

William "Billy" Beckwith  
1843-1891  
Tsnungwe/Hoopa advocate for Native People

by Danny Ammon, October, 2021



*Hupa spokesman Billy Beckwith carried the people's grievances to outsiders and appealed for justice. Photograph courtesy of Ed and Matilda Marshall.*

photo: Our Home Forever by Byron Nelson Jr., 1978.

William “Billy” Beckwith was born in 1843 pre-contact to a Tsnungwe mother from the ʔe:lding (=place where the rivers flow together) village of ta:ng’ay-q’it (=on the point extending into the water), previously known as mituq’-q’it-ding (=between - on it -place). His father was from the Hoopa Valley village of tse:wina:lding.

Billy Beckwith had three full-sisters and one-full brother:

tse:wina:lding man, d. ~1852	ʔe:lding mother	
Laura Lindsey Norton	Fannie Quimby (~1842 -1912) (no children according to probates); called Fannie Kentuck in 1902 census	Billy Beckwith, 1843-1891
Mary Quimby Campbell, b. ~1850, d. 1902	Frank Campbell, b. ~1851 SF (why-wich-a), d. 1902	



Mary Quimby Campbell, full sister of Billy Beckwith

Billy Beckwith also had two younger half-brothers:

	te:lding mother
William Quimby Sr., b. ~1858 SF, d. ~1903	Dan Quimby, b. ~1859 SF, d. ~1928

Billy Beckwith lived a tumultuous life during all the years of warfare between Indians and soldiers from 1849-1864. He apparently was being raised by a soldier named Leonard C Beckwith, suggesting that his tse:wina:lding father was killed early during the years of warfare.



**Collection:** HCC Photos  
**Photo ID:** 1999.07.3036  
**Author/Creator:** Ericson  
**Date:**  
**Title:**  
**Alt Title:** [Hoopa Mountains]  
**Names:**  
**Subjects:** Hoopa  
**Author's Number:**  
**Folder:** Indians  
**Region:** 01 - North and northeastern Humboldt County.  
**Comments:** "A. W. Ericson", For more information see the Genzoli Collection - Photographs description filed in drawer 1 of HCC photos || "The woods where Billy [Beckwith] sought out and persuaded the Indians to go to the Reservation- Chap. Eleven- Chap-XI-page 59" || 1999.07.2993 through 1999.07.3043 are a set. Spencer, Dorcas J. and M. E. Chase; Women's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church; Hoopa Mission.  
**Source:** Genzoli



Billy Beckwith was unusual in that he learned to read and write very early, probably while being raised by Leonard Beckwith. His alliances with non-Indians and ability to read/write is something that would help him throughout his life to advocate for Indian people. Another constant in his life, was being mistreated by non-Indians because he was able to speak up on behalf of the Native Hupa, Tsnungwe and Hoopa Valley. In 1890, he was identified as the only Hupa who could read and write, and he worked towards making this opportunity available to future Hupa people.

Billy Beckwith served as an Indian scout for Lt. Beckwith and worked with the soldiers. He was a person who was instrumental in ending the warfare and bringing about peace in 1864. His ability to work with the soldiers/non-Indians as well as his own Native people helped to end these years of terror.

In a Humboldt Times article from April 19, 1862: "Coopers' Mill—The Indians seem to have a particular grudge against these premises and are consistently depredating upon them...recent robbery by the savages while soldiers were asleep close at hand. The soldiers are deeply chagrined that they missed so good an opportunity to kill some of the rascals. [soldiers went to sleep; aroused in night; Indians there, but escaped] A party of ten, composed of citizens and soldiers guided by Beckwith's Indian "Bill," followed the trail the day following robbery and came upon the camp about four. Indians had left in haste, left flour, beef, baskets, etc. Whites destroyed everything including 3000 pounds of flour." Billy Beckwith would be 19 years old at this time.

On Aug. 29, 1864, Austin Wiley, Superintendent of Indian Affairs California, to Office of Indian Affairs, San Francisco, writes: "At present there are about 600 Indians in the [Hoopa] valley. I appointed L.C. Beckwith a temporary special agent there at the request of the Indians themselves." Billy Beckwith would play a role in helping to end the years of warfare between soldiers and the Indians. He would assist in bringing in the remaining Indians at war to settle in Hoopa Valley, helping to bring peace, at least in theory.

