

PH0364711

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

****** HISTORIC
Helm Place (Governor John Larue Helm House)
AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
U.S. 31-W, 1 1/2 miles north of
CITY, TOWN
Elizabethtown
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF
 VICINITY OF
021
COUNTY
Hardin
CODE
093
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
02
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Wright
STREET & NUMBER

Comprehensive Care Center
Offices

CITY, TOWN
Elizabethtown
VICINITY OF
 VICINITY OF
STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Hardin County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Elizabethtown
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
DATE

1971
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Kentucky Heritage Commission
CITY, TOWN
Frankfort
STATE
Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Helm House is located about one and one-half miles north of the center of Elizabethtown on U.S. 31-W, the old Louisville-Nashville Pike also known as the Dixie Highway, in Hardin County.

The house, constructed originally from 1832-1840, still stands in a commanding position on a hill on the site of the original fort and homestead. A nearby spring runs down to Freeman Creek, which runs north-south east of the house in a shallow wooded depression. (The stream is dammed a short distance north of the Helm property to form a manmade lake set in Freeman Lake Park. On a promontory overlooking the lake on the west side is the recently restored Hardin Thomas log house, also known as the Lincoln Heritage House, which was listed on the National Register, March 26, 1978.)

For many decades the house was only a distant gleam of white concealed among trees on the thickly wooded hill but today it is easily exposed to view. The house itself, however, is still surrounded by old trees and remnants of former landscaping (see photo 15). The land sloping away to the east toward the creek and beyond has not yet been developed although it is prime real estate amid rapidly expanding subdivisions. The land between the house and the highway to the west has been levelled and become part of the "strip" with highly incompatible development.

This exploitation of the land has also affected the Helm family cemetery, several hundred yards south of the house, now left high and dry with the ground cut away to its rough stone boundaries on all but the east side, which is still contiguous with the undeveloped property. (see photo 25). Local attempts to protect the cemetery and provide access to it have so far proved in vain.

The wife of the second owner of Helm House, John Larue Helm, Jr., the former Lucy Amelia Washington of Nashville, Tennessee, was responsible for having an ellipse laid out in the center of the circular drive which was in front of the mansion. It is believed that it was patterned after the one at the Hermitage, the home of President Andrew Jackson, located east of Nashville. Only a special variety of sweet peas were planted in the ellipse. Little, if anything, remains of this interesting feature, however (compare photos 2 and 3). At present the house is approached by a truncated curved drive that passes between modern brick gateposts centered in front of the house.

The house was basically an almost square two-story brick block with central halls flanked by two rooms on both sides on both floors and a transverse attic story (photos 1, 5-8, 15-18). There must always have been an ell, but that seems to have suffered the most

(continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1832-40 BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Five generations of the Helm family lived on the land where Helm House stands today. Five generations of Helm men, working as surveyors, lawyers, judges, bankers, public officials, physicians, legislators, and one who became governor of the state twice, have made an impressive record in the history of Hardin County and Kentucky.

Helm Place was originally built between 1832 and 1840 for John Larue Helm, Sr*, a unique and interesting example of the transition between the Federal and Greek Revival architectural styles in Kentucky. Although the most unusual feature--a two-story three-bay entrance feature with a recessed vestibule flanked by enclosed brick "tack rooms" on either side, and an elegant gabled porch above--has been replaced by a colossal portico in the 20th-century, photographic evidence of the original appearance remains. Several interesting late 19th-century additions and alterations, documented by photographs, were also removed in 1938, leaving the main block of the house essentially intact. Also included in the nomination is the Helm family cemetery, located near the house, although now isolated by surrounding development.

The story of Helm Place and the Helm family in Kentucky began in 1780 when Captain Thomas Helm, a Revolutionary war veteran from Prince William County, Virginia, brought his family and slaves to Severns Valley (near present-day Elizabethtown) in response to the lure of the western lands which had been granted to him by Virginia for his service during the war.

After coming down from the Falls of the Ohio River (later Louisville), he discovered near Severns Valley a large spring rushing over a rocky proclivity from a cave between two wooded hills. He decided to go no farther but to settle there. For protection from the Indians he erected a strong fort at the point now known as Helm Place. He connected the fort with the spring by means of a tunnel. It became one of the three forts that formed the Severns Valley Settlement, afterwards known as Elizabethtown.

