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## The ANS Attends Historic Commemoration of Christian Gobrecht

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On November 13, 2024, I was honored to have represented the ANS at a truly historic numismatic event - the graveside memorial ceremony for Christian Gobrecht, third Chief Engraver of the United States Mint. This took place at Lawnview Memorial Park in Rockledge, Pennsylvania. The event and the headstone were sponsored by the Liberty Seated Collectors Club (LSCC), a numismatic group dedicated to the works of Christian Gobrecht. The ceremony attracted many people that Gobrecht would have considered significant, namely personnel from the present-day U.S. Mint and from his own family. This included U.S. Mint Director Ventris C. Gibson, Philadelphia Mint Superintendent Robert Kurzyna, fourteenth Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint Joseph Menna, as well as U.S. Mint Medallist Artists Phebe Hemphill and John McGraw. Four descendants of Christian Gobrecht were able to attend, each of whom still live in Hanover, Pennsylvania, the same town where the Chief Engraver was born in 1785. Additionally, Tom Uram, President of the American Numismatic Association (ANA), and Leonard Augsburger, Project Coordinator of the Newman Numismatic Portal and ANS Fellow, were both on hand to unveil the memorial with Gibson and Menna (see image below as also shown on the cover of the December 2024 issue of E-Gobrecht).



While initially trained as a clockmaker, Gobrecht had a fruitful career as an engraver - first engraving illustrations and banknotes in copperplate and, later, as a die engraver. In addition to engraving, Gobrecht was an inventor of several devices, from musical instruments to a medal ruling machine that was used for the mechanized reproduction of illustrations. As a die engraver, Gobrecht first began creating medals. His earliest known design is the 1825 Franklin Institute Award medal, which shows that he was already extremely competent in the art (see images next page). Others from this era include the 1827 New England Society medal, the 1828

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Charles Carroll medal, and the Philadelphia Museum Admission medal.



Images: Bronze Franklin Institute Award medal, engraved by Christian Gobrecht in 1824. This particular example was awarded to F.E. Ives in 1885 for advancements in photography. (ANS 0000.999.18212)

Gobrecht is first known to have applied for employment at the U.S. Mint in 1823. By the late 1820s, he was making letter punches and dies for the Mint, though these are indistinguishable from those made by other engravers. In 1835, Gobrecht was hired at the Mint as an assistant engraver, under Chief Engraver William Kneass. The following year, Gobrecht executed his magnum opus, the 1836 Gobrecht dollar (images on next 2 pages), whose Liberty Seated design was then used on all other silver denominations, from half dime to half dollar. In 1838, his Coronet design replaced the earlier Classic Head design. After several years of experimenting with an updated bust for the copper one-cent piece, a similar Coronet design was finalized in 1839 and used on the half cent the following year. By the time he had become Chief Engraver in 1840, Gobrecht had already successfully redesigned every denomination of United States coinage.

Gobrecht was originally interred at Monument Cemetery in Philadelphia upon his death in 1844; his wife, Mary, daughter, Rebecca, and son, Charles, were all buried there later as well. In 1956, the entire family was reinterred when that cemetery was ceded to Temple University by the city. During that process, their original headstones were discarded, and replaced by a simple ground-level marker with GOBRECHT for the entire family plot. After years of neglect, the marker became overgrown and the exact location of the family's resting place was lost. Through extensive research, the plot was rediscovered in 2008 by Bill Bugert, LSCC member, renowned numismatist, and co-author of The Complete Guide to Liberty Seated Half Dollars (1993) with Randy Wiley.

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At the ceremony, Bugert shared his journey of discovering the plot to the attendees. The new gravestone marks the site for all four Gobrechts once again (see gravestone images later in this article).