Lt. Beckwith settled in the Eel River valley after this. He and his family are listed there in the 1870 census. Billy Beckwith is not listed with them, but may have been living there as well. In 1891, the Western Watchman newspaper, published at Eureka, reports: "He worked for eight years for one man in Hydenville, and a better record during these years no white man can show. No evil words have been known to pass his lips." These eight years were likely working for Lt. Beckwith.

According to Phyllis Jurin's notebooks, on Nov. 10, 1874, William Beckwith married Alice Wilson (Indian) at Hoopa Valley by Rev. M. Grant. (Beckwith children Isabelle, Annie, another girl Clara)

In 1876, Hoopa Valley Indian Agent Broaddus called a meeting in Hoopa to discuss removing all of the Indians there to the Round Valley Indian Reservation. "Buck Billy" Beckwith, "an industrious and certainly the most intelligent Indian on the Reservation," spoke for the people. He refused to leave the valley, criticized the lack of rations, and expressed their collective desire to farm. He blamed the agency employees for the crop failures, saying, "White men were employed to work, and the Indians were anxious to learn, but the white men would not work and how could the Indians learn? [Lieutenant James] Halloran [of Fort Gaston] agreed with Billy's Assessment and charged Broaddus with mismanagement, nepotism, and retaining "a worthless set of employees," including an Agency farmer whom Broaddus acknowledged "knew very little about his business." (Lewis, David Rich. "Neither Wolf nor Dog: American Indians, Environment, and Agrarian Change." Oxford University Press, 1994)

The Hupa Language Program reported a similar re-telling of this saying the because Billy Beckwith had learned to read, he was able to read the plans the Indian agent had to remove the Indians from Hoopa.

(Masten, Ada. "Legend and Personal Histories" by CICD-HSU. Reprinted Feb., 1988. <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/j38609386> )

Billy Beckwith

Told by Ada Masten, Hupa, 11/21/78

One agent we had called the people together. He had someone going around telling them to go on a certain day to a big building for a meeting. Well they asked "What kind of meeting?" He told them "We're going to build a big church here in Hoopa and we want all of you to sign for it. You folks will have to sign before we can build that church." So of course, they put their X's on it, as they weren't educated Indians, at least the older ones. Well, Billy Beckwith, I guess, must have gone to school someplace, he had a pretty good education. I never did hear where he went to school, maybe in Blue Lake. But, he had good sense. At that time, Billy Beckwith had been out of town, out of Hoopa. When he came home, he asked "Where's everybody?" They said "they all went to a meeting, the men folks mostly." So he went to the meeting and saw everybody sitting around and asked "What's up?" They told him they were signing up for a church here. "We're going to have a church and we have to sign up for it." Billy thought for himself why do they have to sign for it? So he went to the desk and said "Let me see that paper." And it was for removing Hupa Indians to Round Valley. That was their church. See what awful things the white people would do to the Indians, and they blame the Indians for a lot of stuff. Now that was our agent from Washington! So Billy Beckwith turned around and asked the Indians in the Hupa Language "Do you people want to be moved to Round Valley?" Of course they knew about Round Valley, because they knew that Indians lived there, because they used to have pack trains that went there. Well the Indians got all mad, they got up and said "Where's that paper we signed?" They tore it all up. I guess that agent got scared. So the government even let the Indians have cows or mares, and told them you folks would have cattle someday, but we want the first calves and the first colts, so they had to turn them over to the government after they were weaned. The government had already sent some of that stock to Round Valley ahead of the Hoopa Indians. They were sure they were going to move the Hupas. But Billy Beckwith told the Indians they didn't have to go. They couldn't be made to move. So he was the one that kept the Indians in Hoopa.

Billy Beckwith's skills put him in a position where he could advocate for what was best for the Indian people. The non-Indians running the reservation considered Billy Beckwith to be a bad Indian for this, a trouble maker.

The Homer Barnett papers - Hupa notebook, noted that Billy Beckwith was an Indian who had been raised by whites and given some schooling. It says he stood up for Indians.

In 1880, the white Leonard C Beckwith family is listed on the Census in Hydesville. Meanwhile, Billy Beckwith's and family show up on the Census listed in Arcata:

1880 Federal Census - in Arcata		
William Beckwith	Indian 28	(farmer)
Alice	Indian 18	wife
Isobel	Indian 4	dau
Clara	Indian 2	dau
Anne	Indian 1/12	dau.