After Hardin County was established in 1792, Thomas Helm became the ranking member of the first justices of the Quarter Sessions Court. As judge he was diligent in the affairs of the court and presided at most of the trials. He was one of the original trustees

*Governor Helm was also one of the chief proponents and was first president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (see pp. 5-6 below).

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coleman, J. Winston, Jr., "Helm Place, " Historic Kentucky, 2nd. Edition
(Lexington: Henry Clay Press, 1967), p. 51.

Johnson, E. Polk, "John L. Helm," A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians (Chicago and
New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), II, pp. 928-930. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

D	A	1,6	5,9,9	1,9,0	4,1	7,4	0,8,0	AR	1,6	5,9,9	3,6,0	4,1	7,4	1,8,0	
		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING						ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
B	C	1,6	5,9,9	5,3,0	4,1	7,3	9,2,0	C	D	1,6	5,9,9	3,5,0	4,1	7,3	8,0,0
		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING						ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The area nominated consists approximately of a rectangle east of the developed area along Dixie Highway, including the main house and outbuildings to the north, the cemetery at the southwest corner, and the barn on the east.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Wilbur Terry and Mrs. Edmund S. Richerson

C.J./WEL

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Hardin County Representatives, Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

104 Bridge Street

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Frankfort

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Cedric W. Miller

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 9/16/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting *R. C. Wilson*
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 11/9/76

ATTEST

Charles...
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 11.9.76

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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

changes. The foundations are of carefully shaped and textured stone. The front faces almost directly south, although the present road to Louisville has a more northwesterly direction. The facade has five rather widely spaced bays, the center three of which were originally hidden by the entrance feature (4-5, 16). The sides of the house are also very wide, with two large flush chimneys flanked by windows on both sides (several perhaps blind with false shutters); the windows appear to be paired in the centers of the sides on all three stories. There may always have been galleries across the back of the house. One original or early room just north of the northeast corner of the main block is separated from it by a narrow space that may once have been an open corridor, breezeway, or "dogtrot" (as similar features in log houses are called).

The unique feature shown in the old photographs was the two-story entrance (photos 4-5). The scale of the gable, defined by the full but still somewhat delicate cornices (that also run up the side gables of the house, returning at the corners), the plain if attenuated Tuscan columns--all suggest the incipient Greek Revival sensibility. Stone steps led up to the recessed vestibule whose opening was flanked by paired columns that seemed to support a well-modelled if narrow entablature. The upper porch had only four columns across the front: single columns centered over the pairs below and at the ends. Another entablature and cornice defined the base of the classically proportioned gable/pediment. There is little sense here of classic "correctness" in the handling of the orders, but an interesting play of geometric forms: voids and solids outlined by the slender columns.

The windows are all large, rather long, nine-over-six-pane sash. Shutters appear to have been original. Interestingly, there are dentils under the cornice of the gables but not along the front or on the porch.

The old photographs show some of the additions that had been made prior to the period of neglect in the early 20th century. Mr. and Mrs. John L. Helm, Jr., owned and lived in the house during the years 1867-1902, although after 1900 only during the summers. Probably shortly after the Civil War they installed a large bay window replacing the rear window in the dining room (northeast corner; photo 6). In order to accommodate their children's expanded social activities they later added a large two-story rear addition with a two-and-a-half-story tower on the east side between the diningroom and the new rear wing; the earlier one-story bay window abutted the tower (photo 7). The tower had a number of windows on its curved faces and shorter attic windows set in

(continued)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

decorative brickwork under the semiconical roof. Sleeping porches were also added on the rear of the main block and west side of the ell, with a diagonal corner and latticework below (photo 8). The old views also show smaller one-story porches at the rear and east sides of the ell, that may or may not have been added at this point.

The Helms are also said to have had a large dance floor constructed in sections so that it could be laid when needed at the rear of the house but folded up and stored when not in use. In 1893 Emilie Todd Helm, the widow of General Ben Hardin Helm, another son of the original owner, wrote an article on Helm Place for the Illustrated Kentuckian. She described it then as having "16 rooms, exclusive of halls, butler's pantry and dressing rooms."

