

## Alfred Beckley

City founder Alfred Beckley (May 26, 1802-May 26, 1888) was born in Washington, the only surviving child of [John James Beckley](#) and Maria Prince. The death of his father in 1807 made Beckley's early life economically precarious. With the assistance of President James Monroe, a family friend, he was appointed to West Point, graduating in 1823.

After a long legal battle, Beckley in 1835 gained a clear title to 56,679 acres in what is now [Raleigh County](#), land that his father had acquired decades before. He resigned from the army in 1836 and moved to his property with his wife, Amelia, the daughter of Neville Craig of Pittsburgh. The West Virginia town of [Beckley](#), originally called Raleigh Courthouse, grew up around Wildwood, the Beckley family home which remains a city landmark. Beckley was appointed a militia general in 1849. He later saw limited service with the Confederacy during the [Civil War](#) and was briefly imprisoned at Camp Chase, Ohio. Five of his sons served in the Civil War.

Beckley was joined at his holdings on the Bluestone Road by several members of his mother's family, the Princes, bringing another prominent Raleigh County surname to the area. He spent most of the remainder of his life developing his mill and landholdings. The town of Beckley, chartered in 1838, is based on his entrepreneurial efforts and was named in honor of his father. Alfred Beckley died at Wildwood.

Written by [Gerard W. Gawalt](#)

