



An Overview

“Gobrecht” Bust Half Dollars by Jim Koenings, LSCC #2798 & JRCS #048

Most Liberty Seated Half Collectors are unaware of how easy “Gobrecht” Bust Half Dollars are to collect. Most collectors can find:

1. 24 out of 25 known, 1837 die marriages
2. 15 out of 16 known, 1838 die marriages
3. 5 out of 8 known, 1839 die marriages

Some collectors avoid 1836 (the first year of the series designed by Christian Gobrecht) since it has a very low mintage and is slightly(?) expensive. (May cost over \$2,000 for a VF specimen.

The biggest challenge may be the fact that 5 of the 6 known die marriages of 1838-O and 1839-O can be very expensive. A PCGS MS63 specimen of 1838-O sold for \$504,000 in a Stacks and Bowers auction held in November 2019. The most common, 1839-O GR-1 die marriage may cost you \$1,175 (Red Book) for a VF20 grade (Red Book says it has a 116,000 mintage).

Some Liberty Seated Half Collectors already have an 1840 (O) WB-4 or 1840 (O) WB-12 in their collection. Both die marriages with an 1840 Liberty Seated obverse have been proven by Randy Wiley and Bill Bugert to have a reverse that was left over from a “Gobrecht” 1839 reverse. They proved that it came from the New Orleans mint, but did not have an O mint mark on either side.

There are many “hidden treasures” in the 1836 to 1839 series of “Gobrecht Bust Half Dollars. Last night, I bought one in a Heritage Auction that will cost me \$264. As far as I can tell, it is only the 3rd known. I have found several other “hidden treasures” in this series.

Part of the problem has been collectors lacking information on this series. Jules Reiver wrote the first real book on this series in 1988. It was mostly word descriptions and collectors had a very difficult time and gave up. I know of maybe 3 or 4 collectors that may have continued.

I bought a copy of Jules’ book in November 2009 and with the help of Dick Graham, I believe my collection, today, is the most complete even though I am missing an 1838-O GR-1 and an 1839-O GR-3 (one known). Only one collector has all 56 die marriages. In 2012, Dick Graham printed his book “[A Registry of Die Varieties of Reeded Edge Half Dollars 1836-1839](#)”. Unfortunately, he only printed 325 copies at that time and had a friend print another 100 copies in January 2018. That reference book is now out of print and is difficult to locate a coveted copy.

In my opinion, the die marriage on the next page is one of those “hidden treasures”. It is one of those “naked eye” varieties where you can see the obvious recutting of the 2nd 8 at the bottom. In 12 years of searching, I have only found 4. It is only rated R-4 (76 to 200 known), but I believe it to be much rarer.



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1838 GR-16 PCGS MS62 Obverse (Image courtesy of HA.com)

Since August 2019, I have been writing monthly Newsletters on the “38 Most Common Die Marriages of Reeded Edge Halves”. My Newsletters contain large photos and interesting information on “Gobrecht” Bust Half Dollars. The next Newsletter #35, will contain information on the 1838 GR-13 die marriage. If you would like to receive this information, simply send your name and email address to: bustcoin1@verizon.net

Happy Hunting!

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