

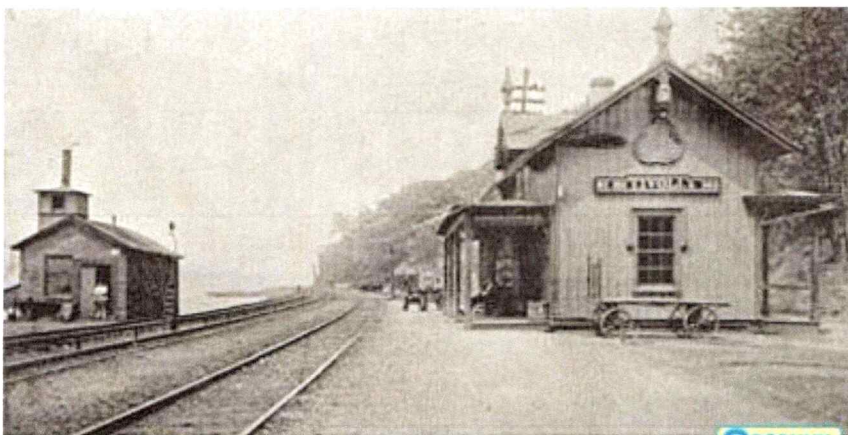
Ham House was build in 1854. The architectural design in the United States at that point in time was going through some revival periods in which the design and inspiration was based on European models. In the 1840's, design was largely inspired by the Greek history and much architecture from that period remains, most notably the White House and the NY Public Library.

In the 1850's the inspiration switched to the Italianate Revival, of which Ham House is an exemplary and outstanding representation. The architecture drew heavily on Italian renaissance details: large floor-to-ceiling windows, center halls and much ornate indoor and outdoor detailing, which was sometimes at odds with the semi-rustic settings.

The village of Tivoli was incorporated in 1872 of a consolidation of two small adjacent settlements; Tivoli (up untill the 1790's called 'the Upper Red Hook Landing') and Madalin. In the mid-1800's Tivoli was a small bustling town along the shore of the Hudson River.

It was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the exploration of the Hudson Valley for a variety of materials to supply the growing metropolis on New York to the south was in full swing.

Most notably, the Hudson River became a transport corridor of the newly discovered cement in the valley. Also the transport of ice, agricultural products and bluestone (which was used for the sidewalks in NY) became faster and more frequent with the opening of commercial steamboat lines in the early 1800's and later the New York Central Railroad system, which was build in 1851 along the shores of the Hudson River.



Tivoli Station, H. Y. C. & H. R. R. R.



William R. Ham, a New York entrepreneur and gentleman farmer, build this 13-room country home for his daughter in 1854 atop a promontory in Tivoli, NY.

The house was build on a north-south axis and faced south toward Cruger Island in the Hudson River and

HAM HOUSE

In the early part of the 1900's, the house became part of a philanthropic endeavor by a group of New York business men who purchased a vast tract of land and homes to be used as a summer camp for underprivileged children. The largest mansion on the parcel was The Grey Stone Manor and is wonderfully described in the book 'In and About a Grey Stone Manor House', by William H. Matthews.

The house became a girls summer vacation home and was baptized 'The Homestead'.

The Grey Stone Manor was destroyed in a fire and only the gatehouse remains, which to this day functions as a wonderful entrance to the campus of Bard College.

St. Stephen's College in New York City was established by John Bard in the late part of the 1800's. John Bard donated a large part of his riverside estate in Annandale to the college.

In the the 1930's this Hudson Valley College became a haven for distinguished writers, artists, intellectuals and scientists fleeing Europe.

In the 1930's, Bard integrated the classical and progressive educational traditions and became the first college in the nation to give full academic status to the study of the creative and performing arts and was renamed 'Bard College' in 1934 in honor of its founder John Bard.

In the meantime the house came into disrepair and was largely abandoned throughout the war years of the 1940's.





Author Saul Bellow purchased the house (“..this ramshackle old building”) in 1956 for \$8.000 with a loan from his father. Bellow, who was teaching at Bard College at that time, took a \$10.000 advance from Viking Press and famously wrote both “Henderson the Rain King” and ‘Herzog’ while residing there. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his oeuvre in 1976.

Novelist Ralph Ellison was also a frequent visitor of the house while teaching at Bard College.

Saul Bellow donated the house to Bard College in 1964. The house became student housing and fell yet again into disrepair.

In the 1960’s the 1500 acres of surrounding land were bought by the local power company, who had plans to build a nuclear power plant. After much public outcry, the plan was abandoned and the land was donated to the State of New York. The land is now known as the Tivoli Bays State Park and is protected in perpetuity.

The current owners purchased the house in 1996.

Since then, Ham House has undergone numerous and extensive renovations, always taking into consideration the architectural style of the house and the materials used. Local craftsman and period materials ensured the integrity of this historical home.

- The porch was build in 1997 and the land was cleared and regraded to open up the vista of the Catskill Mountain Range. At the same time the walled in herb garden was installed.

The restorations of the house are too numerous to describe here, but include the rebuilding of the chimneys and fireplaces, replacement of the roof, new heating, plumbing and electrical systems. Later air-conditioning was added to the rooms. All bathrooms and kitchen were replaced and upgraded. Media facilities were also added to the house.

The pool and manicured gardens were installed throughout the years and many improvements are added on a yearly basis. The A.J. Davis inspired cottage was also extensively renovated and is currently where the owners reside.



For more information on the history on Tivoli:

- <http://www.tivoliny.org>
- <http://www.redhook.org/History.html>
- <http://www.fermentmagazine.org/Bio/tivoli.html>

By Saul Bellow:

- Ralph Ellison in Tivoli