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.

If you want to make sure that they're always written immediately, you can put that command into your PROMPT\_COMMAND variable:

export PROMPT\_COMMAND='history -a'