

Library Company of Philadelphia

JAMES BARTON LONGACRE NUMISMATIC & PRINTING PLATE COLLECTION

1818-1875

.18 linear feet, 2 boxes

October 2022

Descriptive Summary

Repository

Library Company of Philadelphia
1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107-5698

Creator

James Barton Longacre, 1794-1869

Title

James Barton Longacre Numismatic & Printing Plate Collection

Inclusive Dates

1818-1875

Quantity

.18 linear feet, 2 boxes

Language of Materials

Materials are in English.

Abstract

The collection consists of hub and die trials of various coinage designed by James Barton Longacre while at the United States Mint. Longacre designed at least ten coins while he was the Chief Engraver from 1844-1869.

Administrative Information

Restrictions to Access

The collection is open for research use and available at the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1314 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. Appointments must be made in advance. For more information or to make an appointment for the James Barton Longacre Manuscript Collection or the James Barton Longacre Graphic Arts Collection, please contact Erika Piola, Curator of Graphic Arts at epiola@librarycompany.org or call 215-546-3181.

The Library Company makes every attempt to provide access to the James Barton Longacre Numismatic Collection while safeguarding the objects. The Numismatic Collection is digitized and as a preservation measure, digital images may be used as surrogates for research purposes. Permission to view the die trials in person must be obtained in advance. For more information or to make an appointment, please contact Linda Kimiko August, Curator of Art & Artifacts at laugust@librarycompany.org or call 215-546-3181.

Acquisition Information

The James Barton Longacre Collection was purchased in 1948 from Maxwell Whiteman.

Processing Information

The collection was originally arranged by staff at the Library Company when it first arrived. A volunteer, Selma Kessler, created a finding aid for the materials from 2005-2007. In October 2022 the collection was formally processed by archivist intern, Alexis Jimenez. *The James Barton Longacre Numismatic & Printing Plate Collection finding aid was made possible by the generosity of our Sponsor Kurt Brintzenhofe.*

Preferred Citation

This collection should be cited as: [indicate specific item or series here], James Barton Longacre Numismatic & Printing Plate Collection, Longacre Collection, The Library Company of Philadelphia.

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Online Catalog Headings

Subject Names

Binns, John, 1772-1860
 Franklin, Benjamin, 1706-1790
 Gobrecht, Christian F., 1785-1844
 Longacre, James Barton, 1794-1869
 Paquet, Anthony C., 1814-1882
 Washington, George, 1732-1799

Subject Topics

Allegories
 Coin design
 Coin dies
 Double eagle (Coin)
 Eagles
 Liberty
 Printing plates
 Women
 Women in art

Biographical/Historical Notes

James Barton Longacre was born August 11, 1794 in Delaware County, Pennsylvania to parents Peter Longacre and Sarah Barton. Longacre's mother, Sarah died while he was still very young and his father remarried. At the age of twelve, Longacre left home to seek work in Philadelphia. There he found work as an apprentice in a bookstore with John Fanning Watson (1779-1860). Watson saw the artistic talent that Longacre possessed and allowed him to end his apprenticeship with him in 1813. At this time, Longacre began an apprenticeship as an engraver with George Murray (d. 1822). While at Murray, Draper, Fairman, & Co. Longacre worked alongside his future predecessor as Chief Engraver at the U.S. Mint, Christian Gobrecht (1785-1844). At the company, Longacre earned a reputation for his skill in creating engravings after other artists' paintings. Additionally, he engraved portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Hancock that were used by the publisher John Binns in his facsimile of the Declaration of Independence. Longacre worked with Murray at his firm until 1819 when he left to start his own personal business.

Upon the start of his own engraving business, Longacre's first important commission came in 1820 with the American edition of *Ree's Cyclopaedia* published by Samuel F. Bradford. One notable engraving during this time period is of General Andrew Jackson by Longacre after a portrait by Thomas Sully (1783-1872). Joseph and John Sanderson requested Longacre to engrave illustrations for their *Biographies of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*. The work done for the Sandersons would lead Longacre to create his own series complete with biographies and illustrations.

At nearly the same time as Longacre had planned to create his own series, James Herring (1794-1867) was planning something very similar. In the interest of not being competitors, the two men agreed to work together and *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* came to fruition. Despite Herring being an artist himself, much of the art and engraving fell to Longacre. He travelled the United States to sketch the political figures from life and was recognized by all for his talent as an artist, particularly for his portraits. It was during this time that Longacre befriended John Caldwell Calhoun (1782-1850), the South Carolina Senator and former Vice President. Calhoun would later become an advocate for Longacre's position as Chief Engraver of the U.S. Mint.

Longacre married Eliza Stiles (1807-1850) in 1827. They had six children: Sarah (1827-1906), Andrew (1831-1906), James (1833-1903), Eliza (1837-1906), Orleans (1840-1920), and Phoebe (1850). Phoebe died two months after she was born and is not widely documented except in Longacre's diary from 1850.

