



F.W. Woolworth and the American Five and Dime: A Social History

Jean Maddern Pitrone

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For more than a century, Woolworth's five and dime stores represented Americana, mirroring the country's growth, its good times and bad, its foibles and its fads. The chain was founded by Frank W. Woolworth, who in 1879 established two stores—one in Utica, New York, which failed and was closed down, and another in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which succeeded and marked the beginning of the legacy of the Woolworth's Five and Tens. This work is a full account of the chain, its rags-to-riches founder, Frank W. Woolworth, and his flamboyant and tragic descendants. It traces the important role that Woolworth stores played in the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, the lunch counter sit-ins that began in Greensboro, North Carolina, as part of the Civil Rights movement (which tainted Woolworth's as the Big Business enemy of the downtrodden), and the gradual disintegration of the five and tens during the 1980s and early 1990s. The dramatic story is enhanced with important photos featuring such events as the closing of a Woolworth's in Germany by Nazi soldiers and the Greensboro sit-in as well as archival photos from Woolworth's 40th, 50th, and 60th anniversary booklets.

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