

The first speaker of the Texas House of Representatives following statehood was William E. Crump. A representative from Austin County, Crump was a novice in political circles, having held no previous public office in Texas either in the republic or at the local level. Despite his lack of experience, he was elected speaker on the first ballot without substantial opposition.

William E. Crump was born in North Carolina in late 1809 or early 1810. Nothing is known of his early life, until his marriage to an Englishwoman in that state in 1836. Subsequently, he took his family to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and then in the early 1840s he came to Texas. Settling along the Brazos River east of Bellville, not far north of San Felipe, where Stephen F. Austin had earlier founded the headquarters of his first colony, Crump established a plantation.

In Texas, Crump was involved in one brief military venture, the Vasques Campaign that countered a Mexican raid on San Antonio in 1842. Elected to the house of representatives following statehood, he presided as speaker for most of the 1st Legislature. His tenure was punctuated by a leave of absence lasting from March 3 to March 16, 1846, and by his subsequent resignation on May 1, 1846, 12 days before the legislature adjourned. Among its other accomplishments, the 1st Legislature created over 30 counties, organized a set of courts, established a militia, authorized a state penitentiary, and provided for a regular census and a system of taxation.

Twice, Crump was reelected state representative. He served in the 2nd Legislature and part of the 3rd Legislature, then vacated legislative office completely and returned to his home near Bellville. A large landholder, Crump eventually became one of the wealthiest men in the region.

Crump remained in Austin County the rest of his life, at one time becoming county judge. He died in Bellville on January 3, 1889. "Crump's Ferry," located at his plantation site on the Brazos River near the community of Burleigh, lingers to this day in the memories of older area residents.