

eralists. This dichotomy between Vergara and Sánchez created a quandary for Texas Governor Oscar Colquitt, who wanted to use Vergara's death to bolster his calls for U.S. intervention in Mexico even though he had ties to Sánchez's South Texas political machine.

In the end, Vergara's murderers were never brought to justice, and two months after his death, the U.S. military began its occupation of Veracruz. Adams places Vergara's murder in the context of the tense period of U.S.–Mexico relations leading to U.S. intervention. However, Adams's own evidence suggests that Vergara's death only received the attention that it did because it occurred a week before the killing of British rancher William Benton by Pancho Villa and his men. As Adams states, "The Wilson administration seemed to be more concerned with the William S. Benton murder and the relationship with the British than with the Vergara murder near Laredo" (115). Though the book's title implies that it is mainly about the Vergara Affair, the affair itself is not fully discussed until nearly three-fourths of the way through this short study (140 pages).

Although the Vergara Affair itself is something of a red herring, Adams does a masterful job of summarizing the complex web of international financial and political intrigue in Mexico during the revolution. He draws out the conflicts between American, European, and Japanese interests in Mexico. Adams also highlights the deep economic investments maintained by Texas political and economic elites in Mexico that are often ignored or skimmed over in similar studies. During this period, Adams argues, Wilson had a difficult time balancing these competing interests at a time when his health was declining. Adams's valuable research would be better served by a reframing of the book's main subject along these lines. Readers of Texas and borderlands history will find much of interest in this book, however, which is suitable for use in undergraduate courses on Texas history.

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THOMAS ALTER II

*Battle of the Brazos: A Texas Football Rivalry, a Riot, and a Murder.* By T. G. Webb. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018. Pp. 184. Appendices, photographs, notes, bibliography, index.)

Paid players, expensive coaches, zealous students, and significant financial profits are characteristic of college football in the early twenty-first century. They also describe the Texas A&M–Baylor rivalry of the early 1900s. Sadly, one result of this competition was the death of A&M cadet Charles Sessums during a half-time riot in 1926. Author T. G. Webb believes such an event would be unlikely today. (Many might disagree.) *Battle of the Brazos*, Webb's well-researched and detailed rendering of the

events surrounding the riot and the game, does not attempt to alter those beliefs, but instead successfully informs readers about the violent events that occurred at the Cotton Palace in Waco.

Webb opens his examination of the tragedy with a brief account of the half-time melee, followed by a lengthy discussion of background information, including the history of the Brazos River, the founding of both universities, the early development of college football, the creation of the Southwest Conference, and even a thumbnail biography of former Texas governor Lawrence Sullivan "Sul" Ross. Here, and throughout his account, Webb employs hyperbole, stating, for instance, that "in the fall of 1894 . . . football fever . . . was sweeping the nation" (19). This comment follows Webb's mention of the 1896 A&M season record of 2-0-1; the small number of games suggests that any fever was very mild. Likewise, referring to the death of a student during a brawl as murder tends towards sensationalism.

Disregarding the exaggerations, those familiar with Texas and college football history may still find these lengthy digressions extraneous. But diligent readers are eventually rewarded with a detailed account of a game that denied A&M a Southwest Conference Championship. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, the 20-9 Baylor win was "the most sensational in the traditional history of rivalry between Baylor University and Texas A&M" (57).

While the first section of the book is highly detailed, the real story, grand in its own right, begins in the second part of the book. Here, Webb focuses on the halftime and Sessums's death. With this task, more daunting than a game summary, Webb is exemplary. His narrative follows numerous false trails resulting from anonymous tips, conflicting eyewitness accounts, multiple suspects, and political and institutional cover-ups by both universities and the Waco police. Fortunately, Webb's attention to detail enlightens rather than obscures.

When on December 8, 1926, both colleges agreed to sever "all athletic relations" (102), the search for Sessums's assailant became solely the task of Pinkerton Detective Floyd Benedict. The third part of *Battle of the Brazos* analyzes Benedict's investigation. Once again, readers will appreciate Webb's detailed storytelling, but like Benedict, they will rue the lack of substantive information concerning the young man's death. Thus, the final section of the book is unfortunately the briefest.

This dearth of information is not due to a lack of research; Webb has been diligent in that area, producing a monolith of interest to fans of college athletics and Texas history. Indeed, *Battle of the Brazos* includes a lengthy bibliography for a brief book, including archival sources, books, magazines, and newspapers. Regrettably, neither Benedict nor Webb was able to identify the perpetrator. However, that does not diminish Webb's

ability to dispense valuable knowledge of this unsavory episode in college football's past.