

History Detectives: Landmark Center

a youth musical

by Mark Jensen

Music by Raymond Berg

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Characters

Clorinda – The mall girl. Very well dressed, has a cell phone seemingly attached to her hand. Her purse is full of gum, a mirror, and cosmetics.

Boomer (Pete) – Star athlete who broke his arm during a football game. His arm is in a sling throughout the performance.

Penny – A girl who is prepared for everything. She has a backpack with a first aid kit, batteries, and other useful stuff in it. She is a Girl Scout.

Derek – A boy who is incredibly smart. He is into history and technology. He has downloaded the history of the Landmark Center into his Blackberry.

Nixie – A very negative “Goth” girl who wears black clothes and black makeup. She’s extremely cynical about everything.

Clifton – A young man who plays Clifton, Clifton’s grandson, and Clifton’s great-grandson. The first Clifton (from 1902) wants to become a doctor.

Chorus – A ten-twelve member chorus who play various roles during various time periods. Here is the breakdown of these roles:

1902	1918	1952	1976
AGNES	THOMAS	JUAN	SLICK WILLIE
HANS	DORIS	ERNESTA	SUZIE Q
OLE	CAPTAIN	SUSAN	JAZZMAN JEFF
ROSANNA	SCARED PERSON	BETTY	DIZZY LIZZY
The remaining chorus plays other young immigrants.	The remaining chorus plays either post office patrons or thugs in the Junior Public Safety Militia. Note that in the second 1918 scene, AGNES, HANS, OLE, and ROSANNA also re-appear.	LOUDSPEAKER (Offstage voice) The remaining chorus plays other homeless victims of the 1952 flood.	POLICE VOICE (Offstage voice) The remaining chorus plays other “Disco Freak” dancers.

Setting

The main floor of the Landmark Center, near the Uncle Sam Worked Here exhibit. Most of the scenes take place in this location, although in different time periods. During a few scenes, the play also shifts to the streets of St. Paul in 1902 and 1918.

(Landmark Center, main floor. The entire cast, bored, sits or stands around. CLORINDA, DEREK, PENNY, NIXIE, and BOOMER are all near a reproduction of the original Post Office desk that once was on the main floor of the Landmark Center.)

CLORINDA

What time is it? We've been waiting for what, like a half-hour, now?

DEREK

(Looking at his Blackberry.)

Since we finished the tour, it's been exactly seven minutes and thirty-two seconds.

NIXIE

Oh, just zip it, Derek! Who appointed you to be annoying?

BOOMER

(His arm in a sling; he is in pain.)

That bus needs to get here, like now!

PENNY

I've got some aspirin in my backpack.

BOOMER

Can't, I'm only supposed to use my prescription. Why didn't the nurse let me bring it along on this stupid field trip!

DEREK

Stupid field trip? Oh contraire, my wounded jock friend. We now know what the Landmark Center used to be when it was first built.

NIXIE

A post office. Woo-who! I am so much a better person now that I know that.

DEREK

It was a courthouse too, upstairs. Gangsters were put on trial here. Creepy Karpus. Real scary gangster dude type person. And I got it all downloaded here into my Blackberry. Oh, am I prepared for this test! I'm seeing an "A"!

NIXIE

Not me. I'm seeing a "dweeb".

DEREK

Master technology or it will master you.

CLORINDA

(Calls on her cell phone.)

I can't stand this, I'm starving! Hey Ashley, it's me. We're gonna be late. Save me a spot in the lunch line, would you?

PENNY

So you're really out for the rest of the football season?

BOOMER

Why does everybody ask me that? Yes, I'm out for the rest of the football season. I'M OUT FOR THE SEASON! Everybody hear that? Ow....

(Suddenly in pain.)

PENNY

Sure you don't want some aspirin? I have some in my bag.

BOOMER

Are you a girl scout or something?

PENNY

(Brightly)

Why yes, I am. Girl Scout Troop 531!

CLORINDA

This morning was such a waste.

NIXIE

This morning was dull times twenty.

DEREK

I do not understand why you people want to revel in your ignorance.

CLORINDA

Revel? Who says "revel" like ever? Why don't we just take field trips to the mall?

NIXIE

I'm there.

