The Duke City has long been the center of the state's restaurant and retail scene — from Old Town to Nob Hill to major malls.

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When the time New Mexico state, the shopping and restaurant hub in the Duke City had moved from Old Town to Downtown.

The reason for that in the early days of statehood: the Santa Fe Railway.

“The railroad built Albuquerque,” says Randy Sanchez, the general manager of Coronado Shopping Center and chairman of the New Mexico Retail Association. “Retail and restaurants catered to the railroad.”

And as the largest city in the state, Albuquerque offered — and continues to offer — more shopping options for the state’s residents, ranging from Old Town to three major malls to the upscale ABQ Uptown.

In other communities, old Main Street merchants were the mainstay for retail until they started to struggle to compete with Walmart, Home Depot, Lowe’s and other national chains. The large merchandisers changed the face of retail and downtowns everywhere.

“It’s no secret that small towns in New Mexico saw mom-and-pop close when national retailers moved in,” Sanchez says.

Small communities in New Mexico have held on to some locally owned businesses. Tiny San Antonio, for example, is home to the Owl Cafe and other local retail operations, says Rowena Baca. She is the co-owner of the Owl Cafe, which started as a grocery store in San Antonio in 1939 and continues to thrive, as its green chili chile entrepreneurs lure visitor from all over.

ABQ Uptown brought more high-end shopping to the area near Winrock mall in 2000. Wagon In Old Town in the 1970s when her family made trips to town from Cuba, N.M. That was one of the first retailers to open in the area, she says. Coleman also remembers the opening of La Placita and the Basket Shop (now called the Aceves Old Town Basket and Rug Shop). All three are still in Old Town.

Coleman purchased an old hacienda at 2111 Church St. in 1993, which is now Church Street Cafe. In the remodeling process, she discovered newspaper clippings from the 1900s.

Coleman and the Journal browsed through them, looking at ads for companies that were big during that time. Many brought back memories of shopping as a child in Downtown, including in Madewell, a jewelry store, and Paris Shoe Store.

The clips also included ads for the Kimo theater; Sunshine Movies, now the Sunshine Theater; Strong- Thorne Mortuary; Sears Roebuck and Co.; Gales Motor Co.; Montgomery Ward; Albuquerque lumber Co. and others.

Sanches also has memories of shopping — and eating — Downtown. He recalls shopping as a child with his family at J.C. Penney and Sears and eating at the Royal Fork restaurant of Central and his family.

“We’d go there at least once a week,” he says. “It was all you could eat and free ice cream.”

Growth of malls

Winrock, an open-air mall, was built in 1962 (named after Winthrop Rockefeller) on farmland east of the city’s center, Sanchez says. In 1964, Sears Homart Development Co. built Coronado. In 1972, Coronado was purchased by Hahn, a San Diego-based company that expanded and covered the shopping center.

“That was about the time retailers migrated from Downtown to shopping centers,” Sanchez says, and Albuquerque’s Uptown area with its two malls became the “retail mecca” for Albuquerque and the state.

The city’s third mall, Cottonwood Mall on the east side, opened in 1996. Uptown now also includes ABQ Uptown, an upscale, outdoor mall that opened in 2006.

Nob Hill has also established itself as a retail destination in the state.

And Downtown continues to undergo revitalization efforts, which have included new restaurants, nightclubs and retail offerings.
SNAPSHOTS IN NEW MEXICO RETAIL HIST

DILLARD’S
Entered New Mexico in 1972 in Albuquerque at Winrock Center. There are six stores currently operating in the state.

MCDONALD’S
The first McDonald’s in Albuquerque opened in 1959 at 5900 Menaul Blvd. NE. McDonald's currently has 107 restaurants throughout New Mexico.

WALMART
The first store in New Mexico opened in Hobbs in 1983. There are currently 32 Supercenters, three Discount Stores, two Neighborhood Markets, seven Sam’s Clubs and a Distribution Center in the state.

GALLES MOTOR CO.
The family-owned dealership was founded in Albuquerque in 1908. It is the oldest continuously operating auto dealer in Albuquerque, according to the New Mexico Automotive Dealers Association.

LA POSTA DE MESILLA RESTAURANT
Opened in 1939 by Katy Griggs Camunez; it occupies 10,000 square feet of the La Posta Compound. After Katy passed away, the property and business were acquired by a great-niece, Jerean Camunez Hutchinson, and her husband, Tom, aka “Hutch.” The restaurant serves dishes from recipes handed down over the years from the Fountain, Chavez and Griggs families.

PARIS SHOE STORE
Founded in 1904 by Italian immigrant Pomplio Matteucci, it opened first as a shoe repair shop, but later became a full-service shoe store. By the 1950s, the store moved to Third and Central, with a second location in Nob Hill. Paris Shoes was a nationally known and respected company. Eventually it had six locations, but they closed by 1995 or 1996, said Bob Matteucci, the great-grandson of Pomplio, who opened Shoes on a Shoestring in 1990 and sold it in 2003. He is now a family law attorney.

TARGET
Opened its first two locations in Albuquerque in 1988 at 11120 Lomas Blvd. NE and 8710 Montgomery Blvd. NE. It has since added new stores in Albuquerque, Roswell, Farmington, Las Cruces, Santa Fe and Rio Rancho.

ACEVES OLD TOWN BASKET AND RUG SHOP
Opened in 1956 in Old Town in a building that was built in 1875.

FRENCH FUNERALS CREMATIONS
Family-owned company founded by Chester T. French in 1907 at Fifth Street and Gold Avenue in Downtown Albuquerque and continues today at four locations across the city.

KISTLER-COLLISTER
Opened as J.H. Collister in 1909 in Downtown Albuquerque. By the 1950s it carried fabric, bridal wear and clothing. It moved to San Mateo in the early 1960s, by then becoming the place to go for high fashion. Doug Collister, third-generation owner, lamented the store’s closing in the mid-1990s as a sign of the times.

DION’S
Bill Scott and John Patten opened the first location in 1978 at Juan Tabo and Montgomery NE. There are now 17 Dion’s locations: 10 in Albuquerque, one in Rio Rancho, one in Bernalillo, one in Los Lunas, one in Santa Fe, one in Las Cruces and two in Lubbock, Texas, according to the company’s website.

BUTTERFIELD JEWELERS
In 1945, the Butterfield family moved to Albuquerque and opened its store across from the University of New Mexico. Ernest Bernard Butlerfield Jr. (Bernie) joined his father in business after graduating from Albuquerque High School. Bernie took over the operation of the family business upon the death of his father in 1954. The store moved in 1975 to its current location on San Pedro Boulevard, and Bernie acquired and renamed the center Butterfield Plaza.

WRIGHT
Charles opened Post & Fourth in Albuquerque in 1959. The husband sold it in 1967. The business moved to its current location on Main Street in 1958. It is still owned by the current family.

AMERI
Founded 1936 in The Bla comp.

ROBERTO E. ROSALES/JOURNAL

EL PINTO
A one-room restaurant was opened in 1945 by Connie Thomas. The Thomas family still runs the eatery that now seats more than 1,012 people. Its recipes are still used by the family.

JIM THOMPSON/JOURNAL

JH

ROSE PALMISANO/JOURNAL

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100 YEARS OF STATEHOOD