

# Garret Augustus Hobart

(1844-1899)

A prominent lawyer, successful businessman, and popular politician in his home state of New Jersey, Garret Augustus Hobart became the 24th vice president of the United States in 1897. Born in Long Branch, Hobart served in the New Jersey state assembly from 1872 to 1875, rising to the post of Speaker. Later he was president of the state senate. His dedication to the Republican Party, as well as his wide-ranging business pursuits, led to Hobart's popularity in New Jersey and to his selection as the vice presidential candidate at the GOP convention of 1896. Elected on the ticket headed by William McKinley, Hobart became a close friend and advisor to the president. Hobart died in 1899, before completing his term in office. The day after his death, New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt said of Hobart's accomplishments: "What he did was done not by force of position, but by force of character, his rare tact, his extraordinary common sense, and the impression of sincerity he created upon every man with whom he was brought in contact."<sup>1</sup>



While serving as vice president, Garret Augustus Hobart was asked by the Joint Committee on the Library to select a sculptor to execute a marble bust of himself for the Senate's Vice Presidential Bust Collection. The committee acted according to the recently adopted Senate resolution of January 6, 1898, which expanded the collection beyond the Chamber's gallery-level niches to allow placement of the busts in the "Senate wing of the Capitol." Hobart, however, delayed the decision and died without having made a recommendation. In 1900 the committee asked the deceased vice president's widow, Jennie Tuttle Hobart, for a referral; she chose distinguished sculptor Frank Edwin Elwell, a New Jersey resident.

Fine arts juries at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 had awarded Elwell's sculptural groups a gold medal. Previously he had sculpted the Senate's bust of Vice President Levi P. Morton (p. 288), along with many other works. Elwell prepared the plaster model for the Hobart bust in his New York City studio, and the well-known marble cutters, Piccirilli Brothers, translated the model into marble. Elwell wrote to then-acting Architect of the Capitol Elliott Woods in June of 1901: "There is however a slight dark spot on the lapel of the coat on the right side facing the bust, but it is of no account, in fact I think that the marble is superior to the Morton bust in color. The face is entirely clear with the exception of a very slight dark, near the hair. It is remarkable that so large a piece of marble should have come out so well."

Jennie Tuttle Hobart was pleased with the resulting bust and, according to the artist, commented in a letter to him, "I think that no one could have made a better likeness than you have made." Following Mrs. Hobart's official approval, the completed marble bust was placed in the U.S. Capitol in 1901.

Elwell wrote and lectured on the importance of art in society, and later served as curator of statuary at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. His last major works, completed in 1907, were the symbolic figures of *Greece* and *Rome* for the United States Customs House in New York City.

**Vice President Garret Hobart in his ceremonial office in the Capitol.**

(Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

*Garret Augustus Hobart*

**Frank Edwin Elwell (1858-1922)**

Marble, modeled 1900, carved 1901

37 x 33 x 21½ inches (94 x 83.8 x 54.6 cm)

Signed and dated (on base at left): F▲E▲ELWELL▲Sc. / 1901

Commissioned by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1900

Accepted by the Joint Committee on the Library, 1901

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