DEREK

History is cool.

BOOMER

History stinks. It's a big waste of time!

(Song. "History, What a Waste of Time.")

CHORUS

So this place was a post office,
Whop-de-do!
Are we supposed to care?
It doesn't change the fact,
That Charlene's got bad hair.

CHARLENE – (spoken) I do? Oh no!

History. What a waste of time!
Dates and people and events,
It doesn't make a bit of sense.
All this useless stuff just makes me tense!
So very, very tense!

So people served on juries here,
How amazing.
Those rooms were courts. Can you say bore?
It doesn't change the fact,
That my test will have a low score!

PETER – (spoken, fingers crossed) I studied for the test, Mr. Walters, really!

History. What a waste of time!
Dates and people and events,
It doesn't make a bit of sense.
All this useless stuff just makes me tense!
So very, very tense!

So the Landmark was nearly torn down,
So sad, so bad.
And, oh-no, a parking ramp was planned.
It doesn't change the fact,
That Lenny's iPod is still banned.

LENNY – (Spoken) Give it back, please! All my music's on there!

History. What a waste of time!
Dates and people and events,
It doesn't make a bit of sense.
All this useless stuff just makes me tense!
So very, very tense....
...and borrrrrrrred....
...and tense....

(Everyone groans and collapses.)

CLORINDA

Where is that bus! Argh!

NIXIE

Do you have a chill pill in your bag, Penny? She needs one.

PENNY

Chill pills don't come in first aid kits. If you had been a girl scout, Nixie, you would know that.

BOOMER

My arm throbs, I can't stand it!

(He slams his good arm on the Uncle Sam Worked Here post office display. A large, ornate letter tumbles out.)

What's that?

DEREK

It looks like... like a letter.

(PENNY picks it up.)

PENNY

A fancy letter. Whoa, okay, this is kind've weird. It has Clorinda's name on it.

CLORINDA

Huh?

PENNY

Clorinda, your name, right there. And it's addressed from the Landmark Center.

CLORINDA

Give me that.

(Starts to open it.)

DEREK

What are you doing, you can't open that letter! It's from the museum!

CLORINDA

It's addressed to me. Maybe they're advertising a sale or something.

DEREK

It probably just has your name on it by accident. Put it back!

BOOMER

Let her open it if she wants.

(Sounds of a bus.)

STUDENT ONE

Bus is here!

STUDENT 2

Finally!

(The CHORUS exits. NIXIE starts to trail after them.)

CLORINDA

Just let go, Derek! Let me open it!

DEREK

It belongs to the museum!

BOOMER

Ow, you doof, you bumped my arm!

(Pushes DEREK, who slams into CLORINDA and PENNY.)

CLORINDA

Hey!

NIXIE

Come on you guys, the bus is here!

PENNY

Put it back, Clorinda!

CLORINDA

They're my coupons!

NIXIE

(Grabs the letter.)

I'll split them with you.

DEREK, PENNY, BOOMER, AND CLORINDA

NO!

(DEREK, PENNY, BOOMER and CLORINDA all touch NIXIE just as she rips open the letter.)

(Space and time warp. In the windows behind them, images from St. Paul's past display and flicker like a slide show in full speed reverse.)

CLORINDA

(Speaks in slow motion.)

Wwwwwhhhaatttt'sssss hhhappppennningggggg? (What's happening?)

DEREK

IIIII dddddddonnnnn'tttt knnnnowwwww! (I don't know.)

BOOMER

Mmmmmmmakkkkkeeee ittttt sssstttooooo! (Make it stop.)

(There is one final deep note, and then everything is quiet. Still images from 1902 appear in the windows. The Uncle Same Worked Here materials are gone, and the Post Office desk and window look brand new.)

DEREK

Did—did--did you all see that too?

BOOMER

Uh-huh.

CLORINDA

And worst of guys, my letter is empty! There could've been an ad for shoes, at least.

PENNY

Let's just get out to the bus. Okay?

NIXIE

Already there.

(They drop the letter and quickly run to another part of the stage. Sounds of birds.)

PENNY

Where's the bus? It can't be gone yet?

BOOMER

Of course it can. That's just the way this day is going!

DEREK

Forget about the bus. Where's the Ordway Center?

