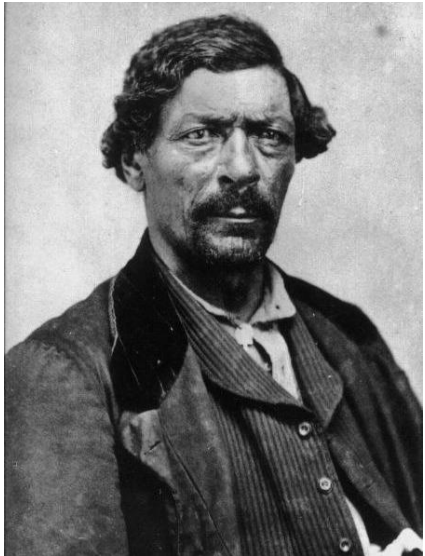


James Beckwourth

Explorer, Scout, Mountain Man



James Beckwourth was an explorer, scout, fur trapper and mountain man. He was born into slavery in Virginia in 1798 and was manumitted by his slave owner who was also his father.

Beckwourth spent several years living with the Crow Indian nation and married a Crow woman. According to legend, he was well liked and respected by Native Americans and was made an honorary chief.

He left the Crow nation in the 1830s and joined the Missouri volunteer military as a scout. During the Seminole War in Florida he scouted for General Zachary Taylor, who became the 12th president of the United States.

Beckwourth left the military in 1840 and spent his next years traveling around the west while periodically working as a civilian scout for military parties.

In 1850 he discovered a pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains that was a safer and faster route for pioneers trying to reach California during the Gold Rush. That pass became the Beckwourth Pass and is part of the United States Interstate Highway system.



Beckwourth Pass, as it looks today