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**Home is Where the Farm is:  
Identity Formation in Antebellum Southern Illinois**

Darrin Reinhardt

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## Introduction

“There can be no neutrals in this war, only patriots or traitors,” exclaimed Stephen A. Douglas on April 25, 1861.<sup>1</sup> Douglas called on the people of Illinois, and the United States, to become patriots and to defend the Union, which meant making national alliances undeniably clear. One could not remain between the two sides. The line was drawn, and people needed to find out what side they were on. In the context of Illinois of the 1860s, these words echoed the long rooted traditions and family alliances between those who had migrated from the Southern states who now had to choose between becoming “patriots”, supporting the North and the state of Illinois where they lived; or to become traitors, and side with their family roots and political ideology. This was true for reputable Illinoisan men such as Congressman John A. Logan. While Congressman Logan denounced “abolitionist Black Republicans,” he believed that the “election of Mr. Lincoln, deplorable as it may be, affords no justification or excuse for overthrowing the republic.”<sup>2</sup> While the Civil War solidified the identities of the “patriots” in Illinois, this process of identity transition through geography, politics, and religion had been well on its way since the early part of the nineteenth century. The Pate family was one such family undergoing this transition of identity.

For many people living in Southern Illinois, the Civil War created an instability of identity. Southern Illinois, often called Egypt, had the demographics of a southern state.<sup>3</sup> Most of the population had southern origins, and they grew typically southern crops such as cotton and tobacco. However, during the Civil War, the people of Southern Illinois showed themselves to be

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<sup>1</sup> John Y. Simon, *“Black Jack”*: *John A. Logan and Southern Illinois in the Civil War Era* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Victor Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 5.

more northern than previously thought. This paper argues many in Southern Illinois went against their Southern origins and identified as Northerners during the Civil because of their background and their primary identity as farmers. This paper will use the Pate family, a family living in Southern Illinois originally from the South, to illustrate this argument. Personal letters, biographical records, and obituaries allow us to reconstruct the pre-Civil War image of the Pates including their education, religion, and politics; they were similar to most people in Southern Illinois. The Pates were Baptist subsistence farmers from Tennessee with access to a limited education. However, two members of this family willingly fought and died for the Union Army during the Civil War. Personal letters written during the Civil War, military records, and secondary accounts of the time reveal how their identity as farmers helped them cement their loyalty to the North.

### **Literary Review**

While the literature on the Civil War is vast, fewer studies center their analysis specifically on the impact of the Civil War on agriculture. R. Douglas Hunt's recent work, *Food and Agriculture during the Civil War*, examines how agriculture was more than simply an economic endeavor. Hunt argues that agriculture was "a form of power similar to military power" in that it could unite or destroy the union.<sup>4</sup> Victor Hicken's *Illinois in the Civil War* discusses Illinois' involvement in the Civil War and the role of Illinois regiments in specific battles.<sup>5</sup> Hicken discusses the effect of geography of Illinois soldiers with the state's "southern tip pointed like a sword at the heart of the new-formed confederacy."<sup>6</sup> Written by eyewitnesses

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<sup>4</sup> R. Douglas Hunt, *Food and Agriculture during the Civil War*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016) xiv.

<sup>5</sup> Hicken, *Illinois in the Civil War*. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

W.S. Morris, L.D. Hartwell, and J.B. Kuykendall, *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment: Illinois Volunteers Organized by John A. Logan* conveys the history of the infantry regiment from Southern Illinois.<sup>7</sup> Roger Biles, in his study titled *Illinois: A History of the Land and its People*, demonstrates the relationship between statehood and agriculture, and narrates the movement of people into Illinois.<sup>8</sup> Kay Carr also looks at the demographic variation across the state in her book, *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg: community and democracy on the Illinois frontier*.<sup>9</sup> The book focuses on the “link between frontier community building and the acceptance of particular types of democratic political processes in the United States.”<sup>10</sup> She proves this by examining three towns from various parts of Illinois in the early nineteenth century. This includes the development of communities in Southern Illinois and the effects of their cultural background. Barton Price examines religion in Southern Illinois during the nineteenth century in his article, “Religion, Reform, and Patriotism in Southern Illinois: A Case Study, 1852-1900.”<sup>11</sup> Price examines the progression of religion during the Gilded Era through the “lens of the Southern Illinois Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church” which he believes represents “the antithesis of the cultural refinement of New York City or Chicago,” which most authors focus on while examining religion during the Gilded Era.<sup>12</sup> Price talks about the devotion to Christian duty and morals in Southern Illinois that shaped its Antebellum Era and Gilded Era culture.<sup>13</sup> These secondary sources deal broadly with specific aspects of the Pate Family’s