CLORINDA

What?

DEREK

That big theatre, I've been there lots of times.... None of these buildings look right. Did we go out through another entrance?

NIXIE

Ew, what is that?

BOOMER

What?

NIXIE

Right there, on the street. It looks like a pile of... horse squeeze.

PENNY

There's another one.

CLORINDA

Okay, too weird, calling Mom. She'll havta pick us up.

(Flicks open her cell phone.)

Come on, come on...

BOOMER

And, of course, something's wrong with your phone.

CLORINDA

It can't find a signal. No way, this is a new phone, I just got it at Southdale. It's just searching... How come it can't find the signal?

DEREK

My Blackberry's off-line too! Am I the only one that thinks these buildings look wrong?

CLORINDA

Date's all messed up on the phone too. It says May 5th, it's October.

(A sound of a horse and wagon going by them. They all stare at it, mouths wide open.)

BOOMER

Back inside.

CLORINDA

Uh-huh.

(Once back inside....)

PENNY

That smell. You guys smell that? It's like... fresh paint.

CLORINDA

Yeah. I thought I smelled that before.

NIXIE

This isn't right, there's a ceiling in here. There wasn't a ceiling in here before.

DEREK

There used to be a ceiling in here.

BOOMER

No there wasn't.

DEREK

If you had paid attention during the tour, jock boy. When the Landmark Center was originally built, there was a ceiling above the main floor!

CLORINDA

Okay, like, starting to freak out here. What's going on?

(Enter CLIFTON, cleaning the floor with a broom. He wears clothes from 1902.)

CLIFTON

(Southern accent.)

Say, ya'll get outta here! The building's not open 'til nine!

NIXIE

It is too open. Who are you?

CLORINDA

Where'd you get those clothes? Is that a new style?

CLIFTON

C'mon ya'll, please get outta here! My boss told me nobody's gettin' in here before openin' time, nine o'clock. So git! Git!

DEREK

Aren't you too young to be a janitor?

CLIFTON

(Threatening with his broom.)

Git!

BOOMER

(Grabbing CLIFTON's broom with his good hand.)

Enough of that.

CLIFTON

No, hey! If y'all steal my broom, I'll really catch it!

DEREK

Excuse me, this, ah, is going to be an odd question, but... What year is this?

CLIFTON

I can tell you, no problem there chief, sure. Just gimme back my broom.

BOOMER

Tell us the year and we will.

CLIFTON

Bunch of crazy fools. It's 1902. Been 1902 all year. Now my broom?

CLORINDA

Nineteen... oh two?

NIXIE

Okay, it's official. I'm scared.

(DEREK takes his Blackberry out of his backpack.)

CLIFTON

My broom or they'll fire me right quick. I need this job somethin' awful.

BOOMER

Here, take it. Argh, don't break my other arm too. You're welcome.

(CLIFTON goes back to sweeping. He watches them out of the corner of his eye, however, fascinated.)

PENNY

Have some aspirin, it'll help. Here.

BOOMER

Okay. But, what am I going to wash them down with?

PENNY

Apple juice, I have a can.

CLIFTON

(Not heard by others.)

Juice in a can! They sure can put everything in a can these days.

CJORINDA

Do you have any more food Penny? I am like beyond starving.

PENNY

I have trail mix. Want that?

CJORINDA

Trail mix, yuck... Oh... Sure, sure, okay.

PENNY

Anybody else? It contains fast energy and is a good source of protein.

(Others take some trail mix.)

CLIFTON

Would ya look at this here? Post Office ain't even open, and already there's a letter on the floor.

DEREK

(Looking at his Blackberry.)

Okay, thought I was right. 1902 was the year the Federal Courts Building opened.

BOOMER

Federal Courts Building? What's that?

DEREK

The Landmark Center's old name. Didn't you listen to anything today?

BOOMER

Just lay off, Derek, okay? Truce? I'm trying to figure this out too y'know.

DEREK

Sure. Sorry, Boomer, I... sorry. What date is on your phone, Clorinda?

CJORINDA

It's screwed up. May 5th.

DEREK

May 5th, 1902 was the date when this building opened. Where is that letter?

NIXIE

We dropped it on the floor. Over by... him.