In 1912 the house passed out of the hands of the Helm family. In 1919 the notice of an auction for the entire property included a photograph of the house and description of the property (see photo 1). From that time until 1938 the house and grounds were neglected and were abused --the former even being used for storage--as can be seen in two views showing it in that state (photo 5 and 7) which, however, ironically provide the clearest and fullest record of the appearance of the house as it evolved during the 19th century during Helm ownership.

In 1938 Judge J. R. Layman acquired the property. Although he owned it for only a year, he made drastic changes in the residence. It was he who removed the tackrooms and porches of the entrance feature, perhaps leaving the gable intact except for the insertion of a circular ventilator opening (see photo 15). The stone foundations of the original entrance also remain as part of the present porch floor, and old bricks and window frames were used to fill in the gaps left in the front wall of the main block by the removal of the tackrooms. The original front entrance is no longer protected by the vestibule. The wide door with a handsome turn-of-the-century bevelled-glass inset is slightly recessed and flanked by original slender colonnettes. The transom above is also bevelled-glass. The similar doorway that had opened onto the upper front porch was shortened and converted into a double window. At this time also all the additions to the main block at the rear and in the east side were removed.

The Paul Marions, who bought the house in 1945, improved the condition of the remaining house and grounds, and added a one-story service wing to replace the much larger one removed in 1938 (see photo 18). This wing may incorporate at least the foundations

(continued)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

of an early or even original brick room several feet north of the northeast corner of the main block, as mentioned above.

The interior of the house retains many original elements. There is a fairly wide central hall divided in the center by double folding doors. The staircase at the rear is basically of the late Federal type rising from the left to a landing over the back hall door and thence, forward to the upper hall. The fine railing and newel post are slender and simple, and there are acorn-shaped pendants under the angles, but no stringer. (There are no visible traces of the mural showing groves of birch trees that was supposed to have been painted between 1832 and 1867 above the chair-rail along the stairway by Mary Helm, a crippled daughter of John Helm, Sr.) (Photos 19-20.)

The woodwork throughout the downstairs of the main block has strong, symmetrically grooved moldings with geometric concentric cornerblocks (see photos 9-11). Upstairs, however, the mill work is simpler, of the Federal type (photos 12-13; the Federal mantel shown in photo 12 is conceivably original). Some chair-railing remains. The double folding doors between the two parlors on the west side have five horizontal panels narrowing toward the top (photo 9); other doors had three slightly graduated horizontal panels over two vertical panels (photos 11 and 13). There are also triple panels downstairs under the deepset windows.

Although the late 19th-century additions have been removed (see photo 11 for a glimpse of the dining-room bay and photo 14 for an upstairs bedroom in the tower), most, if not all, of the present mantels appear to date from the turn-of-the-century, as shown in the 1912 photographs (see photos 5, of which conceivably only the swags may have been added to the original mantel; 10; perhaps 12, 13, and 14). These are fairly handsome examples of their kind, mostly with columned overmantels, swags and tile facing, although far more elaborate than the surviving original woodwork (photo 21).

The recent adaptation of the residence for offices has not seriously affected the interiors, although the opening between the double parlors has been partitioned and some additional plumbing has been installed.

It is believed that there were brick slave quarters northwest of the house, but these have long since disappeared. There are two fairly recent frame structures north of the rear ell, which may be those shown on the 1912 view (8, 23). A large barn stands in the fields below the house to the southeast near the creek (24).

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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

of the Hardin Academy which was established under an act approved December 22, 1798. Judge Helm was a large, strong man, weighing over 200 pounds, and was also a large landowner in the Valley and on the outlying frontiers. His wife, Jenny, was a member of the wealthy pioneer Pope family.

After the Indians were gradually driven from the state, Judge Helm built a comfortable log house beside the old Fort. This log house served as his family home until he died in 1816. His wife died in 1821.

George Helm, a son of Thomas Helm and Jenny Pope Helm, inherited their 1300-acre farm. He had been born in Prince William County, Virginia, in 1774, had come to Kentucky with his parents in 1780, and grew up in the fort and in the log house. He took an active part in clearing the farm and superintended it until 1820. He was a highly respected and popular citizen of the county and at one time or other served in a great many civil and legislative offices. On May 14, 1801, he married Rebecca Larue, eldest daughter of John and Mary Brooks Larue of nearby Hodgenville, and the couple had nine children all of whom were born on the Helm Place. Despite his success in politics, George Helm became financially embarrassed in his business dealings about 1821 and went to Texas planning to enter business there. His plans did not materialize, however, and he died there in 1822.

