



# United States \$5.00

## LIBERTY HEAD HALF EAGLE

### 1839-1908

Destined to become one of America's most enduring coinage designs, Christian Gobrecht's Coronet Liberty Head motif grew to be as familiar as the Pillar Dollar or Athenian Owl. First appearing on the \$10 gold coin in 1838, it was adapted to the \$5 gold coin in 1839 and the \$2.50 in 1840.

Christian Gobrecht was strongly influenced by the Neo-classic style popular during this period. Because they felt modern fashions changed too frequently, neo-classical artists froze their subjects in the clothing and style of Ancient Greek sculptors.

Gobrecht's new design for the \$5 gold coin featured a classically styled head of Liberty, with hair in a bun secured by a string of beads, wearing a coronet inscribed with LIBERTY. The reverse used a spread eagle design similar to that in use since 1807 (Gobrecht extended the wingspan rim to rim).

In 1866 the motto IN GOD WE TRUST was added to the reverse on a scroll above the eagle. During the terrible carnage and aftermath of the Civil War many Americans, in a religious and philosophical state of mind, wrote to Secretary of Treasury Salmon P. Chase requesting that our coinage carry some reference to God. A minister from Pennsylvania suggested "God, Liberty, Law". Mint Director James Pollack offered "In God is our trust" (a line from a popular hymn). GOD OUR TRUST began to appear on some U.S. pattern (experimental) coinage. Eventually the phrase evolved into the now familiar IN GOD WE TRUST.

The design remained in uninterrupted production right into 1908 when it was replaced by Bela Lyon Pratt's incuse engraved Indian Head design. Of the surviving specimens, many fell victim to the gold recalls of the 1930's and were lost forever to the melting pot.

Whether you have the \$2.50, \$5 or \$10 (or a set of all three) *the Gobrecht Coronet remains an icon of United States coinage -*

*a classic American work of art ...  
wrought in solid gold.*

**Diameter:** 7/8" (22.5mm) - 1839-40  
**Diameter:** 17/20" (21.6 mm) - 1840-1908  
**Weight:** 129 grains (8.359 grams)  
**Composition:** 90% gold - 10% silver/copper (1839-49)  
**Composition:** 90% gold - 10% copper (1849-1908)  
**Designer:** Christian Gobrecht  
**Engravers:** Christian Gobrecht (1838-44); James Longacre (1844-68); William Barber (1869-79); and Charles E. Barber (after 1879)  
**Mint Marks:** Philadelphia (none); Carson City (CC); Charlotte (C); Dahlonega (D); Denver (D); San Francisco (S); New Orleans (O); - obverse over date (1839) reverse under eagle (after 1839)  
**Obverse:** Liberty head is facing left wearing a coronet inscribed LIBERTY. Date (below), 13 stars (surrounding) around beaded border.  
**Reverse:** Spread eagle holding 3 arrows in left claw and an olive branch in right. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and denomination FIVE D. around beaded border. Motto IN GOD WE TRUST (beginning in 1866) on scroll above eagle.  
**Edge:** Reeded

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