

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

SAVING ONTARIO'S EARLY ARCHITECTURE AND PLACES OF NATURAL BEAUTY

It was in 1933, decades before the Ontario Heritage Act of 1975, that a 'who's who' from the province's arts, academic and political circles formed ACO, the **Architectural Conservancy of Ontario**. Eric Arthur, a young professor of architecture, and his students at the University of Toronto had drawn the **floor plans of over 200 of the best early buildings left in Ontario**. This inventory was the basis of Ontario's preservation movement.

Fearing it was slated for demolition, **Arthur initiated the purchase of Barnum House** in 1939 and ACO later opened it to the public as **the province's first period house museum**. Though of great beauty, this vernacular building is a sink-hole for money. Imagine the ACO's relief when **the house was transferred to its present custodians, the Ontario Heritage Trust in 1982**.

Today ACO has twenty-five branches. The local branch, Cobourg & East Northumberland, looks forward to the day when they will be able to use Barnum House for branch activities, **thus renewing the ACO connection**.



Photo courtesy Maria Longley

"There is no house of similar size and material in the United States that is the superior of the Barnum House, Grafton, Ontario"

Eric Arthur

Built c. 1819 in the neo-classical style, Barnum House is a National Historic Site. It's shown here with OHT staff, and ACO's Provincial President and local branch President in 2014.