John Larue Helm, the eldest child of George and Rebecca Larue Helm, was born in the log cabin on the Helm Place on July 4, 1802. He grew up on the family farm, living with his parents and grandparents and attending such local schools as there were at that time. He was a good student and became particularly proficient in the study of American history but he had to leave school when he was 16 to go to work on a full-time basis because of his father's financial difficulties. Soon thereafter, he was appointed Deputy Clerk of the Hardin Circuit Court and through his work there during the next three years he became interested in the study of law. During this time his fidelity and adaptability in the clerk's office attracted the attention of Duff Green, one of the most notable men of the state, who had also formerly been one of his teachers. In 1821 Helm became a student in the law office of the Honorable Ben Tobin, of Elizabethtown, and was admitted to the Kentucky Bar in 1823. Upon his father's death he became the sole means of support for his mother and her large family. His father's estate was sold but it failed to pay all his liabilities. The remaining debt of \$3,000 was assumed by the young Helm who gave his own personal notes for it and paid them himself as soon as his

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

own financial resources permitted.

John Larue Helm soon developed a large law practice owing in part to his own ability, in part to his many well-connected relatives, but especially to the hopelessly tangled condition of Kentucky land titles which gave rise to almost as many civil suits as there were acres of land and to numerous trials for homicide as well. In 1824 Helm was appointed County Attorney in the newly formed Meade County northeast of Hardin County because there was no resident attorney there at the time. He continued in this office for a consecutive period of sixteen years. In 1825 he was elected to the lower house of the state legislature and was one of the youngest members ever to serve in the General Assembly. He continued to serve in the state House of Representatives by successive re-elections for a total of eleven years and for five sessions he was Speaker of the House, a position in which he proved to be one of the most able presiding officers that ever filled that position. He became well known for his active defense of the "Old Court Party" in 1825 and was instrumental in the defeat of the "New Court Party" in the 1826 legislative session.

In 1830 John L. Helm was married to Lucinda Barbour Hardin, the eldest daughter of the Honorable Ben Hardin, a noted frontier attorney of Bardstown (see the National Register nomination form for his house, Edgewood, in Nelson County, listed on July 30, 1975). Later that year he and his wife moved to Elizabethtown from the country in the Nolynn neighborhood where they had been living with his mother. Records of the Sisters of Loretto who purchased the farm from John L. and Lucinda B. Helm, on which the Sisters established Bethlehem Academy, show that the Helms lived in the mansion at the time of the purchase in 1830 that later formed the center block of the Academy building. After he succeeded in redeeming his father's inheritance from his uncle, Major Ben Helm, in 1832, the younger Helm and his wife moved to his ancestral home which at that time was called Helm Station. They lived in the log house for about 8 years until the large house he began to build there was completed. This is the house seen today. It remained his home until his death in 1867. Helm and his wife upheld the Helm family tradition of large families by rearing twelve children of their own, most of whom were born at Helm Place.

John L. Helm was noted for his athletic prowess and was a good hunter and marksman. He was popular with the people and proved a good vote-getter as his long service in the

(continued)

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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

state legislature demonstrated. In 1838 he ran for a seat in the Federal House of Representatives but was defeated by a small margin by Willis Green of Breckinridge County, one of the few political defeats during his long political career and the only time he ever ran for a national office.

While serving in the lower house of the state legislature in 1843 he was paid a great compliment when it was proposed to name a new county to be formed out of Hardin County after him. Since there were a few dissenting votes to "Helm County" which touched his pride, he declined the honor and, instead, suggested that the new county be called "Larue," the maiden name of his mother, because there were a large number of Larue families, who were the first settlers, still living in the area. This suggestion was unanimously approved.

In 1844 Helm was elected to the State Senate. In the exciting presidential election year of 1848 when the country was about to divide upon the Wilmot Proviso, Helm was elected Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky on the Whig ticket headed by the Honorable John Jordan Crittenden. In this capacity he served as the presiding officer of the State Senate in 1848-1849.

During the politically stormy 1840s one of the most important political questions on the state level in Kentucky was whether to hold a convention to form a new state constitution. When the bill to hold the convention was introduced into the legislature in 1848, Helm, who was at that time serving in the state senate, voted for its passage in order to leave the matter to the vote of the people for a final decision. He published his stand prior to the election of 1848 when he ran for Lieutenant Governor. He indicated that although he believed that the old state constitution was defective he was afraid a convention would fail to weed out the evils of the existing one and perhaps introduce new measures that would be even more disadvantageous.