Billy Beckwith's advocacy for the well-being of the Indian people continued through the 1880s and up to his death in 1891. "In December 1888, G.R. Stanley, the pastor of a local Methodist church, forwarded some of their complaints to General Fisk. Billy Beckwith and other Hupa leaders had come to him, Stanley said, and "desired him to have their wants laid before some authorities or Christian men who would help them." (Nelson, Byron. "Our Home Forever" )

Billy Beckwith would forge an alliance with Mrs. Dorcas Spencer, a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union:

Spencer's Indian experience began with the Hupa Indians in 1889 as an outgrowth of her organization work, Women in Humboldt County, in the far northwestern corner of the state, invited her to come and organize the residents there. During her months-long stay, she connected with a Hupa man, Billy Beckwith, whose initial concerns were not temperance per se but, rather, the general poor condition of life on the reservation, made worse by the presence of Fort Gaston, a nearby army base that was the source of debauchery for Indians. He had even appealed to his congressman, but to no avail. Fort Gaston was investigated after an extensive letter-writing campaign was initiated by Spencer that eventually reached President Benjamin Harrison who assigned Dr. Daniel Dorchester to investigate the situation further. Eventually, the post was closed in 1892. (Lappas, Thomas John. "In League Against King Alcohol: Native American Women and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1933." University of Oklahoma Press, Feb 13, 2020)



In "Our Home Forever" by Byron Nelson, he also writes of Beckwith's alliance with Spencer in 1889: "Ten days later the complaints about the soldiers began again. Billy Beckwith had approached Mrs. Dorcas Spencer, a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The reservation, she said, was "the most inaccessible one in the United States, in the heart of the Trinity Mountains, with no road nearer than 16 miles." As a result, she claimed, "abuses are certainly perpetrated there which could not be done openly."

Billy Beckwith sought the assistance of Dorcas Spencer to help protect the Indian women of the Hoopa Indian Reservation from the soldiers stationed there at Fort Gaston:

That fall the MIA turned to California once again. On September 12 [1890], it's president Elizabeth Bullard, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Thomas Jefferson Morgan, requesting 160 acres of land on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation for educational and missionary purposes. Located in the northern part of Humboldt County, this reservation was home to the Hupa Indians. While speaking in nearby Hydesville, Mrs. Dorcas Spencer, corresponding secretary of the California branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, had been approached by William Beckwith, a Hupa Indian, who pleaded with her to accompany him to his reservation to witness his people's wretched living conditions. He especially decried the presence of Fort Gaston, whose soldiers were debauching the women and supplying liquor to everyone. A descriptive letter written by Spencer to Quinton, reprinted in *The Indian's Friend*, had alerted Bullard to the missionary need of the Hupas. (Mathes, Valerie Shere. "The Women's National Indian Association: A History." UNM Press, April 15, 2015)

Billy Beckwith discusses the negative influence of the soldiers on the women population of the Hoopa Indian Reservation from July 9-14, 1890: Superintendent of Indian Schools Daniel Dorchester [comes to investigate poor conditions]. During that time, he saw prostitutes operating openly on the reservation, with the encouragement of the soldiers. Billy Beckwith, Doctor Michel (who had been replaced in April, but remained in the valley), Thomas Bair (the post trader) and others all confirmed his observations. Dorchester found many witnesses who stated that these things had not been a part of Hupa life before the soldiers came. Billy Beckwith explained: "It was not allowed... The Indian Law was very strict... There were no prostitutes around then after men. Such a person was not known then, so far as I have any knowledge, or have heard." (Nelson, Byron. "Our Home Forever")

Later in 1890, Billy Beckwith continues to clash with the new Indian agent because he is advocating for the well-being of the Indians. Byron Nelson writes in "Our Home Forever":

In November 1890, the new civilian agent, Isaac Beers, replaced Captain Edmunds. He soon discovered that the people of the valley were not awed by his authority. Before the new agent had spent two months in the valley, Billy Beckwith began to tell the Hupa that "he would see that the agent was removed if they were not satisfied with him." Only two years earlier, Beckwith's protests had brought a series of investigators to the valley. So,

when Beckwith told the Hupa to “pay no attention” to their new agent, Beers could not afford to ignore his threats. Hoping to remove the man who had caused him so much trouble, Beers ordered Beckwith to leave the reservation. First the agent told him that he had “forfeited all claims” at Hoopa because he did not live on the reservation. When the agent threatened to imprison him, Beckwith left. Only then did the agent write to the commissioner of Indian affairs to find out if Beckwith did have rights on the reservation.

