



STRIKING DISPLAY

The U.S. Mint's first steam coin press has an impressive provenance.

The Edward C. Rochette Money Museum has thousands of objects on display, but a select few are guaranteed showstoppers for visitors of all ages and interests. One of these marquee attractions is a steam coin press built in 1836—the first such machine used by the United States Mint. On loan from the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, the device is an important and unusual-looking artifact demonstrating the technology that revolutionized coin manufacture.

The first steam-powered coin press was produced and used in 1788 by engineers Matthew Boulton and James Watt at the newly founded Soho Mint in Birmingham,

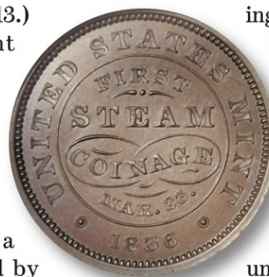
England. Eight presses were created, each capable of striking about 80 coins per minute. Because of the Soho Mint's precision and efficiency, it eventually was contracted to produce the country's small-denomination copper coins. (The Royal Mint adopted steam-power technology in 1813.)

In 1833 U.S. Mint Assayer (and later Chief Coiner) Franklin Peale was sent to France and Germany to study European mint production methods. Peale sketched a press design created by German inventor Diedrich Uhlhorn and improved

by knuckle-joint technology introduced by French engineer Eugene Thonnelier. The Philadelphia firm of Merrick, Agnew & Tyler constructed the press onsite at the mint. On March 23, 1836, it struck its first issue: a Christian Gobrecht-designed medal commemorating the press. A few examples were dated FEB. 22.—perhaps to coincide with George Washington's birthday—before the press or dies broke down. Medals dated MAR. 23, 1836, were made until 1862.

Able to produce 100 coins per minute, the press was reworked in 1858 and remained active until 1875, when Philadelphia resident George B. Soley purchased it. He used the press to make medalets at major events, including the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo and the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Soley's widow donated the machine to the Franklin Institute in 1927; it was displayed at the institute's science museum and was used to strike tokens for visitors.

An agreement between the ANA and the Franklin Institute was made in 2000 to give the historic press more exposure. The machine was moved to the Institute's rotunda and on March 23—the 164th anniversary of the press's inaugural



▲ **THE FIRST STEAM-POWERED COIN PRESS** used by the U.S. Mint awes guests at the ANA Money Museum. It produced coinage from 1836-75.

Not Actual Size

PHOTOS: ANA MUSEUM/ROBERT B. KELLEY (PRESS) & HERITAGE AUCTIONS



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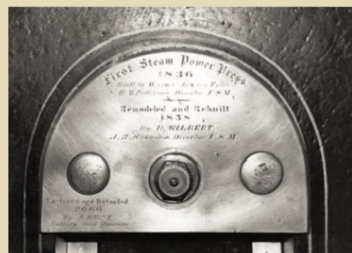
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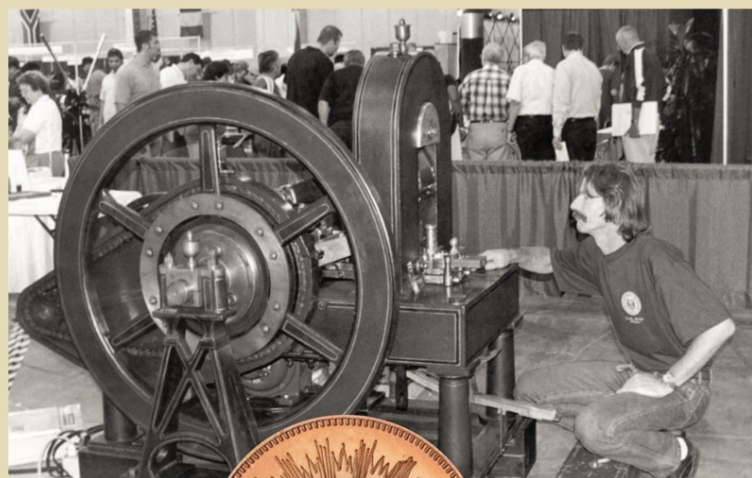
Money Museum

continued



THE PRESS was demonstrated at the ANA's 109th Anniversary Convention in Philadelphia. The late Joe Rust (pictured) refurbished and refitted the press. The 2000 commemorative (shown below) was modeled after Gobrecht's 1836 medal. Dies used to strike the pieces were engraved by Ron Landis.

Not Actual Size



PHOTOS: ANA ARCHIVES/B. GREGORY

coin production—a first-strike ceremony (this time using electric power) was held for new commemorative medals made in copper, silver and gold. Later that year, the press was featured at the ANA's 109th anniversary convention in Philadelphia before being shipped to the Edward C. Rochette Money Museum in Colorado Springs, with costs covered by the sale of the new commemoratives.

Since then, the press has been one of the Money Museum's most popular displays. It is the centerpiece of the Marquee/American Classics gallery, which includes two 1804 dollars, a 1913 Liberty Head nickel, rare pieces of Colorado numismatic history,

exceptional error notes, and a scale on loan from the Denver Mint. School groups instinctively gather around the press, marveling at its odd appearance, while curious adults peruse the machine and admire its mechanical composition.

Located just six blocks from the site of the ANA's 2018 World's Fair of Money® at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Franklin Institute is one of the oldest and most prominent science education centers in the country. Founded in 1824, it promotes science through research, publications, a speaker series and community programs. The institute's museum is the most visited in Pennsylvania, featuring exhibits on virtual reality, the human brain, Sir Isaac Newton, astronomy and more. For more information, visit fi.edu.

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