A new state constitutional convention met in October 1849, and after many months a new constitutional instrument was written which was to be submitted to the voters in the general election of May 1850. Lieutenant Governor Helm, among other prominent Kentuckians, opposed the ratification of the new Constitution by the voters. His position placed him in direct opposition to the stand taken by his father-in-law, Ben Hardin, and caused an estrangement between the two which was healed only when Hardin lay on his death-bed. Helm made an impassioned plea against adoption of the new Constitution in a speech in which he said, "I was for reform, not revolution. I

(continued)

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Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

was for amending the Constitution, and not for obliterating every vital principle which it contained." While he believed that there were some good provisions in the new document he thought, for the most part, that the new instrument was an error. Despite his opposition, when the new Constitution was adopted by the voters and became law in June 1850, he urged the people to accept it peacefully and to give it a fair trial.

When the death of President Zachary Taylor in July 1850 resulted in the elevation of the Vice-President, Millard Fillmore, the new President offered the position of Attorney-General in the reformed cabinet to Governor John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. He accepted and resigned his post as Governor of Kentucky on July 31, 1850. This action resulted in the succession of Lieutenant Governor John Larue Helm as the eighteenth governor of Kentucky. Helm completed Crittenden's term until September 5, 1851, when Lazarus W. Powell was inaugurated as his successor. During his term of office, 1850-1851, Helm proved himself a strong governor although he did not run for election himself in 1851. After serving for a little over thirteen months as Governor, Helm ended his political career in 1853 by serving as a Whig presidential elector from Kentucky. He voted for the Whig candidate in the 1852 presidential election, General Winfield Scott, who lost to Franklin Pierce, his Democratic opponent.

From 1851 to 1854 Helm resumed his law practice in Elizabethtown. During that time he acted as counsel for Matt Ward in one of the most noted murder trials that ever took place in Kentucky. The venue was moved to Elizabethtown because Helm as defense attorney felt that Ward could not receive a fair trial in Louisville where he had shot and killed William H.G. Butler, one of that city's most popular citizens, in a moment of passion. As a result of Helm's masterly defense, Ward was acquitted.

Throughout his entire public career John Larue Helm had stood boldly for the Whig program of Henry Clay on tariff, internal improvements, and the national bank. As a Southern Whig he strongly advocated public improvements at the expense of the state. He worked diligently for the construction of the Louisville and Nashville Turnpike and as early as 1836 from his office in the state House of Representatives had favored the establishment of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad which was afterwards built. He was a liberal subscriber to the original stock of the road and his influence with the

(continued)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 6

capitalists of the State contributed largely to the success of the gigantic undertaking. He was elected the first president of the L & N Railroad in 1854 and, owing to his wise and careful management, the line was finally completed. In 1859, when the first train crossed the Rolling Fork River, Helm, as president of the railroad, went aboard to greet his friends and neighbors who came in great crowds to wave their congratulations to him. Through his influence a clause was put in the charter of the railroad requiring that every train which passed through Elizabethtown stop at that city. Helm resigned the presidency of the L & N Railroad in 1860 because of a difference in opinion between himself and the majority of the board of directors as to policy of the company.

The presidential election of 1860 and the ensuing events of the Civil War resulted in the most trying period of John Larue Helm's entire life. Although his personal sympathies were in the interest of the South, Helm never favored secession from the Union. He believed that the peoples' regard for the Constitution of the United States would correct every evil under which his own section was suffering without resort to measures certain to divide the country. Despite his own political background as a Southern Whig, in 1860 he openly denounced the election of Abraham Lincoln (born near Hodgenville, Larue County; see the National Historic Landmark nomination form for Lincoln's Birthplace) and attempted to preserve Kentucky's neutrality. He acted as chairman of the famous meeting held in Louisville on January 8, 1861, in which the neutral policy of Kentucky was declared. He was open in his condemnation of the war but was equally ardent in his opposition to acts of secession.

