

# Presiding Officers of the Texas Legislature 1846-2016

Prepared by the Research Division  
of the  
Texas Legislative Council

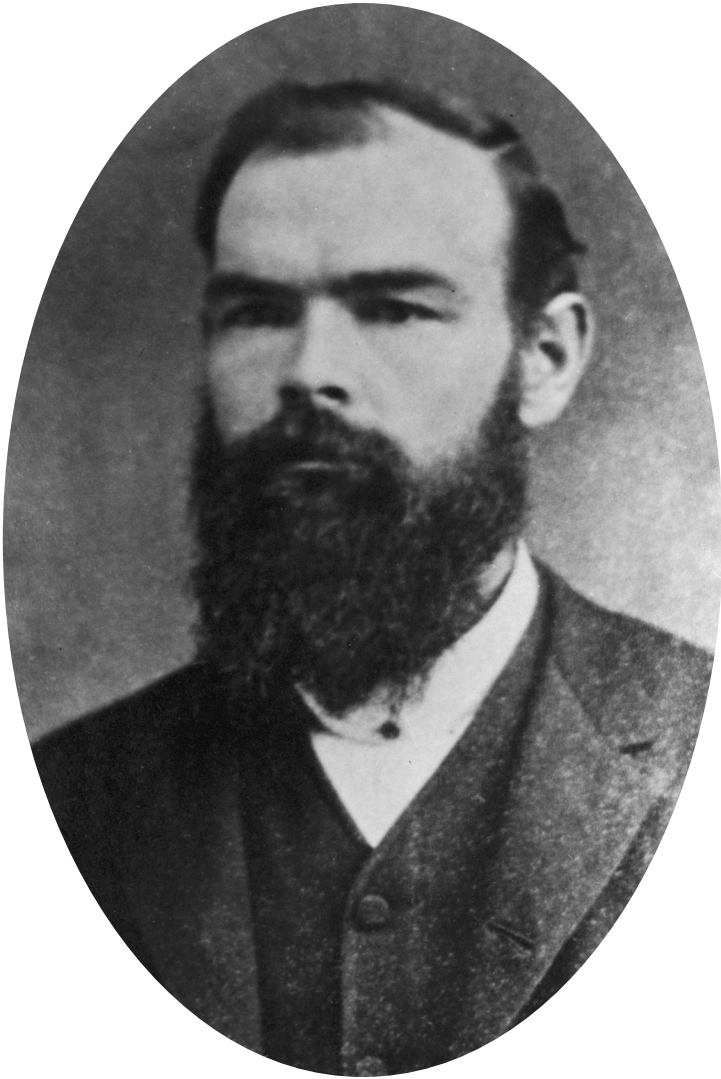
Published by the  
Texas Legislative Council  
P.O. Box 12128  
Austin, TX 78711-2128



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2016

**28th Speaker of the House of Representatives**



**Lafayette Lumpkin Foster**

Of a generation that was too young to fight in the Civil War but nevertheless old enough to be affected by it, Lafayette Lumpkin Foster was born near Cumming in Forsythe County, Georgia, on November 27, 1851. When hostilities erupted, schools throughout much of the South were closed, and the private academy that Foster attended in northern Georgia was no exception. At the end of the war, Foster, like many other Southern youths of his age, saw his family circumstances and financial prospects devastated. Thus, when he arrived in Texas in 1869 at age 18, he was virtually penniless.

Persevering as a common laborer, Foster saved enough money within a few years to continue his education. Settling originally at Horn Hill in Limestone County, he worked laying brick and stone, and picked cotton or did other farm work when the masonry business was slack. Eventually, he entered Waco University (later consolidated with Baylor University) and thereby managed to resume his previous studies.

On leaving college in late 1873, Foster went to Groesbeck. There, as editor and proprietor, he founded the *Limestone New Era* in 1876. The newspaper prospered, Foster became prominent in political circles, and in 1880 he was elected to the house of representatives.

His period in office lasted three terms, covering the 17th through 19th Legislatures. In the 19th Legislature of 1885, his colleagues in the house elected him speaker. Following the expiration of this last legislative term, Governor Lawrence S. Ross appointed Foster commissioner of insurance, statistics, and history. He held that office for four years, from 1887 to 1891, during which time he assisted Attorney General James Stephen Hogg in compelling certain "wildcat" insurance companies to cease doing business in the state. Hogg later became governor and in 1891 appointed Foster as one of the three original members of the newly created Railroad Commission of Texas.

Foster vacated that position in 1895 to become vice president and general manager of the Velasco Terminal Railway. He remained with the railway company for about three years and then resigned and assisted briefly in the 1898 campaign of gubernatorial candidate Joseph D. Sayers. Before the election, which Sayers won, Foster received an appointment as president of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (Texas A&M University).

President of the college until his death in Dallas on December 2, 1901, Foster was responsible for numerous campus improvements during his tenure as its chief administrator. Among other accomplishments, he erected a large new hall devoted solely to scientific agriculture, constructed electric power and sewage disposal plants, and instituted the school's first summer sessions. More important was the contribution he made to practical agriculture throughout Texas by establishing the college's branch agricultural experiment stations. Venerated at a funeral in College Station attended by Governor Sayers and other important state officials, Foster was buried on the grounds of Texas A&M University.