In earlier years a man in Beckwith’s position would have no appeal. But Beckwith had already enlisted outside support for the Hupa’s protests, and, when Agent Beers evicted him, he explained his position in a letter to the editor of the Western Watchman, a Eureka paper. He addressed his petition to “all good white people who believe the Indian has a soul and can feel hunger and pain.” He recounted his own difficulties with the agent and then explained that the Hupa were upset because Beers would not answer their complaints. The agent had sold their flour without paying them, made them pay to mill their own wheat on the reservation, and forced them to buy back the produce they had raised. He allowed the trader’s livestock to trample their crops. He refused to stop illegal whiskey sales. When they protested, he gave evasive answers.

1891 had many important events in Billy Beckwith’s life. In February of 1891, an important letter to the newspaper appeared trying to inform the general public of the deplorable conditions the Indians faced on the reservation. Beckwith had also been protesting that he is being run off the reservation by the Indian agent. This letter was signed and supported by most of the Indian men of the Hoopa Indian Reservation:

Feb 8. 1891  
Hoopa Valley, Cal.

We, the undersigned, and William E. Beckwith are friends, and we are wishing for him here and we like to know why is it that our agent don’t allow him here. William is a full-blooded Hoopa Indians forty-five to fifty years of age, for we do not know his age exactly; and why is it the agent here tells him, “you have no right here?” We don’t believe William would tell us or teach us anything that was wrong. William always tells us how to take care of ourselves and be kind just the same as our own earthly brothers. But our cruel agent says to him, “Go away, we do not want you here, you are too smart, you know too much, you will make trouble, you have made trouble before; if you talk too much I will put ball and chain on you and give you nothing to eat for a week or more.” Now, let us ask about that. How did our agent know about William Beckwith? Just because he been told that William was a bad man by the contemptible man? The contemptible man was Berryman Lack. Our Agent thinks that Berryman is the best boy he got on this reservation, because he always trying to (blind?) him, or else did he know that Berryman is citizen? Berryman got homestead at Willow Creek, and have no right to come on the reservation and take up land; he have no right to raise his hogs and

cattle on reservation land. We all know a long time ago, that Berryman and the reservation clerk would put this agent into trouble for they tells him too many lies. We don't think Will Beckwith would make trouble here by teaching us the Gospel (?) but the Agent will make trouble if he don't stop talking about the old time and making us remember what we have done before that we have forgot a long time ago. Not only what he said to Whites (?) that we know he is not the right kind man we want here. We had lots Agent better than him and we always turned out when he don's set right. We like to have a Agent that will punish us for drinking whisky or for bringing whisky on the reservation. Since our (unreadable) Agent come here the girls and boys had big drink here, but the drunkards never got punished, or either do our Agent (unreadable) where whe whisky comes from. He thinks he have to do nothing but selling (unreadable)...

...

We nearly got starved last year because too many flour has been sent off last year. We never did buy our own flour on the reservation before except now. We are afraid he will chastise us for threatening our wheat, for he is charging us for grinding our flour, and we don't like to see him remain here any longer. We just just out why white people don't like to have William Beckwith here, because he is trying to help us.

Signed

William Duskey	William Quimby
Daniel Quimby	Bigmouth Tom
Todie Ned	Todie Sambo
Jacko	One-eye Sam
Big Frank	Jerry
Kentuck Dick	James Jackson
Kentuck	Frank Campbell
Captain Joe	Doctor Tom
John Sherman	Little George
Little Billy	Clarence Wallace
Carpenter Charles	James Davis
John Davis	Carpenter Johnnie
John Spencer	Oldman Jamie
Willie Hosler	S F Johnie
Charles Tracy	Pete Hostler

Robinson	Ben Hostler
Black Henry	Pratt Hostler
William Gibbs	Alfred Misket
Dan Misket	Bob Misket
James Smith	Finley Smith
Campbell [Norton]	Saxon
Hank	Socketish
Jim Hosler	John McCann
Ferry Bob	Major Norton
John Montgomery	Peter Socketish
Fancy Ned	S. Bob
HG Richmond	Billy Richmond
Cooney Hank	

The following week another letter to the newspaper is submitted by Bill Beckwith:  
Feb 16, 1891 - Letter in newspaper from Bill Beckwith discussing treatment of Indians on reservation, and himself in particular.

