

PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY
Special Collections
Collection #064-03-01
Tattoo Photograph Collection
1889-c.1935

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Number: 064-03-01

Title: Tattoo Photograph Collection

Creator: Providence Public Library, collector.

Dates: 1889-c.1935

Quantity: 1 container, 0.5 linear feet

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition: Purchased, 2018-2021.

Accruals: Accruals are expected.

Custodial history: Materials collected by the library.

Processed by: The collection was processed by Jessica Rogers-Cerrato in 2021.

Conservation: Not applicable.

Language: Materials are in English and German.

RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Access: This collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Providence Public Library, Special Collections department.

Preferred Citation: Researchers are requested to use the following citation format: [item number], [item title], Tattoo Photograph Collection, Special Collections, Providence Public Library, Providence, R.I.

Property Rights: Providence Public Library owns the property rights to this collection. Consideration of the copyrights is the responsibility of the researcher.

INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS

Separated material Items were split from various accessions and cataloged separately by format. Accession numbers from which materials in this collection derive include: 2018-07-17-002, 2019-07-22-001, 2019-09-06-002, 2020-05-003, 2021-08-02-002, 2021-08-02-003.

Published description Not applicable.

Location of originals Not applicable.

Location of copies Not applicable.

Publication note Not applicable.

Subject headings LCSH:
 Tattoo artists
 Women tattoo artists
 Tattooed people
 Tattooed women
 Body marking
 Circus performers
 Sideshows

AAT:
 black-and-white photographs
 card photographs (photographs)
 color photographs
 picture postcards
 cabinet photographs

SEE ALSO

- Eddie Pofert Tattoo Collection, Collection #064-02-01, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- Jeff Towns Collection on the History of Tattooing, Collection #105, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- Tattoo Ephemera Collection, Collection #064-04-01, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- Tattoo Flash & Artwork Collection, Collection #064-04-03, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.
- Collection of Tattoo Trade Cards & Business Cards, Collection #064-04-02, Special Collections, Providence Public Library.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Providence Public Library's Tattoo Photograph Collection incorporates materials from various acquisitions and purchases related to the art, history, and culture of tattooing, as well as materials on the tattoo industry. The Tattoo Photograph Collection includes images of tattooed individuals from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the individuals featured in this collection were themselves tattoo artists or sideshow performers, and it was common to create photographs like this for use in marketing and promotion or as calling cards. A number of well-known performers of the era can be found here, such as Lillian Marco, who traveled throughout the country, and Emma Schuster, known as "La Bella Angora," a famous European traveling performer from Germany. Also featured is Lady Lenora Platt, one of the earliest known women tattoo artists in the country, who began her craft prior to 1912 and traveled with carnivals throughout her career. A more common scenario at the time would be for a "tattooed lady" to have been inked by her husband, as a sort of living example of the quality of his work. Circuses also enjoyed the novelty of promoting a tattooed couple. Artoria Gibbons, who performed with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus shows, was tattooed by her husband Charles "Red" Gibbons. The same is true of Stella and Samuel Grassman, better known by their stage names "Stella & Deafy." The Collection also showcases the work of some famous early 20th century tattooists, such as Mose Smith of Chicago, Joe Clingan of Toledo, Amund Dietzel of Milwaukee,

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

The Tattoo Photograph Collection contains postcards, cabinet cards, and other photographic forms from the late 19th century through early 20th century, featuring images of tattooed performers, tattoo artists, and other tattooed individuals. Most of the images are in the form of unfranked postcards, though a few of the postcards were circulated and include routine correspondence unrelated to the image. In addition to postcards and photographs, there are also a small number of cabinet cards.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COLLECTION

