

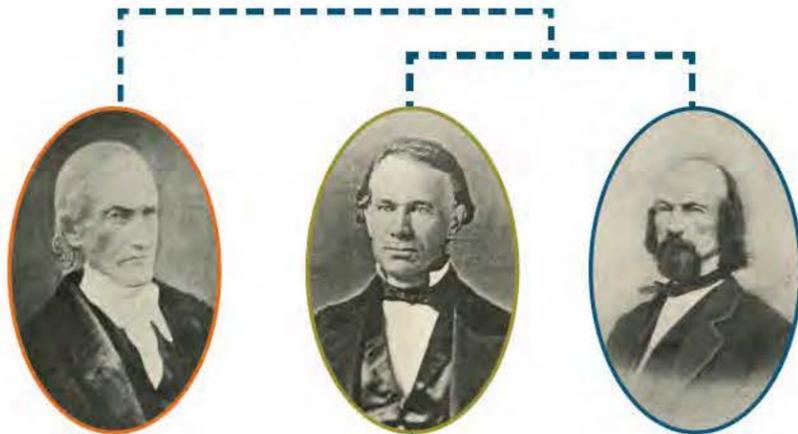
The Henkel family settled in New Market, Virginia in 1790.

Generations of fathers and sons studied medicine. Over the course of their careers, these Shenandoah Valley physicians ministered to their community, tended to their countrymen on the battlefield, and testified in the nation's courts of law.

The letters of the Henkel family richly document the daily life of men in medicine in the nineteenth century, and reveal the challenges of the profession as well as the rewards and responsibilities. These missives convey the concerns and characters of the authors, vividly illustrating the writers' personalities, and their experiences as physicians.

THE HENKEL FAMILY TREE

Grandson of a Lutheran preacher, son of a doctor, and third generation New Market citizen, Samuel Godfrey Henkel came from an extended family of medical professionals, which included two of his brothers. Samuels' sons Caspar Coiner and Haller Hippocrates also became physicians as did a cousin, Abram Shultz Miller.



Dr. Solomon Henkel,
1777-1847, father of Samuel Godfrey Henkel and Solon Paul Charles Henkel

Dr. Samuel Godfrey Henkel,
1807-1863, father of Caspar Coiner and Hippocrates Henkel

Dr. Solon Paul Charles Henkel,
1818-1882, uncle of Caspar Coiner and Hippocrates Henkel