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<sup>7</sup> W. S. Morris et al., *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment Illinois Volunteers Organized by John A. Logan* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Roger Biles, *Illinois: A History of the Land and its People*, Northern Illinois University Press, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Kay J. Carr, *Belleville, Ottawa, and Galesburg: Community and Democracy on the Illinois Frontier* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Barton E. Price, “Religion, Reform, and Patriotism in Southern Illinois: A Case Study, 1852-1900,” *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society* 107 no. 2 (2014): 171-203.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

identity from Agriculture and religion to military service and region demographics. These generalizations when applied specifically to the Pate family paint a picture of identity transformation and the reasoning for the decisions they made.

### **Brief History of the Pates**

The history of the Pate family in the first half of the nineteenth century, mirrored the history of many other families moving westward at the time. Originally, the Pates immigrated to Franklin County, Virginia from Ireland.<sup>14</sup> Edward Pate's father fought in the Revolutionary War.<sup>15</sup> Edward Pate moved with his family from Franklin County, Virginia to Jackson County, Tennessee. They were one of many families to pioneer west of the Appalachian Mountains, newly available to American settlers. Edward and most of his children lived out their lives in Tennessee, but two of his sons left Tennessee for new frontiers. Anthony Pate moved to what later became Homer, Louisiana, and Perlemon Pate settled in Somerset Township, Illinois.<sup>16</sup> Perlemon's journey followed the general trend of farmers from the southern states moving to the Southern Illinois region.<sup>17</sup> The two brothers wrote to each other about once a year, each informing the other about their families, friends, and farms; their personal correspondence provides insight into the lives of the average farmers living in Louisiana and Southern Illinois in the decades preceding the Civil War.

### **Education**

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<sup>14</sup> "Anthony Pate," in *Portrait and Biographical Record of Randolph, Jackson, Perry, and Monroe Counties, Illinois* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1894), 554.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> There are multiple spellings of this man's name including: Perlemon, Perleamon, and Pearlemon. Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 17, 1850. Southern Illinois University Carbondale Special Collections, Pate Family Papers (SIUCSCFP), Folder 2.

<sup>17</sup> Biles, *Illinois: A History*, 56.

One's worldview is a product of their education. The handwritten arithmetic book of Edward Pate provides insight into the education of the Pates and Southern Pioneers, revealing the level of emphasis placed on education and the knowledge they deemed necessary to be a farmer on the frontier. As families moved westward, migrants had to find new ways of subsistence. For many, educating their children became a personal endeavor due to the lack of schools on the frontier. Edward's descendants wrote their names in the book, implying that it was an educational tool used over generations.<sup>18</sup> In this respect, the Pates represented the people of Southern Illinois in the decades following statehood. Most of the settlers in Southern Illinois migrated from the southern states and held on to their Scotts-Irish or Anglo-Celtic values.<sup>19</sup> They did not place much value in formal education.<sup>20</sup> The Pates and most children in Southern Illinois planned to spend their adulthood on a farm, and therefore, an extensive education in the humanities seemed unnecessary.

The book taught basic mathematical skills in a very practical sense. Sections include "Apothecaries Weight," "Practical Multiplication," and "Cloth Measurement."<sup>21</sup> The section on the measurement of time explained the units of time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, and years) as well as the number of days in each month and leap years. All of the practice problems were examples of the practical application of these skills with farm and family. In addition, the book taught the mathematical skills needed to be a farmer, such as how to measure supplies and manage finances.<sup>22</sup> The other sections in the book dealt with units that a farmer used on a regular basis in the first half of the nineteenth century. The section on money teaches coin conversions

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<sup>18</sup> "EP" Booklet, SIUCSCFPF.

