

218 HENKEL, SOLOMON – [DR. SALOMON HENKEL]

Printer & Publisher

New Market

Publisher of numerous German language imprints issued from the family-owned Henkel Press in New Market (1807-47); publisher of the *Virginische Volksberichter und Neumarket Wochenschrift* there (1807-09) with brother Ambrose (214) and father Paul (217) 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.

Solomon Henkel was the one son of Paul Henkel not to enter the ministry; rather, for much of his life he remained at the family's home base in New Market, publishing the tracts on which the rest of his family's clerics depended in their ministries. This eldest son of Paul was dispatched to Philadelphia in 1791 to study medicine and pharmacy with Dr. David Jackson, Sr.; the yellow fever outbreak there in 1793 brought him back to Virginia to continue his studies with Dr. Peter Ahl in Staunton. By 1797, he was back in New Market, as he opened an apothecary business in the town that fall. As his business grew, he practiced medicine there as well, becoming a major figure in this small market town; he also served at various times as its mayor, its postmaster, its banker, and a trustee of its public school. But his most enduring function was as the proprietor of the Henkel Press.

In 1802, Solomon's younger brother was sent to Hagerstown, Maryland, to apprentice in the printing trade with Johan Gruber, the noted bilingual almanac publisher. As Ambrose neared the end of that apprenticeship in 1804, Solomon wrote to his father, then in North Carolina, proposing that the family establish a press in New Market that Ambrose would operate to provide print materials that Paul could employ in his ministry. His father agreed and returned to New Market in 1805 to assist in starting the project. Ambrose returned to New Market with the 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 was quickly employed printing tracts. Monies from Solomon's lucrative businesses financed the operation.

While their press was initiated for religious imprints, father Paul joined sons Ambrose and Solomon in publishing a non-partisan weekly in late 1807: the *Virginische Volksberichter und Neumarket Wochenschrift* (roughly, *Virginia Peoples' Reporter and New Market Weekly Newsletter*). Solomon's appointment in 1801 as the postmaster there gave them ready

access to a formal national distribution network, while Paul's ministry built an informal one. Their German-language journal, the first one south of Pennsylvania, spurned political discourse to present essays informed by confessional Lutheranism and traditional German culture. 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 family, both in content and production. However, the ever-changing American environment made such a moralistic paper a problematic venture, as it sharply limited the journal's readership and so its patronage. As a result, publication ceased after just seventy-seven issues (December 1807 to June 1809), and the press reverted to its original intent.

The numerous inexpensive imprints produced by the Henkel Press prove a more enduring legacy than the ephemeral *Volksberichter*. They are probably a more influential one as well, given their wider distribution, aided by Solomon's continuing service as postmaster. In the first fifteen years of the press's operation (1806–1820), the family published at least fifty-eight distinct imprints – almost four per year. Many of these were multiple editions of titles that became standard items in their inventory, so indicating either their popularity or their centrality to their evangelical mission – likely both. The most famous of these were the series of German-language primers that they wrote and published, generically called the "ABC Books" in their correspondence and business accounts. But the most important were the tracts written by Paul Henkel targeting an adult audience. 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, 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.

While Ambrose had been the first printer in the family, Solomon took control of the Henkel Press in about 1812 – when Ambrose was called to military service in the War of 1812; he later turned to a ministerial life as well, formally handing over the family press to Solomon in about 1815, who conducted that office skillfully until his death in 1847. Hence, much of the aforementioned production was Solomon's rather than Ambrose's. It is clear that he learned the craft from his brother, but Solomon also employed trained hands, such as Lawrence Wartmann (431), a German-language printer of Swiss origin who was the shop foreman at about the time of its transfer from Ambrose to Solomon. Moreover, he was aided by at least one other brother in that production; Andrew Henkel (215) began his adult life as a copperplate engraver for the family's imprints, and likely set type and pulled the press as well; some family histories indicate that all six of Paul's sons learned the printing trade to one degree or another, but only Andrew's work can be verified. Yet it would be the

physician and apothecary Solomon who stayed with the trade; his five brothers – Ambrose, Andrew, David, Philip, and Charles – all took on ministerial duties in adulthood, with all but Ambrose leaving the Valley for pulpits south and west of Virginia. As a result, Solomon built a complex of buildings in the town center that included an operating room and laboratory, a medicine shop, a storehouse with a counting room, a Bookbindery, and a press office with a copperplate press alongside the traditional wood-frame one built by his father – a complex known to locals as "Solomon's Temple."

Henkel's commitment to the press evinces a devotion to evangelical Lutheranism as firm as that demonstrated by the rest of his family; he just took on a supportive role rather than the ministerial one they had. In doing so he created a new tradition in the family: medicine. Among his fifty-five grandchildren, there are equal numbers of ministers and doctors alike, as well as the few printers who continued the Henkel Press into the twentieth century. That turn was reinforced by his marriage in 1800 to Rebecca Miller, a daughter of Winchester's principal apothecary, Godfrey Miller, himself a son of a family of Lutheran ministers.

Personal Data

Born: Nov. 10 1777 Hampshire (now Pendleton) County, VA/WV.
Married: Sept. 9 1800 Rebecca Miller @ Winchester, Virginia.
Died: Aug. 31 1847 New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia.
Children: Helena (1801-23); Seorim (1803-04); Sylvanus (1805-30); Samuel Godfrey (1807-63); Siram Peter (1809-79); Simeon Socrates (1811-12); Silon Amos (1813-44); Solomon D. (1815-78); Solon Paul Chas. (1818-82); Hannah Rebecca (1820-61); Helea Anna Maria (1822-74).

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