

James H. Down

September 20, 1877- September 12, 1946

1942 2 years

James H. Down came to southern Nevada in 1919 and settled in Goodsprings where he worked for George A. Fayle at his general store. In 1924, Down moved to Las Vegas and took on a franchise to distribute Studebaker vehicles in the city. He ran for the Clark County Commission in 1942 and served a two-year term on the board. He actively participated in civic affairs in Las Vegas and served as president of the Chamber of Commerce in 1932.



Down was born in Michigan in 1877. His parents both died while he was a young man and he was placed in an orphanage. In 1888, he went to live with Walter A. Down, a farmer. In 1890, Down adopted James. He lived with the Down family and learned farming and later trained as a butcher.

In 1907, Down married. He worked as a carpenter and streetcar operator in Michigan for several years. The couple moved to Portland, Oregon in 1911 and Down worked as the manager of a grocery store. In 1913, he moved to Los Angeles where he resided for the next three years. In 1916, Down moved to Goodsprings, Nevada, where he quickly found work with George A. Fayle.

James Down made the move to Las Vegas in 1923 and opened a franchise selling Studebaker automobiles. He maintained that business until his death. He also operated a Texaco service station at the corner of Main and Carson Streets.

Once in Las Vegas, Down ran for several public offices. In 1927, he ran for the Las Vegas City Commission and lost. He ran again in 1933 and was elected to the City Commission. In 1935, he ran for mayor, but was defeated. In 1937, he attempted to reprise his role as city commissioner, but voters did not elect him. He ran for mayor once again in 1939, but was defeated for that position as well. Down remained active in civic affairs and was named head of the Chamber of Commerce in 1932. He also served on the city planning board and was a member of the public housing authority.

In 1942, Down was elected to the Clark County Commission. During his time on the commission, he focused on public services desperately needed by the growing community, including light, water, and garbage collection. Down lost his reelection bid in 1944, when voters chose Mike E. Leavitt for the commission.

James Down died at the Clark County General Hospital in 1946 after a heart attack. His son, James H. Down, Jr., also served as head of the Chamber of Commerce, served as Justice of the Peace in 1950, and was a member of the Las Vegas Housing Authority for 34 years.