<sup>19</sup> Biles, *Illinois: A History*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "EP" Booklet, SIUCSCFPF.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

for the pound sterling.<sup>23</sup> The book dates four years after the Coinage Act of 1792, establishing the U.S. dollar.<sup>24</sup> The Pates, therefore, used the pound sterling for currency rather than the U.S. dollar in 1796. Precious space in the book was used to teach about the pound sterling instead of the U.S. dollar. This suggests that the children using this book were more likely to use the pound sterling than the U.S. dollar. The use of the pound sterling in the book supports the idea that it was more prevalent than the dollar in 1796. This is an example the U.S. Government's lack of immediate authority with Southern pioneers. The Pound Sterling was a remnant of their British identity. This also displays a more gradual change in identity from British colonists to American citizens. Scarcity of educational materials necessitates versatility. Despite it being an arithmetic book, the Pates used it to teach other subjects as well. They learned common legal statements by practicing phrases such as, "King George County, to wit, I command you...." and "Summon William Williamson to appear before me...."<sup>25</sup> Money and paper were scarce resources, and the fact that the Pates dedicated any toward education shows its value to them. However, every page applied explicitly to their everyday lives. The versatility and practicality of Edward Pate's Arithmetic book reinforces the claims of Roger Biles, who stated that the Southern migrants received a practical education of law and mathematics.

## **Religion**

The Pates were devout Baptists in Tennessee and held their religion as one of the cornerstones of their lives. Anthony and Perlemon carried that strong faith with them as they moved further west. Just as a farming family develops a close bond with the land that they

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> "A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875," *Library of Congress*, accessed May 10, 2017, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=369>

<sup>25</sup> "EP" Booklet, SIUCSCFPF.

worked, they formed a close bond with the church where they worshiped. This held true for Perlemon as he moved away from Jackson County, Tennessee. Indeed, he remained a member in good standing with the Baptist Church of Jesus Christ at Salt Lick, Tennessee, six years after he moved to Southern Illinois.<sup>26</sup> Plausibly, Perlemon found a new church and felt connected enough to it and made it his new home church, which demonstrates his transition in identity from Southerner to Southern Illinoisan. Perlemon severed a tie to Tennessee and the South in 1845 when he did not maintain his membership with Baptist Church of Jesus Christ at Salt Lick, Jackson County, Tennessee. While it took six years to change, he eventually severed that tie to his Tennessee identity. It was a process of gradual adaptation to his new home in Southern Illinois.

Perlemon was not the only person with a changing identity in a new home. In letters to Perlemon, Anthony talked about a Baptist meeting that occurred every month and a Methodist service every week near his house.<sup>27</sup> Anthony held the Methodist preacher, “old father Stevisan” in high regard, having given the best sermon Anthony had heard up to that point.<sup>28</sup> Anthony’s respect for Father Stevisan, a non-Baptist minister, suggests that either denominational differences were not important, or he was being influenced by his new community. This was further confirmed when four years later in the spring of 1848, Anthony Pate and his family joined the Methodist Church.<sup>29</sup> It was not until two later Anthony wrote to his brother about his conversion to the Methodist church, possibly because he was concerned about how Perlemon would react to such a change.<sup>30</sup> While Perlemon simply changed congregations, Anthony changed denominations. However, it is plausible that Perlemon would have approved of his

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<sup>26</sup> Partial, 1842 SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, April 7, 1844. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 17, 1850. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

brother being a Methodist. After all, Perlemon's son, also named Anthony Pate, later became a member of Centenary Methodist Church.<sup>31</sup> Both brothers altered the religious aspect of their identity in accordance to their new surroundings. This further emphasizes the effect of geographical to location on the identity of farmers during the Antebellum and Civil War Eras.

## Politics

Religion was not the only area in which the two brothers differed. When they headed westward toward their new homes in Illinois and Louisiana, their new surroundings changed them in other ways. Political tendencies were one of these changes. Perlemon Pate, while not active in politics, was a devoted Democrat.<sup>32</sup> This paralleled with most people living in Southern Illinois at the time. Illinois allied itself with Andrew Jackson and his Democratic Party because they saw Jackson as the common man for westward expansion.<sup>33</sup> He worked to expand rights and opportunities for common men west of the Appalachian Mountains, and he supported the removal of the Native American from land desired by Illinoisans.

