

= Benjamin Hardin Helm =

Benjamin Hardin Helm (June 2 , 1831 ? September 21 , 1863) was a Kentucky politician , attorney , Confederate brigadier general , and a brother @-@ in @-@ law of Abraham Lincoln . He was also the son of Kentucky Governor John L. Helm . Helm was born in Bardstown , Kentucky . He attended the Kentucky Military Institute and the West Point Military Academy and then went to study law at the University of Louisville and Harvard University . He served as a state legislator and the state 's attorney in Kentucky . He also served as the assistant inspector @-@ general for the Kentucky state guard . Helm was offered the position of Union Army paymaster by his brother @-@ in @-@ law , President Abraham Lincoln , a position which he declined . Helm felt it was an honor to serve in the Confederate States Army , where he was initially a colonel and later promoted to brigadier general . Helm commanded the 1st Kentucky Brigade more commonly known as The Orphan Brigade . He died on the battlefield during the Battle of Chickamauga . Helm was married to Emilie Todd , the half @-@ sister of Mary Todd Lincoln .

= = Early life = =

The son of lawyer and politician John L. Helm and Lucinda Barbour Hardin , Benjamin Hardin Helm was born in Bardstown , Kentucky on June 2 , 1831 . In the winter of 1846 , at age 15 , Helm enrolled at the Kentucky Military Institute , where he remained for three months . He left on his 16th birthday to accept an appointment in West Point the same day . Helm graduated in 1851 near his 20th birthday , ranked 9th in a class of 42 cadets . He became a brevet second lieutenant in the 2nd U.S. Dragoons . He served at a cavalry school at Carlisle , Pennsylvania , and at Fort Lincoln , Texas , but resigned his commission after a year , when he was diagnosed with inflammatory rheumatism .

Helm then studied law at the University of Louisville and Harvard University , graduating in 1853 and practicing law with his father . In 1855 , he was elected to the House of Representatives of Kentucky from Hardin County , and was the state 's attorney for the 3rd district of Kentucky from 1856 to 1858 . In 1856 , Helm married Emilie Todd , a half @-@ sister of Mary Todd Lincoln .

In 1860 , he was appointed assistant inspector @-@ general of the Kentucky State Guard , which he was active in organizing . Kentucky remained officially neutral in the American Civil War , but his brother @-@ in @-@ law , now President Abraham Lincoln , offered him the position of paymaster of the Union Army . Helm declined the offer , and returned to Kentucky to raise the 1st Kentucky Cavalry Regiment for the Confederate Army .

= = Military career = =

Helm was commissioned a colonel on October 19 , 1861 , and served under Brigadier General Simon B. Buckner in Bowling Green , Kentucky . Helm and the 1st Kentucky were then ordered south . He was promoted to brigadier general on March 14 , 1862 and , three weeks later , received a new assignment to raise the 3rd Kentucky Brigade , in the division of Major General John C. Breckinridge . During the Battle of Shiloh , Helm used his brigade to guard the Confederate flanks . In 1862 , he was also sent to protect the Arkansas , an ironclad warship of the Confederate Navy under construction in Yazoo City , Mississippi . Serving under Breckinridge in January 1863 , he was given command of the First Kentucky Brigade , commonly known as the " Orphan Brigade " . Helm 's brigade was assigned to the Army of Tennessee , where it participated in the 1863 Tullahoma and Chickamauga campaigns . Near the end of the spring of 1863 , Breckenridge ordered Helm to deploy the brigade to Vicksburg , Mississippi to participate in General Joseph E. Johnston 's unsuccessful attempt to break the siege . Helm called it " the most unpleasant and trying [campaign] of his career " .

= = Battle of Chickamauga and death = =

In the fall of 1863 , the 1st Kentucky Brigade formed a part of General Braxton Bragg 's counteroffensive against Union Major General William Rosecrans in Chattanooga , Tennessee . At 9 : 30 am on September 20 , 1863 , the divisions of Generals Breckinridge and Patrick Cleburne were ordered to move forward . Helm 's brigade and the others in Breckinridge 's division drove into the Federals ' left . General Cleburne 's division , which was intended to strike near the center of the line , was delayed by heavy fire from Union soldiers , leaving the left flank unguarded . Repeated attempts to overwhelm the Federals were in vain , though some of Helm 's Kentuckians and Alabamans managed to reach within 39 yards (36 m) of the Federal line . In less than an hour of the order given to advance , fully one third of the Orphan Brigade had been lost . While the remainder of Helm 's men clashed with the Union line , a sharpshooter from the 15th Kentucky Union Infantry shot Helm in the chest . Bleeding profusely , he remained in the saddle a few moments before toppling to the ground . After being carried off the battlefield , Helm 's surgeons concluded that his wounds would be fatal . Helm clung to life for several hours . Knowing that his health was deteriorating , he asked who had won the battle . When assured that the Confederates had carried the day , he muttered : " Victory ! , Victory ! , Victory ! " . On September 21 , 1863 , Gen. Helm succumbed to his wounds .

Following his death , Abraham Lincoln and his wife went into private mourning at the White House . Mary Lincoln 's niece recalled : " She knew that a single tear shed for a dead enemy would bring torrents of scorn and bitter abuse on both her husband and herself . " However , the widowed Emilie Todd Helm was granted safe passage to the White House in December 1863 .

In an official report of the Battle of Chickamauga , General Daniel Harvey Hill stated that Benjamin Helm 's " gallantry and loveliness of character endeared him to everyone . " In a letter to Emilie Todd Helm , General Breckinridge said , " Your husband commanded them [the men of the Orphan brigade] like a thorough soldier . He loved them , they loved him , and he died at their head , a patriot and a hero . "