

# Old house gets a new story

## Saul Bellow house restored, for sale

By Harvey Auster  
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**TIVOLI** — Three years ago, Christopher Field was looking for an old rural property to restore.

Field, a free lance translator of Japanese for the electronics industry, worked primarily in and around New York. He started his search for a property around Poughkeepsie. After seeing seven older properties from Poughquag to Rhinecliff, he felt they were not rural enough. But when he took a ride up River Road, past Bard College to Tivoli Bays, he found the 1854 Hamm House.

What he saw was an early Victorian Italianate manor house of the mid-19th century built for William R. Hamm, a gentleman farmer. The house, as Field saw it, had five acres, but was surrounded by 1,500 acres of state-owned property running down to the Hudson River.

The house was in bad shape, divided into apartments and housing Bard College students.

He bought it, and three years later, restoration completed, Field now wants to sell it and move on to something smaller than the 4,700-square-foot former manor house.

So he has listed it with Gary DiMauro of DiMauro Real Estate in Tivoli, asking \$695,000 for the three-story, 10-room, 3½-bath home with a caretaker's apartment in the basement and a guest cottage and workshop in what had been the carriage house. The house has 10 working fireplaces, many of them marble.

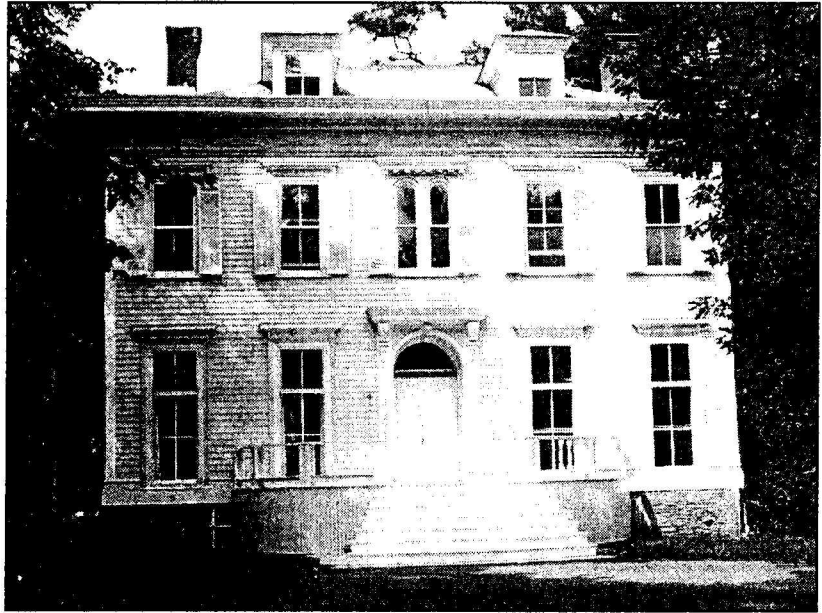
### Author's home

The house was the home of award-winning author Saul Bellow, whose works include "The adventures of Augie March," "Herzog," and "Mr. Sammler's Planet." Bellow was on the faculty of Bard College in the late '50s and early '60s, DiMauro explained.

According to an article in New Yorker Magazine last year, the late author Robert Ellison, who wrote "The Invisible Man" shared the house with Bellow for awhile.

These were among the house highlights that led Field to decide to try to restore the manor house even though he deemed it in bad condition when he first laid eyes on it three years ago.

"The house had been chopped up into apartments, with a kitchen in-



Kellie McCann/For the Poughkeepsie Journal

The Hamm house in Tivoli was once owned by author Saul Bellow.

stalled in the living room," he recalled. Some of the exquisite original molding was broken away, plaster walls were rotted through, wide-board pine floors worn down, an original wraparound porch was falling down, and soffits had come loose. "It was tragic," he said.

But Field was determined to give restoration the old college try. A woodworking hobbyist, he did some work himself, including creating a whole new kitchen in what had been the old dining room. The original kitchen was in the basement.

He hired the finest craftsmen he could find to restore the moldings, replaster the walls, and restore the wood floors. He also installed a new six-zone, oil-fired, hot-water heating system, new electrical and plumbing systems and brought the house back to life.

In front, he built a set of white fan-shaped steps leading from the front lawn to the formal entrance.

### House to be on tour

The Hamm house is slated to be a stop on the annual Hudson River Heritage Hudson River Estates tour of northern Dutchess County later this month, DiMauro said.

Visitors then will front steps into the center-hall which leads to a long flight of stairs to the second-floor bedroom area.

To the left of the center hall is a huge double parlor with delicately restored carved ceiling moldings and matching marble fireplaces. The living room — and the dining

room on the opposite side of the center hall — have 9-foot tall Victorian windows and 12½-foot high ceilings.

Beyond the dining room is a former butler's pantry that has been remodeled into a serving area between what is now the kitchen and dining room. The dining room also features a back staircase to the second floor sleeping area. The kitchen was created completely by Field. The original was in the basement in what is now the caretaker's apartment.

Field's kitchen revolves around a center island and boasts large Victorian style cabinets that he made himself, plus an informal dining area.

There is also a half bath on the first floor and a back staircase leading out to a brick patio.

The caretaker's apartment — three rooms — has its own entrance and patio.

The house presents views to the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains beyond with 100-year-old maple and locust trees.

Being surrounded by 1,500 acres of state preserve, the property has the privacy of a large estate, without the taxes of one, DiMauro said.

Actually, he explained, much of that state land once belonged to the estate. But all but the house and five acres were bought up to be made forever green and natural about 40 years ago.

DiMauro said he believes the market for such a property probably lies south of Dutchess County in Westchester or New York.