While Illinois almost unanimously supported the Democratic Party, Louisiana was more divided. In Louisiana, Anthony Pate was a dedicated member of the Whig Party.<sup>34</sup> The Whigs stood in opposition to Jackson and the Democrats, primarily on issues such as tariffs and the national bank. In Louisiana, the Whig party in the 1830s and 1840s was successful enough to win two gubernatorial elections and achieve majorities in the state legislature.<sup>35</sup> Merchants and sugar plantation owners were primary voters for the Whig Party, because they had the most to

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<sup>31</sup> "Anthony Pate, Pioneer, Dead: Life Reviewed," September 20, 1926. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>32</sup> "Anthony Pate," in *Portrait and Biographical Record*, 554.

<sup>33</sup> Roger Biles, *Illinois: A History*, 55-56.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 1, 1844. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>35</sup> William H. Adams, "The Louisiana Whigs," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 15, no. 3 (1974): 213-218.

gain from tariffs and a national bank.<sup>36</sup> It is curious that Anthony Pate supported the Whig party. He was neither a sugar farmer nor a merchant, but instead a small cotton farmer.

On May 5, 1844, the *Daily Picayune* (an influential New Orleans newspaper) published an article claiming Whig leader Henry Clay opposed the annexation of Texas, a major issue for Louisianans.<sup>37</sup> The article cost Clay Louisiana's electoral votes, but not Anthony Pate's vote.<sup>38</sup> Anthony wrote his brother three months later about supporting Henry Clay in the upcoming presidential election.<sup>39</sup> Anthony must have been opposed, or at least indifferent, to Texas annexations. This is an odd position to have considering he came from a family of westward expansionists. Influences from his new life in Louisiana turned him against the idea of westward expansion, or fostered more loyalty to Clay than to this aspect of his family heritage. Anthony's geographic location in Louisiana does not fit within his political party, as he lived in the northern part of the state. In the election of 1844, Northern Louisiana primarily voted for Polk. Most of Clay's votes came from New Orleans and Southern Louisiana.<sup>40</sup> Anthony's political opinions and their conflict with his location and family heritage demonstrates the possible conflict between different aspects of Perlemon's identity and their effect on his own political opinions at this time.

While political leanings reveal some of the ideologies of the Pates, the amount and time of political discussion in personal letters revealed the importance of politics to the Pates. Anthony Pate did not hide his political allegiance. He attempted to sway Perlemon to the Whigs

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 1, 1844. SIUCSCFPF Folder 2.

<sup>40</sup> William H. Adams, "The Louisiana Whigs," 213-218.

in two different letters. He first wrote about being a Whig in July of 1842, the same year as the gubernatorial election.<sup>41</sup> In his September, 1844, letter, he concluded it by reminding his brother,

“Don’t forget to vote for Henry Clay....Don’t forget the true Whig principal.”<sup>42</sup> Either Anthony did not send any letters to Perlemon during any other election year, or these letters are lost.

However, in correspondence after the election he did not mention the Whig Party. Outside of election time, political parties fell by the wayside. The Whigs proved that Antebellum Louisiana was not as monolithic as it would later become.<sup>43</sup> Anthony Pate illustrates how individuals could still go against geographical political tendencies by voting Whig in the Democrat dominated Northern Louisiana. The Pate brothers showed that while common farmers in the 1840s were involved in politics, they were not engulfed by politics.

## **The Civil War**

As hostilities between North and South increased over the issues of slavery and the rights of states, the Pate brothers continued their loving correspondence, uniting Illinois and Louisiana, two states that soon became foes. In 1861, attempts by Southern states to secede from the Union ushered in five years of bloodshed known as the Civil War. As the nation stood divided during the length of the Civil War, the Pate family in the North had to make the difficult decision to either pledge loyalty to “state and country” or stay true to traditions and family. The pressures of the time, that is, to choose sides on the conflict, troubled the people of Southern Illinois. Migrant farmers originally from the southern states made up the bulk of the population settled in Southern Illinois.<sup>44</sup> As farmers moved into the Southern Illinois region, they brought with them

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<sup>41</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, July 31, 1842. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 1, 1844. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>43</sup> William H. Adams, “The Louisiana Whigs,” 218.