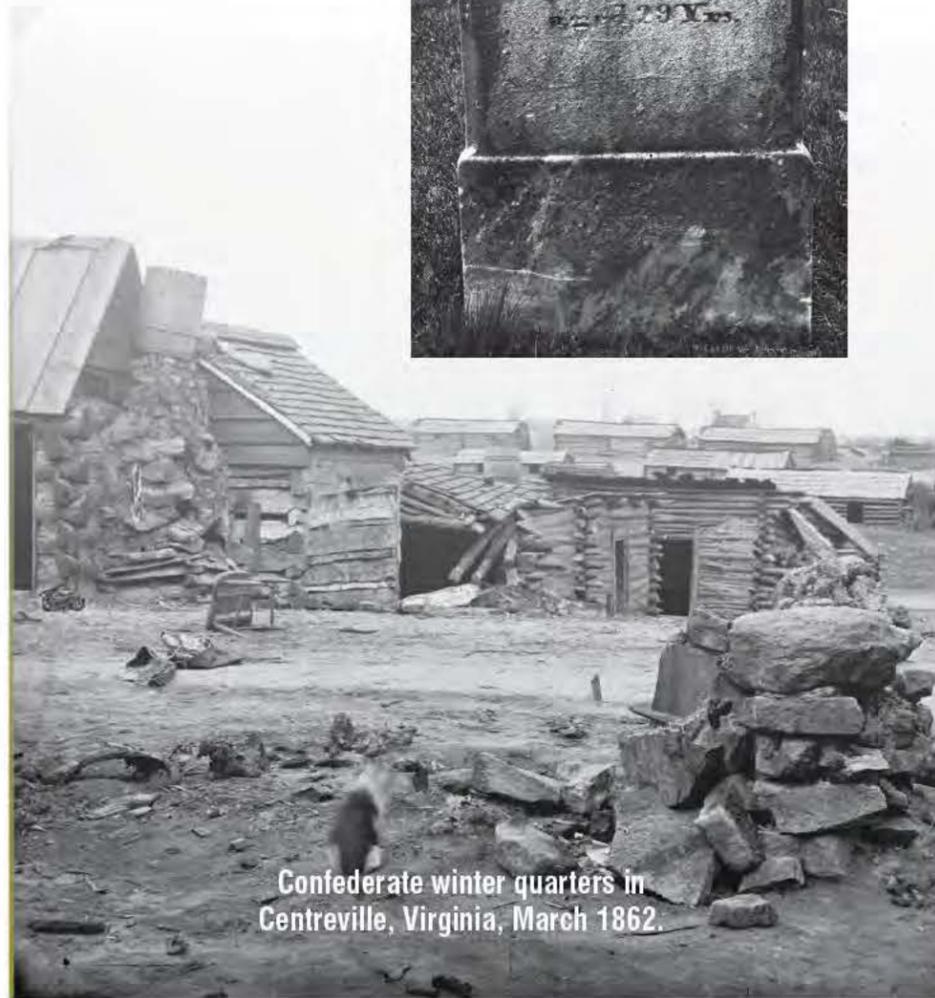
Caspar Coiner Henkel,
1835-1908



CONFRONTED BY WAR

Members of the Henkel family were not slave owners. However, when the American Civil War erupted, the men took up arms on the side of the Confederacy to fight against what they perceived as the imposition of the northern will on their affairs. In 1861, Caspar Coiner Henkel joined the 2nd Regiment, 7th Brigade of the Virginia Militia serving as an assistant surgeon. Many of Caspar's contemporaries volunteered; their hopes, fears, and fates are reflected in letters.

RIGHT: Tombstone of Benjamin F. Graves. B. F. Graves, a friend of Caspar Henkel and volunteer soldier, died in battle and was laid to rest in his home town of New Market, Virginia.



Confederate winter quarters in Centreville, Virginia, March 1862.