Letter from W.E. Beckwith

Editor Watchman: And all good white people who believe the Indian has a soul and can feel hunger and pain, I desire through your paper to speak out of the fullness of my heart of grievances in Hoopa Reservation. I saw in Arcata Union a letter from Agent Beers as long as both my arms, in which he tries to prove me a bad Indian. I will say of that: the same spirit proved my Lord and Master a bad man and crucified him; I have just come from Hoopa, and I can go back there and prove myself innocent of all he accuses me of to the satisfying of any honest man.

Oh, my white brothers, and all that have feeling for my neglected and much-abused people, let me freely speak to you of our trials and abuses as they exist in Hoopa Reservation to-day. When Mr. Beers, the Agent, drove me from the reservation last fall, I went to work for Mr. Campbell, a few miles above on Trinity river, and when I got through there I returned to the reservation on my way to Mad river. I came to Dr. Kalahan's office, reservation doctor, with my brother Quimby, who wanted me to go with him to see the doctor as he had a tooth-ache. While we were at doctor's office, Agent

Beers came there and says to me: "Take your team and spring wagon and go back to your friends; Indians say they don't want you here, and you are making trouble." I say: "What Indians don't want me here?" There were some Indians standing around and he look all round among them and then says: "Jim Marshall says you been telling some stories." I say: "I don't think Jim Marshall said anything bad about me." Jim Marshall come to me next day and said: "I never said anything against you, but boss farmer Berryman Lack has been making all this trouble and telling these lies."

When I came here last fall, Agent told me a good many Indians said I was a bad man and would make trouble and they did not want me here. The Indians told me they did not say any such thing to him, but said among themselves "Why don't he let Billy stay, for he is our best friend; we know he always trying to help us." The Indians have wrote a letter to the paper, and speak their minds, and fifty of them signed their names and more would have signed had there been more room; it has only just come to their minds why Agent don't want me here. Last Monday I was in company with a lot of Indians and Beers come up and says:

"Billy, I want to see you at my office." I says:

"I am away in the morning." He says:

"Well, I will tell you now. I am making up a paper about your case to send to Washington; if they say you can come back after twenty years absence, then you can come, if not that will end it." I says:

"Mr. Beers you told me last fall when your first drove me off that you had a law book that said I had no right to be here after being away so long; now, why do you have to write to Washington to find out?"

"Oh!" he says, "you did not come round when I told you to." I says:

"Mr. Beers, that don't change the law." Then the Indians that stood around commensed (?) on him and said:

"We want Billy here, for this is his home." Then they began to accuse him of selling their wheat and flour. At first he denied and says:

"How do you know?" They said:

"We see with our own eyes and we know eyes don't deceive us." And they pressed him till he saw he could not get out of it and then he owned up and said:

"I did sell two or three hundred dollars worth and the money is down in Arcata in Tom Bair's bank for the Indians." The Indians told him there was a great deal more flour than that sold and also they says to him:

"You ...." (not readable) "some flour back?"

“Well,” he says “this has always been done... (not readable)

...

we have to take what each Indian raises to get money to buy things for them, as Government didn't furnish any money we have to pay out of our own pockets. Then the Indians turned the conversation and asked, “Why are all these cattle and mules allowed to run on reservation eating up our grass?” He said,

“I have not seen any cattle.”

Tom Bair, or Arcata, has had a band of cattle on reservation for years, and his mules jump into the Indian grain fields, destroying their crops and we dare not hit a band to help ourselves or make complaint.”

And then they says to Agent,

“Why don't you stop the Indians from getting whisky.”

“Oh,” he says, “I can't find where they get it.” William Dusky says,

“You don't want to find out. Go and ask that woman. She told where she got it, and it was Mr. Stamp, the reservation clerk that gave it to her. She told her father so.” This woman was wife to another Indian, and Stamp took her for his own use, and her and another woman got drunk on the whisky and they got into a fight and she got a piece of her ear bit off; and still Mr. Beers says it so hard to find out; you can't believe anything you hear. Then the Indians say:

“You don't want to find out anything only how much wheat and flour you can sell to outside.” This woman told plainly where she got whisky and yet it was so covered up in hidden mystery Mr. Beers could not see it. So one after another would ask him questions and get him cornered, and the others would laugh and he would turn round and another says:

“You promised me shoes and naver gave them to me.” Finally Mr. Beers turned the talk by asking,

