Paper Drinking Cup and Public Health

Samuel Crumbine (1862–1954) is considered a national pioneer of early public health. He began his career as a physician in Dodge City, Kansas, and became the secretary of the Kansas State Board of Health in 1904. He held this job for nearly 20 years. It was an era of epidemic diseases such as tuberculosis, smallpox, and influenza. In addition to treating diseases, Crumbine believed that the best way to cure illness was to prevent it. He recognized that educating people on how disease is spread and changing their behaviors would help do this. His public health campaigns targeted spitting on the sidewalk and the use of public drinking cups. Crumbine also undertook a crusade to keep people’s homes, restaurants, offices, and other public buildings free of flies. His measures were the beginning of the modern public health system.

One of Crumbine’s most successful campaigns targeted the use of public drinking cups. These cups were found in public places such as trains, train stations, schools, and state and county buildings. Each cup was reused multiple times by anyone needing a drink without being cleaned between uses. Crumbine observed health risks such as young children drinking from the cups after people sick with serious diseases such as tuberculosis. He believed that the spread of disease could be reduced by banning the public drinking cup. In 1909 Kansas became the first state to do so. Alternatives to the public drinking cup were folded paper cups.

How to Make a Paper Drinking Cup

1. Cut on the solid lines to make a square. Fold the paper in half on the line between ‘A’ and ‘B’ so that the writing remains on the outside. Crease the fold.

2. Fold ‘A’ to ‘a,’ and crease the fold line.

3. Fold ‘B’ to ‘b,’ and crease the fold line.

4. Fold the top front flap down, crease the fold line, and tuck into ‘C.’

5. Turn the cup over. Fold the top back flap down and crease the fold line.

6. Open and your cup is ready to use.