

## **To Spit or Not to Spit?**

By Brandon Gollotti

While walking down a Philadelphia street, it is common to see someone spitting or spit on the ground. Some people find it acceptable, while others are mildly grossed out. Unaware to most Philadelphians, spitting on “sidewalks, streets, subways, concourses, floors, or passageways of public buildings or in any other place frequented by the public” is prohibited according to Title 10, Section 601 of Philadelphia’s legal code. And when this law was passed over 100 years ago, the city tried to enforce it.

Today, spitting has a different meaning than it did hundreds of years ago, mainly because of chewing tobacco. In colonial America, one of the major crops was Tobacco and one of the forms of using tobacco is chewing it. With chewing tobacco, you regularly spit out the tobacco juices and saliva that builds up. This mixture is pretty disgusting because of its clear-brown color and bad smell. The hundreds of thousands of tobacco chewers during this era would not hesitate to spit this juice wherever they could, including public buildings, streetcars and sidewalks. Chewing tobacco is still around today, but it is less popular than it once was.

In May of 1897, some “No Spitting Signs” mysteriously appeared on lampposts on busy Philadelphia streets. People wondered where and why these signs showed up on popular streets around the city. Some people even feared that their rights as citizens of the United States were being violated. These signs were being posted after members of Health societies around their nation took this issue on as their crusade to try to make spitting against the law. The cause of this crusade focused mainly on tobacco chewers who would spit their tobacco juice in public places. The activists believed that if they stopped the spitting they could control the spread of Tuberculosis, which was extremely deadly at the time if one contracted it. Eventually, the Board passed a law, which prohibited spitting in public places in the city however, it was really never enforced. But what if it was?

Could you imagine being fined for spitting? Or imagine baseball without spitting, especially the Philadelphia Phillies of the early nineties, who were notorious for using chewing tobacco. I know it seem like a minute detail of life, but would Philadelphia and other cities around the world really benefit from a law prohibiting spitting? So I ask you the question, to spit or not to spit?