

## Hugh Spurgin and UTS explain selling the historic UTS Barrytown property

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*Henry Christopher, left, the director of admissions and financial aid of the Unification Theological Seminary, and Hugh D. Spurgin, its President, stand for a portrait at the Daily Freeman in October.*

BARRYTOWN, N.Y. -- If the rolling hills and forested lands that stretch between the Hudson River and River Road and Barrytown Road and Montgomery Place in this Northern Dutchess hamlet could talk, they would tell the tales of a time before the birth of our nation, when members of the prominent Livingston family were lords of the manor, and of how it was in its meadows and at its waterfront that a young Theodore Roosevelt indulged in his budding passion for nature, collecting the small mammals, insects, snakes and birds that would become part of his "Roosevelt Museum of Natural History," and ultimately end up in the Museum of Natural History in New York City.



*One of the buildings that was once home to the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, N.Y.*

They would tell, too, of being purchased by John D. Rockefeller in 1929; of the antics of the high school boys who attended the St. Joseph's Normal Institute, a Christian Brothers boarding school constructed by Rockefeller for them there and how, in 1974, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon chose the bucolic 260-acre property as the home for his young church's first theological seminary.



"It had the right combination of mountain, river field and forrest," Henry Christopher, the seminary's historian and director of admissions and financial aid, said recently, explaining the appeal of the land to Moon. "He said you could walk out into nature and experience God."

Now the property, which contains a number of buildings, including the historic Messina House and several single-family homes, is preparing to tell the next chapter of its story.



The Unification Church closed its seminary there in 2015, although it does still offer some courses there, and, earlier this year, the church put the property up for sale.

Originally listed for \$18 million, the seminary recently reduced its asking price to \$16,750,000, according to Michael Mickler, the vice president for admissions.

The sale of the property is bittersweet for many in the church who see the property as the birthplace of the

church in America.

But, since 1999, the seminary has offered more and more classes at its location in Midtown Manhattan, where, President Hugh Spurgin said, the majority of its American students reside.



"For 40 years, we had our seminary and our main campus in Barrytown," Spurgin said. But, he added, since 2009, the seminary has had more students at its Midtown location than in Barrytown, and worldwide, more and more students are choosing to take the seminary's online offerings.

"In a sense," Spurgin said, "we're sacrificing this property for the larger providence around the world and the future of the Unification Theological Seminary."