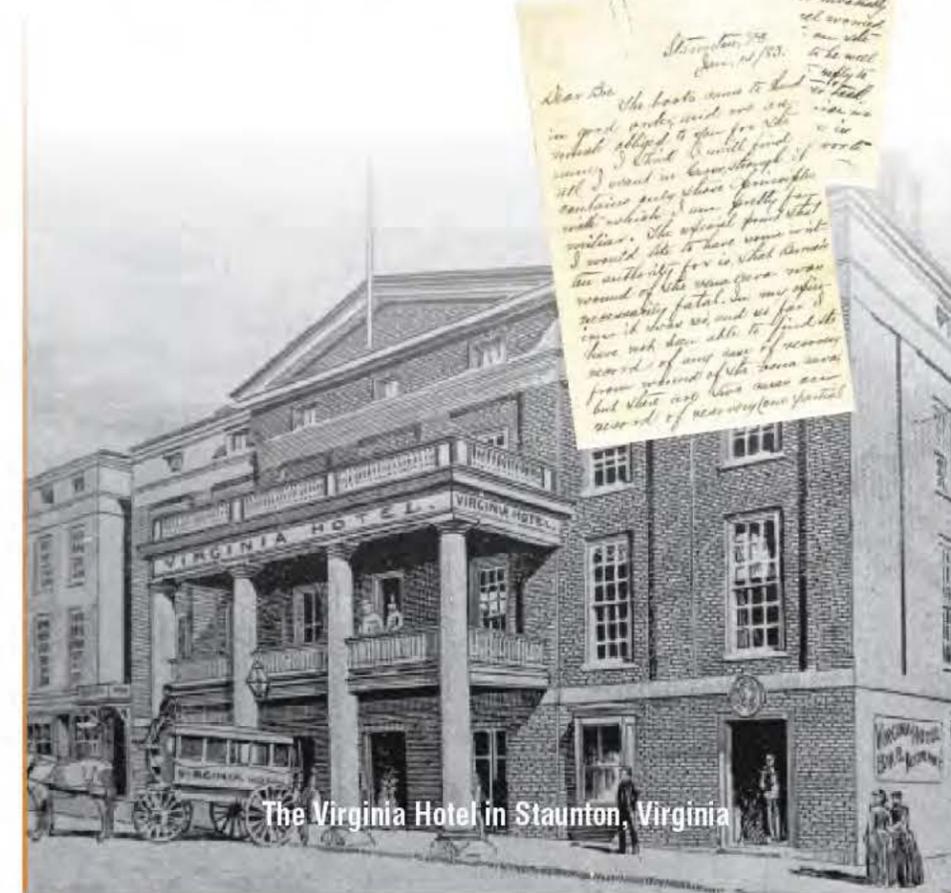
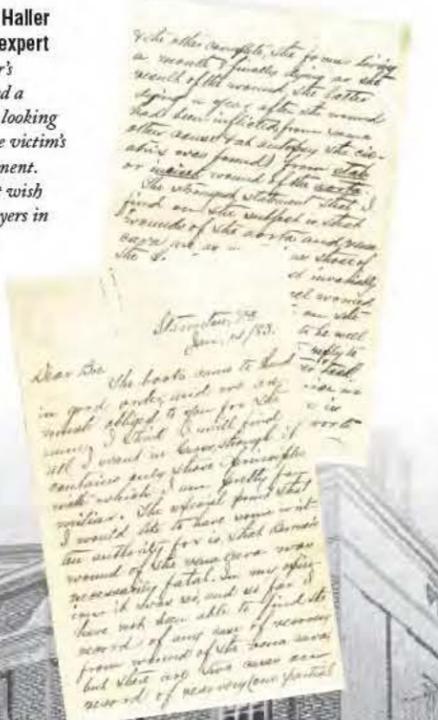
"MIXED UP WITH A MURDERER, WHORES, AND A MURDERED MAN!"

MEDICINE & the COURT

On a Tuesday evening in January 1883, in the Virginia Hotel in Staunton, Virginia a man was shot. The victim, Mr. Burner, still alive, summoned Haller Henkel to give him aid. Unfortunately, the gunshot wound was fatal. As the attending physician to the murdered man, Haller provided forensic evidence during the trial of the accused, who was convicted of murder.

Haller's letters reveal his concerns about the legal obligations he would inevitably be drawn into, having treated the victim. The young doctor understood that his practice and his reputation was at stake if his performance during the trial was not satisfactory.

RIGHT: Letter to Caspar C. Henkel from brother Haller H. Henkel dated January 14, 1883, concerning expert witness. Haller testified at the trial of Mr. Burner's murderer. To prepare, the younger brother borrowed a number of medical books from Caspar. Haller was looking for authoritative support for his conclusion that the victim's wound was inevitably fatal regardless of the treatment. He told Caspar that "I don't feel at all worried but wish to be well posted so as to be able to reply to the lawyers in whatever 'rack' they may take."



The Virginia Hotel in Staunton, Virginia

DOCTORS ON CALL IN NEW MARKET

The Henkel family of physicians was called upon for everything from common complaints to medical emergencies. As well as treating illnesses and injuries, the doctors also undertook public health activities to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