Images here and on next page: The famed Gobrecht dollar of 1836 (2009.28 25)

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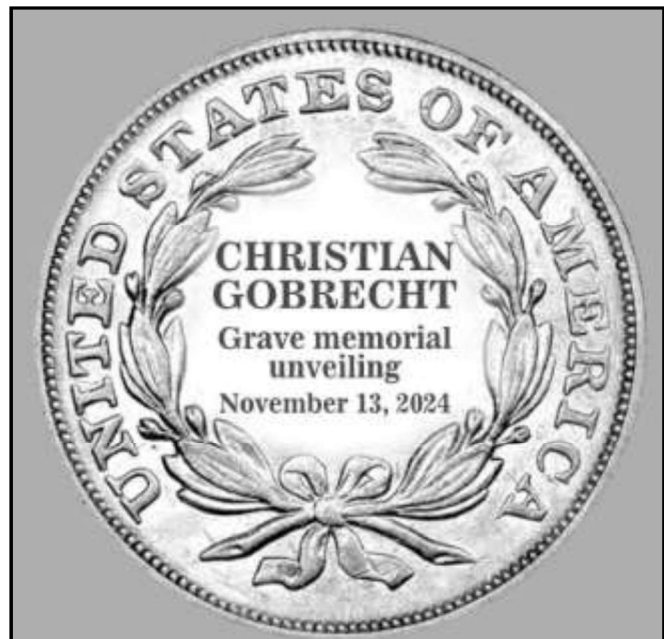


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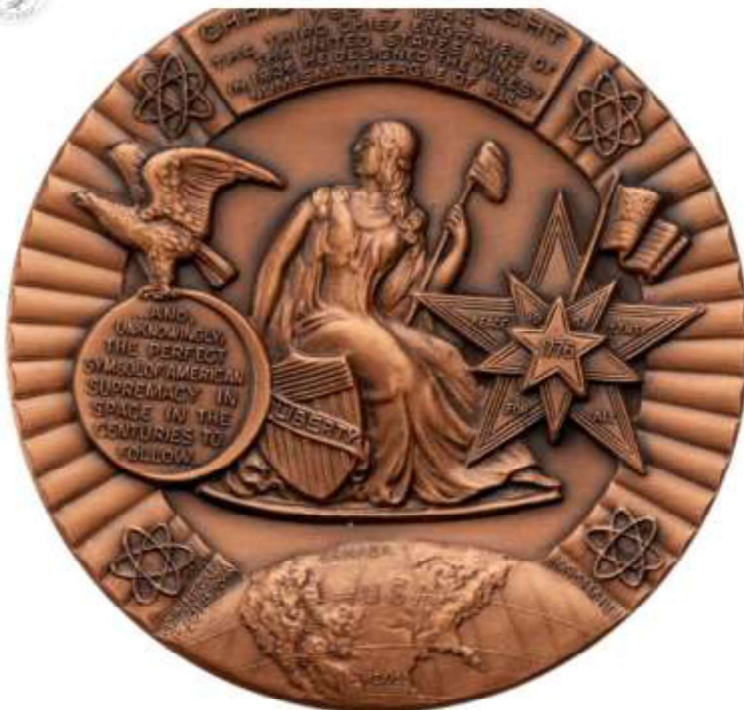
**Images:** Close-up of the new graveside memorial headstone for Christian Gobrecht and his family on the left and on the right the original grave stone that was unfortunately destroyed and discarded when all the cemetery graves were moved to make way for Temple University land expansion in 1956 (original gravestone photo provided by Bill Bugert from his earlier research)



The commemorative medallion produced by ANA President Thomas J. Uram especially for the ceremony.

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In addition to Tom Uram's medal, the ANS collection contains several other pieces that commemorate Christian Gobrecht. The first was produced in 1962 by Metal Arts Company (not to be confused with the Medallic Arts Company) for the company Coin Medals. It was designed by Toivo Johnson and Robert Schabel and celebrates the creation of the Flying Eagle design, first used as the reverse of the Gobrecht dollar.



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Struck in white-metal, another piece in the ANS collection was engraved by Joseph Dinardo in 1982 and commemorates the brief tenure by Gobrecht as Chief Engraver in the early 1840s.

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Lastly, the ANS collection has the complete run of local coin club medals of the Hanover Numismatic Society (HNS) between 1966 and 1980 (8 these portray "Gobrecht on the obverse along with his name, birth and death years, the year of production, and HNS.

Most of the reverse designs, which changed each year, replicate one of Gobrecht's designs, including his famed Gobrecht dollar and several of the medals. The MANTIS catalog contains entries for all of these pieces.



One in a series of small commemorative copper tokens issued by the Hanover Numismatic Society between 1966 and 1981.  
(ANS 1985.67.654)



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