Helm stood aloof from the conflict from its beginning to its end but suffered greatly from the interference of federal officials in his own private affairs. His oldest son, Ben Hardin Helm, and his son-in-law, Thomas H. Hays, cast their lot with the Confederacy and he did not feel justified in opposing them. Hays was married to Sarah Hardin Helm, the daughter of John Larue Helm, whose son, Ben Hardin Helm, was married to Emilie Todd, half-sister of Mary Todd Lincoln, the wife of President Abraham Lincoln. This situation caused Lincoln some embarrassment at the hands of the Federal Congressional Committee established to oversee the execution of the war because his wife's brother-in-law, Ben Hardin Helm, had become a brigadier-general in the Confederate army. Upon at least one occasion Lincoln voluntarily appeared before the committee to testify that neither his wife nor any other member of his family had ever

(continued)

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RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

been guilty of aiding, abetting, or giving comfort to the enemy.

Because of his out-spoken opinions, former Governor Helm was classed as a rebel. Warrants were issued for his arrest and he was required to take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States. He did so, but this provided him with little peace. He continued to suffer continual harassment throughout the war.

Perhaps the crowning insult and indignity to the former governor was his arrest in September 1862 along with several other prominent citizens of Hardin County. All were placed under guard and taken to Louisville. Through a coincidence, Governor James F. Robinson, a former friend, saw Helm in the cavalcade of prisoners and immediately used his influence to have the former governor released and returned to his home. To compound the misery of Helm and his family, word was received of the death of his oldest son, General Ben Hardin Helm, on September 23, 1863, in the Battle of Chickamauga while he was leading the First Brigade of Infantry.

The Civil War and its aftermath led John Larue Helm to change his political affiliation to the Democratic Party. In 1865 he was again elected to the State Senate in Kentucky where he continued to serve with honor and distinction until the end of his session. As chairman of the committee on federal relations he led a successful fight for the removal of all restrictive and punitive laws against the ex-Confederates, and on January 20, 1866, he offered a resolution for the benefit of the newly-freed Negro slaves in Kentucky.

In February 1867 Helm received the nomination for Governor of Kentucky on the Democratic ticket. Because he believed that trouble was brewing in Kentucky during the period of Reconstruction after the war, he considered it his duty to canvass the entire state in order to present a solid Democratic front. His reward was a stunning victory at the polls for the Democrats in Kentucky. In this memorable election on August 7, 1867, nearly every mayor and alderman, almost all the state legislature, the nine congressmen, and the two federal senators elected were members of his party. He was elected governor by a clear majority of 42, 000 votes over his combined radical and conservative opponents.

Helm's strenuous campaign resulted in his complete physical exhaustion, however. The high price he paid for the overwhelming Democratic victory was his own death at

(continued)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 8

the age of 65 only one month after the election.

A rousing celebration with brass bands and special trains bringing friends and well-wishers to do Helm honor was arranged for the day of his inauguration but had to be cancelled because of his serious illness. When it became apparent that he would not be able to make the trip to Frankfort for the ceremonies which would install him as the twenty-fourth chief executive of the Commonwealth, his wife was able to arrange to have the ceremony at their home, Helm Place. The residence thereby gained the distinction of being the only home of any Kentucky governor ever to be used for inaugural ceremonies. Legend says that his bed was placed in the library, the front room to the right of the mansion as you enter the front door. The retiring Governor was present as the oath of office was administered to the new Governor on September 3, 1867. Immediately after he was sworn in, Governor Helm handed the Commission as Secretary of State to Colonel Samuel B. Churchill. He was too weak to sign the Commission of Colonel Frank Wolford as Adjutant General but Wolford was appointed by Helm's successor as governor, Lieutenant Governor John W. Stevenson of Covington. Because he was able to make the difficult but successful transition from the Whig to the Democratic Party after the Civil War, he became the only man ever to serve as governor of the state who holds the distinction of having served once as a member of one major party, the Whig, during 1850-51, and again as a member of the other major party, the Democratic, in 1867.

From the diary of his crippled daughter, Mary, we learn of Governor Helm's last days in a moving passage:

He appreciated with honest pride the honor that had been conferred upon him by the people; and he appeared, also, to keenly feel the responsibility he had assumed. He loved Kentucky better than his life, and he seemed to be filled with sad forebodings for the future of his beloved state. During the few days that he was her Governor he expressed with intense determination, "come weal or woe" to guard her liberties and her rights to resist any invasion of either, no matter from what quarter it might come.

