

217 HENKEL, PAUL – [REV. PAULUS HENKEL]

Publisher

New Market

Publisher of many German language religious tracts issued from the family-owned Henkel Press in New Market (1806-25); publisher of the short-lived *Virginische Volksberichter und Neumarket Wochenschrift* (1807-09) with sons Ambrose (214) and Solomon (218) Henkel.

The Henkel family was one of Lutheran evangelicals who conducted a press in New Market that produced imprints supporting their ministry. Their crusade was founded on the idea of an unadulterated Lutheran canon focusing on the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Yet the acculturation of German settlers into English language and ways in early-Republic America was then distancing those immigrants from their ethnocultural roots. So if the Henkels were to advance their style of "confessional Lutheranism," they needed to also preserve German language and culture as well. Thus the output of the Henkel Press was a combination of religious and linguistic imprints – religious ones promoting their theological perspective, linguistic ones encouraging the use of German by their followers and prospective adherents. Both genres sustained an itinerant ministry stretching from southern Michigan to northern Georgia, though focused primarily on the family's home hearth in the Great Valley regions of Virginia and North Carolina.

Paul Henkel was both the family's patriarch and the originator of its conservative theology. A native of western North Carolina and a well-known itinerant minister, Henkel was a third-generation descendant of a family of German Pietists who had helped to bring evangelical Lutheranism to Pennsylvania when expelled from the Palatinate in 1717. His parents moved to North Carolina as part of the great German migration southward in the 1750s, but native resistance forced their removal northward into the Valley of Virginia in the 1760s. Trained initially as a cooper, Henkel turned to a ministerial life about 1776, taking on religious study at Frederick, Maryland; family tradition suggests that his training was drawn-out by service in the military during the Revolutionary War. His ensuing assignment to Shenandoah County as a supply minister in 1784 marked the beginning of a mission to fill the pulpits of new and existing Lutheran churches with ministers espousing confessionalism, a ministry eventually embracing five of his six sons and four of his brothers. As a result of that ministry's success, Henkel was also a key player in the founding the North Carolina Synod of the American Lutheran Church in 1803, the Ohio Synod in 1818, and the Tennessee Synod in 1820.

The patriarch's involvement in printing came with the founding of the Henkel Press in 1806. His second son Ambrose had been sent to Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1802 to learn the trade from Johan Gruber, the noted bilingual almanac publisher there. Ambrose returned to New Market with the cast-iron parts needed for a printing press in 1806, for which father Paul then built a wooden frame; the finished press was purportedly set up in the front room of the family home and began printing religious tracts for distribution through Paul's travels. His eldest son, Solomon, is credited with instigating the project, having broached the idea to his father in an 1804 letter; he was then the postmaster there, having returned home from Philadelphia, where he had been trained as a surgeon and apothecary, to start a medical practice; in the long run, Solomon would be the primary conductor of the family press,

having learned the printing trade from his brother Ambrose, who turned over conduct of the press to Solomon in 1815, who then continued in that role until his death in 1847.

In 1807, father Paul joined sons Ambrose and Solomon in producing a non-partisan weekly journal, *Virginische Volksberichter und Neumarket Wochenschrift* (roughly, *Virginia Peoples' Reporter and New Market Weekly Newsletter*). Although the three were the *Volksberichter's* recorded publishers – with Solomon as its financier, Ambrose as its printer, and Paul as its editor – the paper involved the entire Henkel family, both in content and production. Their weekly spurned political issues to present news informed by confessional Lutheranism and traditional German culture. But in the ever-changing American environment, that approach was problematic, as it sharply limited the journal's readership and patronage. As a result, its publication ceased after just seventy-seven issues (December 1807 to June 1809).

More successful than the paper were the religious imprints issued from the family press, particularly those of father Paul. Foremost among these was his *Christliche Catechismus* (or *Christian Catechism*), which drew on and explicated the Augsburg Confession. The Henkel Press issued five editions of the work between 1811 and 1816, with each edition produced in both English and German versions, despite the father's aversion to translating his faith's fundamental texts. A series of hymnbooks also written by Paul added to the abundance of New-Market-produced catechisms. The balance of Henkel's authorial work was a series of commentaries and sermons, none of which saw more than one edition published, though all were aimed at adults literate in German who were the principal target of his ministry. His involvement with the Lutheran Synod of North Carolina, especially after its schism between liberal and conservative perspectives in 1819, made their press the authoritative voice of the evangelical faction, now led by Paul's fourth son, David (216). Similarly, the press was also the source for printed reports of the irregular meetings of the confessional Lutheran evangelicals of Virginia attended by the patriarch.

Even as Henkel was now actively engaged in publishing, his itinerant ministry continued undiminished. Appointed in 1800 as a traveling missionary by the Pennsylvania Synod (then the parental body for all Lutheran synods), in the last decades of his life, Henkel journeyed through North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, as well as his usual stops in western Virginia. Those travels helped him to establish five of his sons as leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Philip and David in North Carolina and Tennessee, Charles and Andrew in Ohio and Kentucky, and Ambrose in his western Virginia base. Only Solomon did not follow his father into the family ministry, staying in New Market, operating a complex of press, store, post-office, and apothecary there that helped financially sustain that ministry. The base allowed Paul Henkel to continue his itinerancy until just before his death, though in ever shorter circuits. He died there of a stroke just short of his seventy-first birthday. He was buried in the graveyard of the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in New Market, attended by the largest gathering of mourners the town had ever seen until then.

Personal Data

Born: Dec. 15 1754 Yadkin River, Rowan County, North Carolina
Married: Nov. 20 1776 Elizabeth Negley @ Pendleton County, VA/WV
Died: Nov. 17 1825 New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia
Children: Solomon (b. 1777); Philip (b. 1779); Ambrose (b. 1786); Andrew (b. 1790); David (b. 1791); Charles (b. 1798); Hannah Rosena (b. 1803); Naomi; Sabina.

Sources: Imprints; Brigham; Rawson, "Guardians," chaps.6-7 (drawing on Henkel family papers now deposited at University of Virginia, James Madison University, College of William & Mary, and Library of Virginia); *Henkel Memorial* (1910); *Life Sketches of Lutheran Clergy*.