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## *Hello, Dolly!* to Again Capture Hearts in Community-Wide Festival & Events

### *Hello Again, Dolly!* will celebrate the filming's 50th Anniversary

BY VIRGINIA CALIFANO

It has been a project over two years in the making, with inspiration dating back a lifetime. The *Hello Again, Dolly!* Festival will celebrate the filming of *Hello, Dolly!* that took place fifty years ago right in Garrison and Cold Spring. The months-long extravaganza was spearheaded by Garrison resident Christopher Radko, who is working with the help of the entire community to bring it to life.

Christopher Radko was just nine years old when his parents took him to the Hollywood-style premiere of *Hello, Dolly!* at the elegant Rivoli movie house on Broadway. The youngster, used to watching *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*, had no idea what he was in for.

"*Hello, Dolly!* really made me feel good. Everyone is singing and dancing, they're having an adventure, and having the confidence to try something new in life and not just do the same old thing every day. And it's all about love," Radko said. The beautiful backdrop of the beginning scenes instantly captivated him.

"I wondered, where is this wonderful town? Where is this Yonkers that the movie is portraying?" he questioned.

Radko's parents, who worked in Yonkers, did not even know themselves. All they knew was that the 1890s Yonkers in the film was nothing like the Yonkers they knew of in 1969.

Forty years later, Christopher Radko stumbled upon Garrison for the first time while traveling. Looking for a quick bite, he made his way to the Garrison Café. In a chance encounter, he met legendary folk icon and activist Pete Seeger, who happened to be dining there. Radko instantly recognized him. He thanked him for coming to his grammar school in 1969.

Feeling inspired, uplifted, and eager to explore more of the already-magical town, Radko asked the cashier at the café where else he should visit. She recommended the Garrison train station, which she said had some nice views of the Hudson River, a little antique book store, and said it was where *Hello Dolly!* was filmed.

Radko hadn't thought about that film in decades. But upon hearing its name, he could feel that childhood joy stirring inside him.

"You mean that movie with Barbra Streisand?" he said, taken aback.

"Yes, that's it!" the cashier replied.

Radko flew down to the Landing, immediately enveloped in the magic of the place he innocently dreamed of, but never knew existed in real life. It was indeed the place. Vandergelder's, the gazebo, the river, the park, it was all still there – a half



PHOTO BY CHRIS LAYTON

Above: Christopher Radko, festival spokesperson, in front of the office building at Garrison Landing that was Vandergelder's in the film *Hello, Dolly!* At Right: Shooting of "*Hello, Dolly!*" at Garrison's Landing.

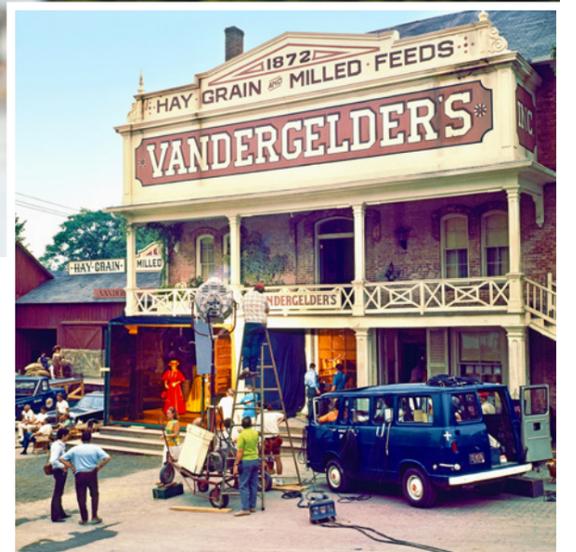


PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER RADKO

a century later.

"I can't believe I stepped into this," Radko fondly recalled with a smile. "It doesn't seem real, it's like a dream. It's a heightened, beautiful version of what life could look like."

Radko soon decided he wanted to move from Tarrytown to Philipstown, and make it his home. He has been here for about two years.

Soon after becoming a Philipstown resident, Radko began planning the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the filming of *Hello, Dolly!* What initially started as an idea for a parade at Garrison's Landing evolved into a months-long festival featuring various groups around town, including the Putnam History Museum, the West Point Band, the Garrison Art Center, the Haldane and Garrison schools, the Depot Theatre, the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, and much more. By the time the festival is in full swing, the new Dolly's restaurant will be open at the site of the old Guinan's at the train station.

"Never in a million years would I have been able to make this festival happen by myself," Radko said. "It is because of the good graces, support, and help of the whole community that it is happening."

Most of the events are free, including the

parade on June 16th at Garrison's Landing. Lead by Tommy Tune himself, the parade will feature dancers, an orchestra, and singing of some of the film's most beloved songs.

Afterward, everyone is invited to enjoy an interview with Tommy Tune about his life in show business. The Garrison Art Center will then sponsor a riverboat cruise, and at night, the film *Hello, Dolly!* will be screened on the Landing where it all happened.

Radko is also writing a *Hello Again, Dolly!* compendium book. It will be a film history, a tribute to the movie, and a tribute to Philipstown and the Hudson Highlands, jam-packed with historical information about Cold Spring, Garrison, and West Point. It refers to what these places were like in the 1890s in reality, not just in filming in the 1960s. It will also feature interviews with Philipstown residents who were around when the movie was made.

To Radko, both the film and the upcoming festival "celebrate the beauty, cultural and natural, of the river and the Hudson Highlands. Main Street in Cold Spring and the Garrison Landing are quintessential America. There are few places prettier than this anywhere."

In fact, when making *Hello Dolly!*, the

studio initially scouted many scenes around the country, such as the Ohio River and the Sacramento River, and thought they would have to build a set from scratch to convey the image they wanted. It was director Gene Kelly himself who discovered Garrison. He visited Yonkers to get a feel for the imagery, since the movie was to take place there, but he did not feel it fit the script. He worked his way up the river – to Irvington, Tarrytown, Ossining, Croton, etc. – but no place was perfect. By lunchtime, he was thirsty, and stumbled upon Guinan's for an ice cold beer. He felt the same wonder that Radko did.

"This festival is by the entire community and for the whole community," he said. "It has been great. I get to share old stories and learn about the community that I may have otherwise not known, and I continue to fall in love...We are all looking for a home, and I think I've found it right here."

For more information, visit [www.helloagaindolly.com](http://www.helloagaindolly.com).