

HISTORIC RED HOOK

Sam Hall

1921 – 2014

St. John The Evangelist Cemetery, Barrytown

Black granite slab, unadorned and purposefully lying flat on the ground, south side of cemetery in back of the church building

Sam Hall, a television screenwriter and most renowned for his work on soap operas, shares a memorial stone with his wife Grayson Hall, an actress. According to FindaGrave.com, Hall “will be best remembered for penning stories for the popular TV series *Dark Shadows* (1967 to 1971). Born Allison Samuel Hall, in the small town of Carrollton, Ohio, his father was the proprietor of a rubber glove factory. [Hall’s parents were Samuel and Beatrice Hall.] He discovered a love for the theater during a trip to New York City and while in high school, he wrote and directed plays for school productions. He attended Dartmouth College; however, his studies were interrupted, when he was drafted into the United States Army. Stationed in Europe during World War II, Hall was a participant in the Battle of the Bulge. Following his return home, he studied playwriting at the Yale Drama School. During the early years of television, there was an abundance of opportunity for writers which Hall took advantage of. He wrote stories beginning in the late 1940s for such programs as *Studio One* and *Matinee Theatre*. His greatest body of work came when he was added to the team of writers for the Dan Curtis creation ‘Dark Shadows’ in 1967, as he was paired with Gordon Russell. After the show’s run ended in 1971, he wrote for the soap operas *One Life to Live* and *Santa Barbara*. In addition, Hall contributed to the screenplays for the films *House of Dark Shadows* (1970) and *Night of Dark Shadows* (1971), as well as the revised *Dark Shadows* TV series in 1991. He was married to actress Grayson Hall (best known for playing Dr. Julia Hoffman in the original *Dark Shadows* TV series) from 1952 until her death in 1985.” As in life, the Halls are linked after, with our memories of one interwoven with the other.

The Halls’ passion for the region is evident when we consider that the name of their home—Wildercliffe—is engraved on their tombstone. This connection to the house and to the area is described by Pieter Estersohn in his 2018 book *Life Along the Hudson: The Historic Estates of the Livingston Family*:

HISTORIC RED HOOK

In 1979, Sam Hall...and his wife, Grayson...purchased the house. They asked Harrison Cultra, a close friend and neighbor at Teviotdale, to renovate the interiors. Sam and Grayson had become friendly with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton during the 1962 filming of *The Night of the Iguana* in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; Grayson earned an Academy Award nomination for her role in the movie. The Halls became parental figures for Elizabeth's daughter Liza Todd, who was a sculptor living down the road in Staatsburg. Due to their close relationship, Liza's wedding was held at Wildercliffe in 1984. As part of Grayson's negotiations with the Rhinebeck police department to provide security detail for the event, Elizabeth Taylor posed for a portrait with each officer after the wedding.

This anecdote, well told by Estersohn, is just one part of the story of the house. Estersohn covers so much more about the estate as well as in similarly detailed descriptions of 35 homes up and down the Hudson River and tied to the Livingstons. The Halls were part of that history and part of our lives through their work and professional endeavors, which became fond (or maybe scary) memories in our lives. Their connection to their home and their love for each other is etched in stone.