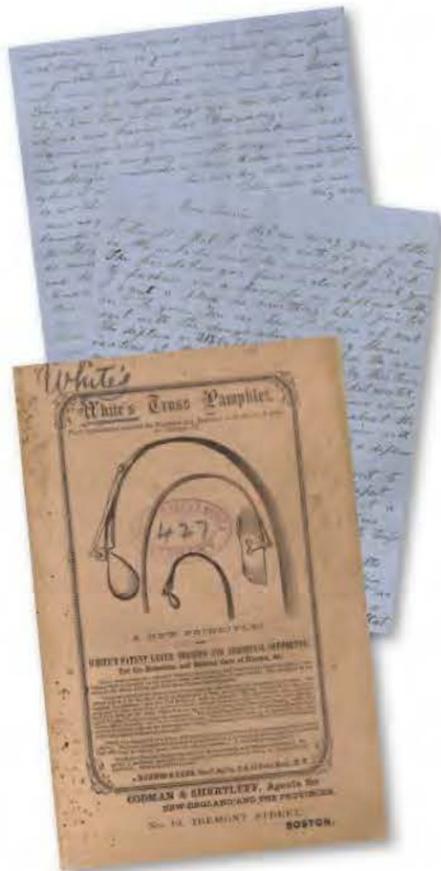
Father, brothers, and cousins kept up an active correspondence that detailed their efforts to quell outbreaks of smallpox, heal broken bones, and treat hernias.

RIGHT: Letter to Caspar C. Henkel from his father Samuel G. Henkel dated January 8, 1857. Samuel reported on the death of Mr. Ruffner, the tavern keeper in Luray, who had contracted smallpox less than a month before. Samuel vaccinated "nearly every one in town" to try to prevent an epidemic. The absence of smallpox as a topic in subsequent correspondence suggests that the efforts of the Henkel family helped suppress a widespread outbreak of the disease.



LEFT: Letter to Caspar C. Henkel from his father Samuel G. Henkel dated February 14, 1857, concerning the treatment of a ruptured hernia. The Henkel family practice fitted John Rupert with a truss to remedy his hernia. The truss slipped while he was chopping wood and "his bowels came down." Mr. Rupert sent for Dr. Sommers, whose treatment did not alleviate the discomfort. Schultz was then called. Before he could render care, Mr. Rupert reconstituted his bowels, leading to Schultz's observation that "it seems rather hard that a patient must pay two Doctors and do the work himself."

BOTTOM LEFT: White's Truss Pamphlet, 1858. White's Truss was a device used to treat hernia during the mid-nineteenth century.



MEDICAL RIVALRIES in SHENANDOAH COUNTY

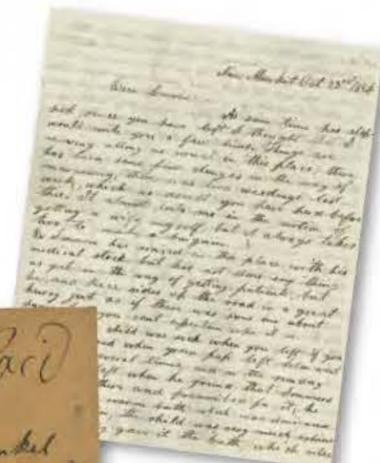
Samuel was a well-respected physician with a successful family practice who served many people living in the area. In 1854, when two doctors new to town set up shop, the Henkel physicians defended their business and described their feelings and reactions in letters.



THE DOCTOR.
All sickness and ills, you say you can cure,
By your all healing gargle and pill,
You relieve them from pain, of this I'm quite sure,
For if you can't cure, you can kill.

LEFT: The Doctor, ca. 1860. Fannie Coiner, from Augusta County, Virginia, anonymously sent this cartoon to her cousin Caspar.

BELOW: Letter to Caspar C. Henkel from his second cousin Abram Schultz Miller dated October 23, 1854. Concerning the attitude and medical expertise of Dr. Sommers and Dr. Rice. Schultz, a physician working with the Henkel practice, derided the competency and apparent airs of the competition in their seemingly pointless racing about town. Schultz expressed grave concerns about the professional abilities of Dr. Sommers after one of his patients died, writing that "he did not gain any[isic] reputation by that proceeding."