“Who do you want for boss farmer, white man or Indian?” And they say

“We want Indian and not half-breed because that half-breed makes trouble; we don't want trouble.” Then Mr. Beers turned to me and said,

“When I get a letter from Washington I will write to you and let you know what they say.” Then the Indians say to him,

“When Billy comes back to live here it will be all right.” Then Agent went away. Then Indians say,



“We know what he is going to do; he will write to Arcata and then say he got a letter from Washington, ‘Billy can’t come back.’ “

Mr. Beers has stated that Indians don’t want me here. I have proved that this is not so; they do want me. Now, who is it that don’t want me there? Let’s see. Berryman Lack, half-breed who if a citizen, has a homestead at Willow Creek. He is the boss farmer. The Indians all hate him because he don’t tell the truth. Then the reservation clerk, Stamp, Si Mills, Black Smith and the Miller. These men are white; they all keep Indian women but are not married. The blacksmith had a half-breed baby born to him lately. Now what kind of men are these? We will see. They were on reservation when Beers came, but before he got there, not knowing that he would countenance (?) their conduct, they sent their Indian women back home; but they got around the Agent and he soon fell in with them and it was all right. So they took their girls back and the same old wicked practices went on again, to the sorrow and shame of the Indian who had been watching to see if these men would not be driven away. But no, he takes these men as his council; whatever they say he does; and then they talk behind his back and say he doesn’t know anything, and boss farmer tells the Indians, “Agent don’t know anything. This is Billy’s (?) Agent,” trying to get the boss against me, and he tells all the boys that work on reservation “If Billy comes here...?...will all be turned off.” But they don’t believe him because they have known him to be a liar many times.

.....(unreadable).....

...have been kept at school in Hoopa for the last twenty-five years.

In conclusion I will state that many years ago while there was Indian war, the Indians sent for me or desired that the soldiers should have me come and help make peace between them and the whites. At that time a promise was made to the Indian, “You shall have Hoopa Valley for your home,” and they have been waiting all these years to have the land set apart, each one his portion and allowed to work it and become citizens. If we only had a chance we don’t need much help. When will the white man give us our land and good men to teach us and not bad men such as we have now?” If I profess to be a Christian at Eel river and they find me drunk in Hoopa and a swearer then I know that is bad, but this is not so; let the inspector of this government come and take me to Hoopa and inquire into this and punish the guilty ones. Shall we ever get justice done us? We have waited now thirty years. We have been kept in wicked hands, no one to teach good things, only wicked things. Many here died, others are suffering now. Is this my treatment at the hands of my white brother for all my good will and deed toward him? If so then I will draw my blanket over my head and without another word quietly submit even unto death, take my life and let me sleep with my

father and give my land to my white brothers, for there seems to be no place for the poor Indian.

—William E. Beckwith

Eureka Feb 16, 1891

[Many of our best citizens stand ready to vouch for the integrity and reliability of Wm. E. Beckwith.—Ed. Watchman]

In this following letter from Billy Beckwith to the newspaper Western Watchman, the paper precedes his letter with an introduction of Beckwith attesting to his superior character. They also give his Indian name Enuck-din (yinuq'-din = from upriver):

The Indian's Friend, ~1891 after letter above Billy Beckwith sent to Western Watchman newspaper, published at Eureka, California

“Who is Billy Beckwith?”

This question is asked and answered in a recent number of the Western Watchman newspaper, published at Eureka, California.

Billy Beckwith, or Enuck-din, a full-blooded Hoopa Indian between forty and forty-five years of age. He was converted to Christianity when he was quite young, and has ever remained a faithful servant of God, witnessing in every place to a change of heart; his conduct in every instance bearing out the truth of his testimony. He worked for eight years for one man in Hydesville, and a better record during these years no white man can show. No evil words have been known to pass his lips. Meek and lowly, knowing his place, he has kept to it always. During the Indian wars that distracted our borders, his services were most valuable, and were eagerly sought for. He was the white man's friend and he was the Indian's friend, and he had the utmost confidence of both sides. The Indians were hard to find in the mountain fastnesses, but as a last resort the soldiers sent him to talk with his people and to get them to settle in Hoopa Valley. This he was able to do by promising them in the name of the United States that the valley should be their home, and that they should never be moved.

While he was at Hydesville he saved enough money to buy five good horses and sent them to his brothers, declaring that he was laying up treasure in Heaven. He has

frequently been summoned to Hoopa to counsel and advise the better class of Indians and to urge them to stand firm against the demoralizing influences of the agency.