Due to the financial Panic of 1837 sales of *The National Portrait of Distinguished Americans* were low. This led to Longacre filing bankruptcy and necessitated his travel of the country to sell copies of the series. Later in 1837, Longacre established a banknote engraving firm with two partners John Draper and Charles Toppan.

In 1844, Chief Engraver at the U.S. Mint Christian Gobrecht died. With the support of John C. Calhoun, President John Tyler appointed Longacre as his successor in September 1844. On January 7, 1845, the United States Senate confirmed Longacre's commission as Chief Engraver.

Gobrecht had recently redesigned every denomination of U.S. coinage prior to his death. This allowed Longacre to get acclimated to his new position as he had no experience as a die-sinker having specialized in engraving copper plates for illustrations. The director of the Mint, Robert Maskell Patterson (1787-1854), and the Chief Coiner, (Benjamin) Franklin Peale (1795-1870), were critical of Longacre's inexperience, whose presence appeared a threat to their private business using Mint resources and machinery to create medals.

Conflicts between the men would continue. In 1849, Congress authorized a gold dollar and double eagle (twenty dollar) gold piece. Longacre opposed Peale's desire to have the work outsourced and Patterson refused his request for assistance. To the detriment of his health, Longacre completed the double eagle dies. They were rejected by Peale, who complained to Patterson. Patterson wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury, William Morris Meredith (1799-1873), requesting the removal of Longacre for being incompetent in creating working dies. Longacre went to Washington to meet with Meredith personally and was asked for a written statement following Patterson's request for his resignation in February 1850. The double eagle went into production in March 1850. Longacre's wife passed away a few months later in May.

In 1851, Peale objected to Longacre's design of the silver three-cent piece and persuaded Patterson to allow him to submit a design. The matter was settled by the new Secretary of the Treasury, Thomas Corwin (1794-1865), who chose Longacre's design.

In 1854, Mint Director James Ross Snowden (1809-1878) fired Peale for his use of the Mint for private gain. The conflict Longacre endured during the Peale controversy ended.

While working as the Chief Engraver at the Mint between 1845 and 1869, Longacre was responsible for designing at least ten U.S. coins and several medals. Some of his most notable coin designs include the three-dollar gold piece, Liberty Head double eagle, Liberty Head gold dollar, Flying Eagle cent, and the three-cent piece in silver. In addition to his U.S. coin designs, Longacre redesigned five silver and four gold coins for Chile in 1866.

Longacre died on January 1, 1869 at his home in Philadelphia. He left behind a significant collection of work as a prolific portrait artist and engraver.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists mostly of die and hub trials with a few engraving plates and two impressions of leaves in metal.

Judd number refers to United States Pattern Coins Experimental and Trial Pieces by J. Hewitt Judd.

Pollock number refers to United States Patterns and Related Issues by Andrew W. Pollock III.

Die trial is an impression from a die in a different metal to test a certain design or example.

Hub is a mirror image copy of a die in relief which is used to make “carbon copy” dies.

James Barton Longacre Numismatic Collection

Accession number – Title – Date – Description – Judd and Pollock numbers

OBJ Longacre 01- Cent die trial. 1858. Reverse die trial of a wreath in white metal. JA1858-2/P3167

OBJ Longacre 02- Two Cent die trial. 1864. Obverse die trial of a shield in white metal. JA1864-1/P3260

OBJ Longacre 03- Five Cent die trial. 1866. Obverse die trial of a shield in white metal. JA1866-6/P3279

OBJ Longacre 04- Five Cent die trial. 1866. Obverse die trial of a shield in white metal. JA1866-8/P3263

OBJ Longacre 05- Five Cent die trial. 1866. Obverse die trial of a shield in white metal. JA1866-5/P3278

OBJ Longacre 06- Five Cent die trial. 1866. Reverse die trial with the denomination surrounded by rays and stars in white metal. JA1866-9/P3269

OBJ Longacre 07- Five Cent die trial. 1867. Reverse die trial with the denomination surrounded by stars in white metal. JA1867-19/P3281

OBJ Longacre 08- Five Cent die trial. 1867. Obverse die trial with the head of Liberty without “liberty” on the coronet in white metal. JA1867-16/P3332

OBJ Longacre 09- Five Cent die trial. 1867. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty with stars on the coronet in white metal. JA1867-17/P3334

OBJ Longacre 10- Half Dime die trial. 1840. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty in white metal. JA1840-1/P3069

OBJ Longacre 11- Half Dime die trial. 1837. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty in white metal. JA1837-1/P3043

OBJ Longacre 12- Dime die trial. 1838. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty with a single star between her head and the pole in white metal. JA1838-1/P3049

OBJ Longacre 13- Die trial for probably a medal. 1840. Reverse die trial of an eagle in white metal. (Previously thought for a dime but probably for a medal.) P3071

