

# SAVING 'SAILOR JERRY'

Conservation Center preserves work of  
legendary tattoo artist Norman Collins

YO!



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**T**O MANY, he's the godfather of American tattooing, the original outsider artist.

Between 1940 and 1973, Norman "Sailor Jerry" Collins inked his distinctive tattoos on the flesh of visitors to his Hawaii shop. His distinctive style combining bold lines and careful coloration is still imitated today and can be found today on thousands — perhaps tens of thousands — of people.

"It's pure folk Americana and it has a rich history," said Erich Weiss, of Philadelphia, who wrote a book and directed a documentary about Collins. "People now consider tattoo-

ing as an art form, but back then they didn't see it that way."

Now Center City's Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts is preserving Collins' work for prosperity with the same care they've put into historic documents and other masterpieces of art. They're finishing up the project in time to mark the 100th anniversary of Collins' birth this year.

The center is a nonprofit conservation laboratory that focuses on works on paper, ranging from paintings to rare books to photos. Among the historic documents that have crossed the center's tables: Ben Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*, abolitionist Freder-

Conservator Samantha Sheesley demonstrates some of the work done on the "Sailor Jerry" art pieces at the center.

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