<sup>44</sup> John Y. Simon, Foreword to *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment Illinois Volunteers Organized by John A. Logan* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), xv.

their old loyalties to the Democratic Party. An example of their faithfulness to the Democratic ideology and political alliances, that is support for slavery and strong state rights, can be observed in the election of John A. Logan. Congressman Logan was elected to Congress in 1860 by eighty percent of what John Y. Simon called “hardscrabble subsistence farmers” in the region.<sup>45</sup> Logan was popular among his contemporaries in large part because of his “reputation as a proponent of legislation excluding free blacks from Illinois and as a defender in Congress of Southern rights.”<sup>46</sup> There were those who supported Logan for his politics, but whose loyalties remained close to their Southern origins. Soon after the start of the Civil War, over thirty men from Egypt joined the Confederate Army.<sup>47</sup> For many, such as the Pate family, this was a complicated dilemma.

The Illinois Pates were often secluded from national politics due to living in a rural area. At the dawn of the Civil War, they had to confront their reality as they struggled to make sense of their loyalties. Perlemon was a life-long Democrat. He always voted for the Democratic ticket. However, his political involvement never went beyond the ballot box.<sup>48</sup> The events of the Civil War placed him outside of his political comfort zone: this had moved past politics. This was war. The situation moved beyond political parties, it was now a national duty to protect the land that sustained his family for decades. It had become a matter of keeping the nation united, not only politically, but also geographically. That meant showing a united front in the North, and cooperation across party lines in the interest of preserving the Union. For the Pates, in Southern Illinois, it became a question of "where was home?" Was Tennessee, the birthplace of Perlemon Pate, home? Alternatively, was Illinois home, where John and Matthew were raised and land

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<sup>45</sup> Morris et al., *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment*, xvi.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>48</sup> “Anthony Pate,” in *Portrait and Biographical Record*, 554.

their family worked for decades? For John and Matthew Pate, two of the sons of Perlemon Pate, home was Illinois.

Without much explanation, John A. Logan, a strong Democrat and defender of Southern rights, announced his support for the Union Army as he joined the war effort.<sup>49</sup> Logan spoke against extremists in both the North and the South, but claimed that “the ‘time has come when a man must be for or against his country.’”<sup>50</sup> Logan’s decision gradually became the decision of the region. They made the choice of “state and nation” versus heritage and family - duty to “state and nation” trumped duty to heritage and family. In order to keep the nation united both politically and geographically, citizens had to move past party lines. For the Pates, Perlemon’s sons John and Matthew answered Logan’s call to arms. John and Matthew Pate were mustered on August 30, 1862, and they were not alone. That same day, neighbors Monroe Martin and Samuel Gray joined Company D of the 31<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry.<sup>51</sup> These four and the other Murphysboro men joined the war effort at the same time representing the decision of Murphysboro to support the Union. Logan and the actions of their peers had persuaded them that they were no longer men of the South living in a Northern state, but true Northerners. The people of Murphysboro affirmed that they were Illinoisans, living in the United States and this association with Illinois and the Union came before any association to John and Matthew’s father’s Southern home. John and Matthew Pate chose to side with Illinois over the South, which makes sense. There probably was little connection to Tennessee, because by 1862 Perlemon had lived in Illinois almost as long as he lived in Tennessee. While a farmer has a strong connection to his heritage, he forms a stronger bond with the land. The Pate brothers chose to side with the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Morris et al., *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment*, 194.

land that they put years of labor into and that had sustained them for even longer. While blood is thicker than water, in this case it appears that soil was thicker than blood.

Ironically, John and Matthew Pate marched south with the 31<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry almost twenty years after Anthony Pate inquired about taking a riverboat to see Perlemon in Illinois. Anthony had wanted to see Perlemon more than anyone in the world, and “take [Perlemon] by the hand once more.”<sup>52</sup> John and Matthew made the journey down the Mississippi River to lay siege to a town less than 150 miles from their uncle’s home. Tragically, the prospective journey of brotherly embrace became a journey of war instead.

