



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

## **Legacy Series**

An ongoing series of articles recounting the history of the Stratford Ecological Center and the Warner family

### **Legacy Series: Part 2 March, 2011**

#### ***Continuing with the story of Gale's Delaware County roots...***



Gale Warner

Last month, we described the role of Gale's great-great-great grandfather, Judge Hosea Williams, in shaping the development of the Village of Stratford south of the city of Delaware. Hosea's wife, Charlotte Avery Williams, had a brother, Judge Frederick Avery, who was an active promoter of the Underground Railroad in Delaware, OH. His home became a secret station for fugitive slaves.

Hosea and Charlotte's daughter, Margaret Copp Williams, married Chauncy Hills in 1847. Chauncy Hills, son of Dr. James Harvey Hills and Beulah Andrews Hills, was a merchant and an original stockholder/director (along with his father-in-law, Judge Hosea Williams) in the Delaware Co. branch of the State Bank of OH (later to become the Delaware Co. National Bank). In 1854, Chauncy purchased Crystal Springs Farm on Clear Run in Troy Township and moved his family there. Hills-Miller Road bears the family name. Chauncy had one of the finest stock farms in the area, and introduced thoroughbred shorthorn cattle and Shropshire sheep into Ohio. He also raised Yorkshire hogs.

Chauncy's brother, Reuben, started a grocery store in 1851, and Reuben's three sons carried on, naming their venture the V.T. Hills Wholesale Grocery Co. It was located in an impressive brick structure just south of Ohio Wesleyan University on the east side of Sandusky Street. The building now houses and operates a valuable enterprise known as The Hardware Exchange. Inside this historic building, you will see pictures of the former grocery business. Visiting this old-fashioned hardware store is rewarding, as the experienced sales folks can provide or create unique solutions to most customers' needs. Descend to the basement archives, admire the displays of antique equipment, or tap the skills of the older staff who can build or repair 'most anything.