OBJ Longacre 14- Twenty cent die trial. 1875. Reverse die trial with “United States of North America” and “1875” in white metal. JA1875-1/P3398

OBJ Longacre 15- Quarter die trial. 1840. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty in white metal. JA1840-3/P3072

OBJ Longacre 16- Half Dollar die trial. 1854. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty in copper. JA1854-1/P3122

OBJ Longacre 17- Half Dollar die trial. 1858. Reverse die trial of the lettering and denomination by Anthony Paquet struck on a rectangular block in white metal. JA1858-5/P3179

OBJ Longacre 18- Half Dollar die trial. 1858. Reverse die trial of an eagle by Anthony C. Paquet in white metal. JA1858-4/P3176

OBJ Longacre 19- Half Dollar die trial. 1859. Obverse die trial with the head of Liberty attired in a crown of oak and vine leaves (also called the “French Liberty head”) in white metal. JA1859-3/P3215

OBJ Longacre 20- Dollar die trial. 1836. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty by Christian Gobrecht in white metal or lead. JA1836-3/P3022

OBJ Longacre 21- Dollar die trial. 1836. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty by Christian Gobrecht in white metal and/or pewter. JA1836-5/P3028

OBJ Longacre 22- Dollar die trial. 1836. Obverse die trial of a seated Liberty by Christian Gobrecht in white metal. JA1836-2/P3021

OBJ Longacre 23- Dollar hub trial. 1840. Obverse hub trial of a seated Liberty by Christian Gobrecht in white metal. JA1840-5/P3076

OBJ Longacre 24- Dollar hub trial. 1840. Obverse hub trial of a seated Liberty by Christian Gobrecht in white metal. JA1840-4/P3073

OBJ Longacre 25- Dollar die trial. 1840. Reverse die trial of an eagle in white metal. JA1840-6/P3082

OBJ Longacre 26- Gold Dollar die trial. 1858. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty attired in a feathered headdress in white metal by Anthony C. Paquet. JA1858-6/P3182

OBJ Longacre 27- Gold Dollar die trial. 1858. Reverse die trial in of a wreath by Anthony C. Paquet in white metal. JA1858-7/P3185

OBJ Longacre 28- Quarter Eagle die trial. 1857. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty in white metal. JA1857-3/P3140

OBJ Longacre 29- Quarter Eagle die trial. 1857. Reverse die trial of an eagle in white metal. JA1857-4/P3141

OBJ Longacre 30- Quarter Eagle die trial. 1857. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty in white metal. JA1857-3/P3140

OBJ Longacre 31- Three Dollar hub trial. 1854. Reverse hub trial of a wreath in white metal. JA1854-2/P3125

OBJ Longacre 32- Three Dollar hub trial. 1854. Reverse hub trial of a wreath in white metal. JA1854-2/P3125

OBJ Longacre 33- Three Dollar hub trial. 1854. Reverse hub trial of a wreath in white metal. JA1854-2/P3125

OBJ Longacre 34- Three Dollar hub trial. 1854. Reverse hub trial of a wreath in white metal. JA1854-2/P3125

OBJ Longacre 35- Double Eagle die trial. 1850. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty without "liberty" on the coronet in white metal. JA1850-1/P3110

OBJ Longacre 36- Double Eagle die trial. 1850 or 1859. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty in white metal. JA1859-9/P3231

OBJ Longacre 37- Double Eagle die trial. 1850 or 1859. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty in white metal. JA1859-10/P3232

OBJ Longacre 38- Double Eagle die trial. 1850 or 1859. Obverse die trial of the head of Liberty in white metal. JA1859-10/P3232

OBJ Longacre 39- Double Eagle die trial. 1849. Reverse die trial of a heraldic eagle in white metal. JA1849-4/P3107

OBJ Longacre 40- Double Eagle die trial. 1859. Reverse die trial of a heraldic eagle in white metal. JA1859-11/P3233

OBJ Longacre 41- Dollar die. Ca. 1849. Obverse die for the gold dollar with the head of Liberty surrounded by stars.

OBJ Longacre 42- Leaf impression. Leaf impression in white metal.

OBJ Longacre 43- Leaf impression. Leaf impression in white metal.

James Barton Longacre Printing Plate Collection

OBJ Longacre 44- Longacre. Steel engraving plate that reads, "Longacre." Stamped on verso: [ROEGE?]

OBJ Longacre 45- J.B. Longacre Engraver. Copper engraving plate depicting a woman with an anchor and portraits of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin in a boat labeled, "J.B. Longacre Engraver." [See related print: P.9175.564].

Printing plate P.2021.27- Declaration of Independence. Ca. 1818. Copper engraving plate of John Binns's facsimile of the Declaration of Independence with portraits of the signers.*

**Printing plate P.2021.27 is housed in the Graphic Arts Collection.*