Helm died on September 7, 1867, after serving as Governor only five days, the shortest term of a Kentucky governor except for that of William Goebel, inaugurated on his

(continued)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 9

death-bed after being shot by an assassin in 1900. John Larue Helm was buried in the old Helm Family cemetery near his home.

After the death of the Governor, Helm Place was inherited by his son, John Larue Helm, Jr. He and his wife, the former Lucy Amelia Washington of Nashville, Tennessee, had five children, all of whom were born at Helm Place and grew up there. The new owner, who represented the fourth generation of Helms to live on the land, operated the farm and also practiced law. He was a director of the L. & N. R.R. for several years up to 1901. He was a director of the First National Bank in Elizabethtown and later when it became the First Hardin National Bank he served as its director until his death in Louisville in 1917. He made a fortune as a tobacconist in Louisville and served as a director of the Columbia Trust Company. He ran for the position of delegate to the 1891 State Constitutional Convention but was defeated by the much younger Harvey Harold Smith by a small majority.

Helm and his wife, Lucy, are credited with making their home, Helm Place, the show place it became. In addition to the numerous additions to the house and the landscaping they provided, they entertained in a lavish manner.

After the turn of the twentieth century it became the custom of the Helm family to spend their winters in Louisville or elsewhere, living at their home in Hardin County during the summer. During that time John L. Helm, III, lived on the place and operated the farm, while his aunt, Mrs. M.H. Marriott, kept house for him. He thus became the last representative of five Helm generations to live on the land originally granted to the first pioneer of the family, Captain Thomas Helm, by the State of Virginia for his services during the Revolutionary War. In 1912 when the Helm Place and farm were sold to the Hardin Realty Company, a local firm in Elizabethtown which intended to cut the vast amount of timber on the property, the last of the Helms moved to Louisville and out of the history of Hardin County. Helm Place was thereafter to pass through the hands of several additional owners, often to the disadvantage of the house.

After the timber was cut on the Helm Place the Hardin Realty Company soon sold the property to Taylor Watkins and his son-in-law, A. H. Douglas. Both the Watkins and the Douglas families lived at Helm Place for a few years.

On January 28, 1919, the property was sold to the Gabbert Land Company, a corporation consisting of M. H. Gabbert and the husbands of his three daughters. Mr.

(continued)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 10

and Mrs. Gabbert and their daughters and husbands lived in the house and operated the farm that year but held a huge, widely advertised auction on December 12, 1919 (see photo 1). L.L. Kennedy and his wife, Lizzie, purchased the house and over 200 acres of land at the auction but never lived in it during the 19 years they owned it. During that time several tenants farmed the land and occupied the house or the tenant house which was located in the field on Dixie Highway about where the Helmwood Shopping Center is now operated.

For many years the house remained vacant and deteriorated rapidly (see photos 5 and 7). Its shutters hung away or fell off altogether. It was used as a barn. Wheat was stored in the double parlors and hay and corn were kept in the dining room. The grounds were treated as public property during this time and were popular for picnics and political speakings. Public barbecues were held on the family cemetery hill.

On December 5, 1938, L.L. Kennedy sold Helm Place to Judge J.R. Layman. Although Judge Layman owned it for only a short period of time he made drastic changes in the appearance of the house. The two saddle rooms were removed and a front porch added, embellished with two-story white columns. The Victorian additions on the south side were also removed.

On July 12, 1939, Judge Layman sold the property to Hayes Burnett. About the latter part of 1939 or early 1940 Mrs. Porter Smith rented the house and opened an antique shop and catering service there. On December 31, 1943, Mr. Burnett sold Helm Place with about 100 acres of ground, to Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Hobbs who sold 77 acres with the house to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Marion on January 30, 1945.

The Marions restored the house and grounds as far as possible. No change was made in the structure of the main block of the house but they built the one-story brick service wing at the rear.

A few years after the death of her husband, Mrs. Marion sold Helm Place to Dr. Robert E. Robbins of Elizabethtown on November 24, 1970. Reserving the frontage on the highway and other acreage, Dr. Robbins sold the house with a few acres to Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Wright in July 1971. The Wrights made Helm Place their home until early in 1975 when they leased it to the North Central Comprehensive Care Center. It is now used by this agency for offices.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 7 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 9 1976

Helm Place

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

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