While the Civil War challenged the institution of slavery this was not the reason Matthew and John Pate joined the Union army. Rather, it was their loyalty to the Union and its preservation despite its views on slavery. A letter written by Matthew Pate to his brother during the war from Corinth, Mississippi illustrates this point. After complaining about the rain Matthew Pate says, “A soldiers life is a harde one altho I am not bin deceived in that I am very well satisfied with my situation if it was not for one thing and that is the infernal n----- we have plenty of the here but we are not blessed so well as them that is at Corinth.”<sup>53</sup> He is upset because the slaves had better shelter from the rain than he did. There was support or at least indifference to the institution of slavery, which illustrates the idea that the Pates joined the Union War effort out of loyalty to nation and not for the fight against slavery. Just as Logan did, the Pates put aside personal ideology to side with their country. There was no internal moral

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<sup>52</sup> Anthony Pate, Letter to Perlemon Pate, September 1, 1844. SIUCSCPFP Folder 2.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Pate, “Civil War letter – Matthew Pate to Sabe Pate,” Internet Archive, accessed May 10, 2017, [https://archive.org/stream/CivilWarLetter-MatthewPateToSabePate/LetterFromMatthewPateToSabePate\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/CivilWarLetter-MatthewPateToSabePate/LetterFromMatthewPateToSabePate_djvu.txt)

decision, but instead a joining with community, state, and country to stand together. Geography meant more than ideology.

The brothers fought with General Grant in his campaign to capture Vicksburg, MS. Their company missed the Battle of Corinth, Mississippi by hours.<sup>54</sup> Later, Matthew returned to his birth state of Tennessee, and he died there too, February 5, 1863.<sup>55</sup> John Pate fought for the Union during the siege of Vicksburg from May through July.<sup>56</sup> He fought in the blood bath battle for Fort Hill, seeing comrades and commanding officers alike fall on both sides of him.<sup>57</sup> On July 4<sup>th</sup>, John Pate marched triumphantly into Vicksburg. John wrote to his brother Sabe about the near 32,000 prisoners being paroled, and how they surrendered on account of having nothing to eat “but mule meat and cow peas.”<sup>58</sup> While John Pate survived the siege of Vicksburg, the war still took his life with camp disease on July 19, 1863.<sup>59</sup> While they did not die in combat, the war between brothers still claimed the lives of brothers John and Mathew Pate. In less than a generation, John and Matthew had abandoned their Southern identity in the name of loyalty to the Union. The brothers died in the South, but they died as Northerners.

## Conclusion

People fought in the Civil War for various personal reasons. These reasons do not always align with the reasons of the nation. One must look at personal factors such as family origin, education, religion, and politics to determine these reasons. John and Matthew Pate did not join

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> John Pate, “Civil War letter – John Pate to Sabe Pate” Internet Archive, accessed May 10, 2017, [https://archive.org/stream/CivilWarLetter-JohnPateToSabePate/LetterFromJohnPateToSabePate\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/CivilWarLetter-JohnPateToSabePate/LetterFromJohnPateToSabePate_djvu.txt)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Morris et al., *History 31<sup>st</sup> Regiment*, 194.

the Union Army for the same reasons as their fellow soldiers from other geographies of the North. The Pates had a vastly different background than that of those who lived just a couple hundred miles north of them. Most soldiers from Northern Illinois had better access to education, originated from the Northeastern part of the U.S., were not Baptist, and voted Republican.<sup>60</sup> Despite these differences, John and Matthew Pate fought alongside them against Confederate soldiers with whom they shared more cultural similarities. Ties to the land they lived on, and worked, proved to be greater than their ties to the state of birth. Where they lived at that moment was more meaningful to their lives than where they had come from. They sided with the geographical North instead of where they were perhaps more ideologically similar to: the South. This instance shows the importance of national crisis in the formation, or cementation, of one's identity. Throughout American history, in times of national crisis, Americans put party politics aside in favor of a national identity as exemplified by John A. Logan, the Pates, and the people of Southern Illinois in the 1860s. However, cementing one's identity was based more on the contours of national geography in the nineteenth century than in the 2010s. During the 2016 election, there was a heated political climate where support was not entirely based on geography one reason is the new technologies of our times such as the internet. In the nineteenth century, people, such as the Pates, joined with their communities to be part of something larger than themselves. Today, people are able to more easily find and ally themselves with people with similar ideology to be part of something larger. Understanding how people choose sides and found identity in conflicts such as the Civil War helps identify how people choose sides and find identity today.

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<sup>60</sup> Biles, *Illinois: A History*, 61.

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