Where is bash's history stored?

If I run history, I can see my latest executed commands.

But if I do tail -f $HISTFILE or tail -f ~/.bash\_history, they do not get listed.

Does the file get locked, is there a temporary location or something similar?

Bash maintains the list of commands internally in memory while it's running. They are written into [.bash\_history on exit](https://www.gnu.org/software/bash/manual/bashref.html#Bash-History-Facilities):

When an interactive shell exits, the last $HISTSIZE lines are copied from the history list to the file named by $HISTFILE

If you want to force the command history to be written out, you can use the [history -a](https://www.gnu.org/software/bash/manual/bashref.html#index-history) command, which will:

Append the new history lines (history lines entered since the beginning of the current Bash session) to the history file.

There is also a -w option:

Write out the current history to the history file.

which may suit you more depending on exactly how you use your history.