

“Dropping the Penny”

As historical re-enactors we are always striving to “time travel” to the periods that we love. This idea of time travel calls to memory a wonderful film from 1980 called “Somewhere in Time.”

The film stars Christopher Reeve, as Richard Collier, a modern-day (1979) playwright and Jane Seymour as Elise McKenna, a young stage actress from 1912. Richard visits the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, Michigan, to get away from his uneventful life. He wanders through the hotel's "history room" and sees the picture of a beautiful woman on the wall. She is Elise McKenna, a stage actress who appeared in a play at the hotel in 1912. Richard immediately falls in love and decides to "will" himself back in time to 1912.

A college professor advises him to remove all connections with the present and immerse himself in things of the past. Richard buys a 1912-style suit and some 1912 money from a coin shop. He rents a room at the Grand Hotel, wills himself back to 1912, and meets Elise, who has been apparently waiting for him. They begin a romance, but just as he thinks they will live happily ever after, he pulls a 1979 US penny out of his pocket, which breaks the "spell" and sends him back to the present (1979).

When we remove all of our modern trappings and travel out of our way into the wilderness we are, like Richard, able to will ourselves, or time travel, into the past of the rendezvous. We live in that time until someone pulls out a cell phone, turns on an LED lantern, and “drops a penny,” pulling us back into the future.

It is so important to our endeavor to not “drop the penny.”

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