Having thus introduced him, we condense a letter which he recently published.

Editor Watchman:, and all good white people who believe the Indian has a soul. I desire to speak out of the fullness of my heart of grievances in Hoopa Reservation. I saw a letter from Agent Beers as long as both my arms, in which he tries to prove me a bad Indian. I have just come from Hoopa, and I can go back there and prove myself innocent of all he accuses me of, to the satisfying of any honest man.

The agent has stated that Indians don't want me here. I have proved that this is not so; they do want me. Now, who is it that don't want me there? Berryman Lack, half-breed, the boss farmer; then the reservation clerk, Stamp, Si Mills, the blacksmith; and the miller. These men are white; they all keep Indian women but are not married. The blacksmith had a half-breed baby born to him lately. Now what kind of men are these? We will see. They were on reservation when the new agent came, but before he got there, not knowing that he would countenance their conduct, they sent their Indian women back home, but they got around the Agent and he soon fell in with them and it was all right. So they took their girls back and the same old wicked practices went on again, to the sorrow and shame of the Indian who had been watching to see if these men would not be driven away. But no, he takes these men as his council; whatever they say he does. These are the men that don't want me in Hoopa.

When will the white man give us our land and good men to teach us, instead of bad men such as we have now?" Shall we ever get justice done us? We have waited now thirty years. We have been kept in wicked hands. Tgere has been no one to teach us good things, but many to teach us evil things. Many have died, others are suffering now. Is this my treatment at the hands of my white brother for all my good will I have shown him, and the good deeds I have done for him? If so then I will draw my blanket over my head and without another word quietly submit even unto death, take my life and let me sleep with my father and give my land to my white brothers, for there seems to be no place for the poor Indian.

—William E. Beckwith

And finally, Billy Beckwith's comfort in working with non-Indians, especially those trying to help Indians with social issues, is illustrated in this last journal notice:

The Indian's Friend (accessed through [books.google.com](http://books.google.com))

A Monthly Published by the Women's National Indian Association. Volume IV, No. 3.  
Philadelphia, Nov. 3, 1891

[Christian missionaries writing of travels to California]...The following day August 12th, we also launched upon the beautiful Pacific, sailing north 220 miles, and landed at Eureka next morning. It was a rough voyage, but was all the way within sight of the bold shore whose beautiful skyline was a constant pleasure, and we had for visible attendants numbers of swift, white-winged seagulls. A few hours later we started under the kind care and guidance of John Walker Esq., for the long drive. Passing Arcata, we reached Blue Lake, 19 miles distant, at eight o'clock P.M. and there passed the night. "Billy Beckwith," an intelligent Christian Indian of Hoopa Valley, was here, and we asked him to accompany us as a guide, which he did, giving us many interesting facts regarding the history of his people. Leaving next morning at seven, we made our way up and down three mountains, often looking down thousands of feet below us, and drove for hours up roads which gave us hardly more than two feet between our outside wheels and the awful abysses below. It took a full day's work from our strong horses to carry us over the 33 miles to "Bretts," ...

Billy Beckwith faced more serious events in 1891. Josephine Hostler Chesbro worked at his sister Mary Quimby Campbell's home in Tsnungwe territory (currently Salyer). Josephine was the wife of James Chesbro and mother of Clara Hostler Campbell. Josephine was also the sister of Mrs. Clara South Fork Johnnie. Josephine went to Buck Billy's to have some food and take a break from work. She became very ill there and later died. Mary Quimby Campbell believed that Buck Billy poisoned/killed her. This started a serious conflict between Mary Quimby Campbell, Billy Beckwith and their family against Buck Billy.

Mary Quimby Campbell's brothers killed Buck Billy for what they believed he had done to Josephine Hostler Chesbro. This story is documented with minor variations by William Wallace and Sally Noble/JP Harrington. Buck Billy was a relative of Sally Noble

and Indian Friday. Billy Beckwith and Dan Quimby both went to pay Sally Noble and Indian Friday, required by Indian law for killing their relative.

In the William Wallace version of the Buck Billy story, some people believed that Mary Quimby Campbell was wrong to assume that Buck Billy had poisoned/devilled Josephine Hostler Chesbro. It said many of Mary Quimby Campbell's family started to die off, and that was considered to validate the idea that Mary Quimby Campbell was mistaken.