The items in this collection have been arranged in a single series and alphabetized by the last name of the tattooed individual in each photo. Arrangement is based on the name by which the person is best known, which is often that individual's stage name. Where possible, the individual's real name is also included within the description, as well as the name of the tattooist responsible for the artwork. Where the person pictured is unknown, arrangement is based on the name of the tattooist. If both the person pictured and the tattooist are unknown, the title is "Unknown." Unknown items appear at the end of the series.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Box	Folder	Title & Description	Date
1	1	A-G	c.1900-c.1925
		Otto Brozey, half-length back, Akron, Ohio. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		Professor S.J. Edwards, aka Edward Joseph Spousta (1883-1971), aka "The Liberty Tattooed Man," half-length front featuring Archibald Willard's <i>Spirit of '76</i> . Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		Professor S.J. Edwards, aka Edward Joseph Spousta (1883-1971), "The Liberty Tattooed Man," half-length back featuring the Statue of Liberty. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		Annie Frank, "Kunstvollst Tätowierte Dame," full-length front, postcard printed & published by Paul Schaerf editor of <i>Impresario</i> . Dimensions: 5.75 x 3.75 inches	c.1900
		Artoria Gibbons, aka Anna Mae Gibbons (1893-1985), "The World's Best Tattooed Lady with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Show," full-length front, seated, tattooist: Charles "Red" Gibbons. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Artoria Gibbons, aka Anna Mae Gibbons (1893-1985), full-length front, seated, tattooist: Charles "Red" Gibbons, Photo Roto, NY. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Artoria Gibbons, aka Anna Mae Gibbons (1893-1985), half-length front featuring George Washington chest piece, tattooist: Charles "Red" Gibbons, Photo Roto, NY. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Artoria Gibbons, aka Anna Mae Gibbons (1893-1985), half-length back featuring Last Supper piece, tattooist: Charles "Red" Gibbons, Photo Roto, NY. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Stella Grassman, aka Edith Grassman (1909-1977), full-length front, tattooist: Samuel "Deafy" Grassman, stamped "Deafy & Stella" on the verso, Philadelphia, PA. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Stella Grassman, aka Edith Grassman (1909-1977), full-length back, tattooist: Samuel "Deafy" Grassman, stamped "Deafy & Stella" on the verso, Philadelphia, PA. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925

1	2	H-O	c.1889-c.1925
		Ward Hallings (1895-1990), full-length front, tattooist: R.L. Beck, Newport, RI. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		Ward Hallings (1895-1990), half-length back, tattooist: R.L. Beck, Newport, RI. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		"Blackey" Johnson, of Kansas City, half-length back featuring Christ & angel, tattooist unknown, Ideal Studio, Chicago, IL. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		C.A. Kunst, half-length front, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.25 x 3.5 inches	1920
		C.A. Kunst, half-length back, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.25 x 3.5 inches	1920
		Lillian Marco, aka Jennetta Ammersley Powell (c.1885-1892), half-length front, tattooist unknown, cabinet card by Burrell, photo artist at 357 Westminster Street, Providence, RI. Dimensions: 6.5 x 4.25 inches	c.1889
		Fred Musselman, of Oklahoma, full-length front, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c. 1915
		Fred Musselman, of Oklahoma, full-length back, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1915
		P. Nelson, costumed in sequined vest, half-length front, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1915
1	3	P-S	c.1900-c.1925
		Lenora Platt, aka Mary Matilda Platt (1883-1960), full-length front, costumed & standing beside a chair, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		Lenora Platt, aka Mary Matilda Platt (1883-1960), half-length front, costumed & seated on a bench, tattooist unknown. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1920
		George A. Schmidt (or Smith), half-length front, tattooist: Amund Dietzel of Milwaukee, W.I. Dimensions: 5.25 x 3.25 inches	c.1925
		George A. Schmidt (or Smith), half-length back, tattooist: Amund Dietzel of Milwaukee, W.I. Dimensions: 5.25 x 3.25 inches	c.1925

		Emma Schuster, "La Bella Angora," full-length front, seated, tattooist: Christopher Lein, managed by Julius Becker aka Don Manuelo. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1900
		Sam Stamper, full-length front, tattooist: Mose Smith of Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Sam Stamper, full-length back, tattooist: Mose Smith of Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1925
		Sam Stamper, full-length back, tattooist: Mose Smith of Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 6.5 x 4.5 inches	c.1925
1	4	T-Z	c.1930-c.1935
		Dick Turpin, half-length front, tattooist unknown, Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 6.5 x 4.5 inches	c.1935
		Dick Turpin, half-length back, tattooist unknown, Chicago, I.L., inscription on the back reads "First prize won by Machinist Mate Dick Turpin, U.S. tug "Sonoma." Dimensions: 6 x 4 inches	c.1935
		Dick Turpin & an unidentified individual, half-length backs, tattooist unknown, Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 4.5 x 6 inches	c.1935
		Unidentified individual (also pictured with Dick Turpin), half-length back featuring a Rock of Ages image, tattooist unknown, Chicago, I.L. Dimensions: 6.5 x 4.25 inches	c.1935
		George Wright, half-length back featuring a Native American woman in a canoe, tattooist Joe Clingan of Toledo, O.H. Dimensions: 5.5 x 3.5 inches	c.1930