

## **Henkel Press**

Shenandoah County's rich history offers a great deal to those of us who enjoy learning about what happened here in the past, reading about those who lived here long ago and perhaps collecting items from those long ago days. A popular, and rare, item for a collector of printed materials, are books published by the Henkel Press which operated in New Market. The story of that press is an interesting one, as told by John Wayland in his book, *A History of Shenandoah County*.

In 1802, Ambrose Henkel, age 16 at the time, walked from his home in New Market to Hagerstown, MD. He spent the next few years learning the printing business in Hagerstown, Reading PA and Baltimore. He then purchased printing equipment of his own and hauled it up the Valley to New Market, starting his business in 1806 at the ripe old age of 20. On October 7, 1807, he produced the first issue of a newspaper, written in German, called *The Virginia and New Market Popular Instructor and Weekly News*.

In 1811 Ambrose printed a child's primer that was illustrated with wood cuts which he himself made. In 1816 his shop produced a hymn book for Lutheran churches containing 546 pages that included compilations and original compositions by the printer's father, the Rev. Paul Henkel. In 1816 or 1817 Ambrose sold his business to his brother Solomon and in 1823 he entered the ministry of the Lutheran Church, where he served until his death in 1870.

Solomon Henkel, followed by other family members, operated the Henkel Press until the last in that long line, Elon Henkel, sold the business in 1925. The scope of materials published at the Press throughout the years included the publication of local newspapers, the writing, printing and illustrating of school textbooks, publishing of church literature, printing of all varieties of job work for surrounding communities and the production of dozens of books of theological, literary and historical value. The Henkel family tradition of quality served the Valley well for 119 years.

Perhaps the most familiar product of the Henkel Press was the weekly newspaper, the *Shenandoah Valley*. The *Shenandoah Valley*, first published in German, eventually merged with Woodstock's *Shenandoah Herald*, which had always been printed in English and first appeared in 1817. Today we still can read the descendant of these two weekly newspapers, the *Shenandoah Valley Herald*.