On September 10, 1891, William Beckwith enrolled at Chemawa Indian School. This is very unusual since he was 48 years old. It is not clear why he would enroll at Chemawa at that age.

Three months later on December 10, 1891, William Beckwith died at Chemawa Indian School of unknown causes. On his gravestone, it reads: "I had no home in this world." This is very sad considering he was run off the Hoopa Indian Reservation for trying to help the social conditions of the Indian people.

William was unusual: He was older (age 40) and is one of the few students buried at Chemawa with an original marble gravestone. It reads: "William E. Beckwith, Dec. 10, 1891. Aged 48 years. I had no home [in] this world. Jesus took me to his mansion's abode." William Beckwith grave record, Find-a-Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64002910/william-beckwith> . 2. "Died Dec. 10, 1891." School Roster. -- 3. SuAnn Notes: "Death/Letter NARA #712 Harriet buried at Cityview"

From findagrave website:

William Beckwith

Birth: unknown

Death: 10 Dec 1891

Burial: Chemawa Cemetery, Keizer, Marion County, Oregon, USA

Plot: Row 5, Plot 5

Memorial #: 64002910

Inscription: "Aged 48 Years"

Created by: Kristy Arbuckle (46759970)

Added: 10 Jan 2011

URL: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64002910/william-beckwith#source>

Citation: Find a Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/64002910/william-beckwith> : accessed 24 October 2021), memorial page for William Beckwith (unknown–10 Dec 1891), Find a Grave Memorial ID 64002910, citing Chemawa Cemetery, Keizer, Marion County, Oregon, USA ; Maintained by Kristy Arbuckle (contributor 46759970) .

Billy Beckwith was long remembered past his death in 1891 as somebody who helped the Indians of the Hoopa Reservation. In later years, his old ally Mrs. Dorcas Spencer remembered her old friend:

[Dorcas] Spencer's experience with Billy Beckwith and the closing of Fort Gaston along with her general organization and petition work marked her as someone both knowledgeable and effective in matters of Indian work. The NCIA sent a missionary to the Hoopa Valley Reservation and a church was established, largely through the urging of Spencer. "Mrs. Spencer continued her plea for the mission before every accessible denominational body for ten years when the Presbyterian Board of Missions undertook the work." They eventually sent M.E. Chase in 1900, and she was pastor there for many years. Spencer returned "after fifteen years and was surprised to find herself remembered gratefully by the Indians 'as the woman that sent the soldiers away.'" The "Indian man [Beckwith]" died before "his vision was realized, but died content in the faith that it was all coming, and in his last hours thought himself surrounded by women wearing the white ribbon- to his mind the symbol of his people's redemption."

(Lappas, Thomas John. "In League Against King Alcohol: Native American Women and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1874-1933." University of Oklahoma Press, Feb 13, 2020)

Again, Dorcas Spencer remembered Billy Beckwith fondly in 1905: On the recent visit of Mrs. Dorcas J. Spencer, for many years deeply interested in the Hoopa Indians, Miss Chase says: Between 40 and 50 adult Indians came to hear her Sunday address, and as she referred to her visit to that field 15 years ago, she said: "At that time, not a soul could read except Billy Beckwith, and now you use 3 or 4 dozen hymn books and sing beautifully." (Jan, 1905 "The Indian's Friend" Volume XVII No. 5)



Billy Beckwith was born pre-contact in a time when his world was all Native. He survived the Indian wars, living in both the non-Indian and Indian worlds. His unique position led to him helping to bring an end to the Indian wars in 1864. Being raised part of the time with soldiers resulted in Billy learning to read and write. For many years, he was the only Hupa Indian able to do this. With these skills, he was able to stop the Indian agent's plans to remove all Indians from Hoopa to Round Valley. Billy understood the traditional Native values and also embraced the new idea of Christianity. All of these values led him to observe that the Native people on the Hoopa Reservation were being mistreated. With his skills and ability to communicate effectively with Indian and non-Indian alike, he was a very strong advocate for the Indian people. This advocacy made him an enemy of the corrupt non-Indians running the Reservation. Billy was forced off the reservation in 1890. Billy relocated to Chemawa Indian School in 1891, enrolling as a student at 48 years of age. Three months later, Billy Beckwith died at the Indian boarding school and was buried there.

To this day, he is remembered by the Tsnungwe people and Hoopa Valley people as a hero, one who gave his life to helping his people.