store chain rose from the ashes of Woolworth's adds historical significance for St. Augustine. The local Woolworth's here was the site of a famous sit-in by black youths at the lunch counter in 1963. The store closed Oct. 13, 1997.

Potter said he's been trying to get an appropriate spot for the new store in St. Augustine for more than three years. He did consider the old Woolworth's site on King Street, but it is currently occupied by a Wells Fargo branch office.

"We did look at that site, but we just feel like St. George is wonderful spot," Potter said.

The new Five & Dime in St. Augustine should fit the company profile.

All the other stores are located in tourist areas and offer a mix of basic staples as well as local offerings and souvenirs. (That would make carrying datil pepper-flavored items a given.)

"We've been looking at St. Augustine for a long time," Collins said. "It's what I refer to as a true tourist destination.

"I think we'll offer a lot to St. Augustine. We have a lot of fun merchandise."

Because there are currently no plans for a food counter, one thing St. Augustine visitors won't get at the Five & Dime here is the famous Frito pie. You'll still have to go to Santa Fe for that.

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