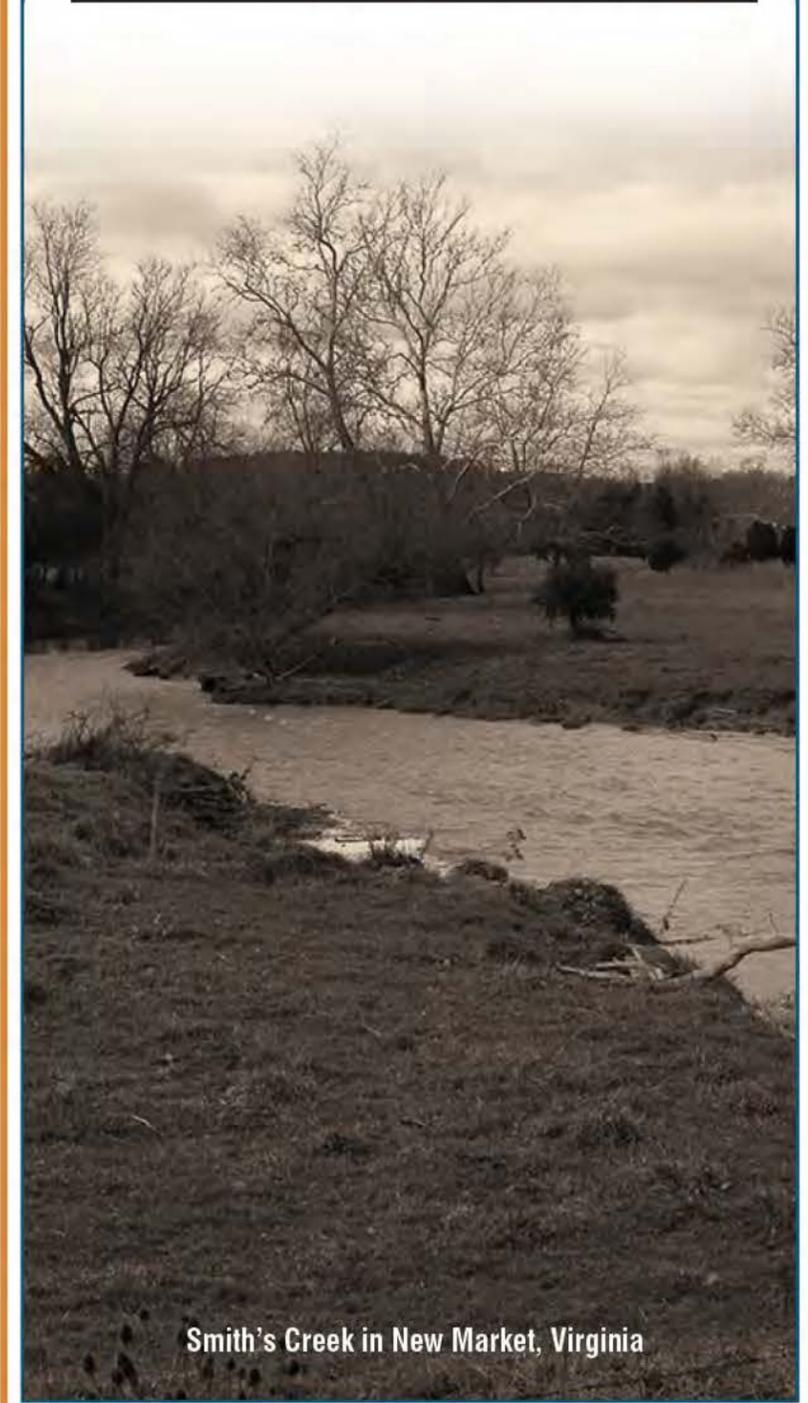


This exhibition was produced by the National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health

Curated by Jim Labosier
Designed by Riggs Ward Design

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/digicolls/henkel/index.html>

THE HENKEL PHYSICIANS or FAMILY'S LIFE in LETTERS



Smith's Creek in New Market, Virginia