

## Chapter 10

### HICKORY SECTION

The Hickory section lies between Loantaka Way on the north and Green Village Road on the south, and includes the Hickory Tree shopping area, Rose Valle Estates, the Chatham Day School, and the Chatham Hill Apartments. The former Kirby estate on the corner of Shunpike Road and Loantaka Way and the Platt estate on Loantaka Way occur in the north while the Oak Knoll playing fields, the Township-owned Green Village Pond Conservation Area and the post office lie along Green Village Road in the south. Most of the central portion of the section is part of the Morris County Loantaka Park. Wetlands occur extensively throughout most of the section.

This site consists of a broad basin with three more or less distinct natural divisions.

The northern portion of the site is cleared land, mostly grass, with large, well-maintained rural homes. It is scenic. A site on the National Register of Historic Places, the Gibbons Barn, sits near the stone bridge over Loantaka Brook. Much of the grassland is pasture for horses and part will remain so under the conditions of proposed conservation easements on the northeastern portion.

The central and largest portion of the site is wet lowland forest. It is a mixture of mature woods, swampy depressions, streams and trails. It has many large old trees, especially beech. One section is filled with mature cedars. There are slopes carpeted with ground pine, areas filled with ferns and mosses, and bramble-encircled bogs. Much of this central area is protected open space, either as part of Loantaka Park or as Chatham Township-owned property.

The portion along Loantaka Lane South has extensive wetlands on which there have been possible sightings of endangered species of bird and reptile. The rear yards of properties along Spring Valley Road are wet.

The third portion of this site lies along Green Village Road. This old section of Chatham Township has scattered houses. The land was used for years for small scale farming and animal raising, but now has secondary growth. The result is a maze of marshes, fields, briar patches, yards, horse paddocks, drainage systems, young woods, old wells and abandoned foundations. The Morris County bike path travels through this site from Loantaka Way and ends at the Green Village post office.

As recently as the 1960s the Hickory Tree area was vacant land with only a rural roadhouse where a franchise dining establishment now stands. Since then extensive development has gradually occurred. Preservation of open vistas along Loantaka Way was a concern of residents when development of the lots became a possibility. Open space along Loantaka Way and Shunpike Road has been preserved by outright purchase using State of New Jersey Green Acres fund and by conservation easements granted to Morris County and Chatham Township.

Steep slopes were disturbed for the construction of Rose Valle Estates on Shunpike Road and during the additions at the Chatham Day School. Wetlands were disturbed for the construction of the Oak Knoll Fields.

### OPEN SPACE

Most open space in the section lies in the Morris County Loantaka Park and in the former Kirby tract at the corner of Shunpike Road and Loantaka Way. The southern half of the former Kirby tract is now owned by Chatham Township and protected with conservation easements. Three contiguous tracts along Green Village Road are owned by Chatham Township, two of which are preserved with conservation easements. The Township also owns a parcel on Shunpike Road.

Private open space includes most of the northern half, now protected with a conservation easement, of the former Kirby estate. Other private open tracts include the Platt estate along Loantaka Way, a parcel behind the Oak Knoll playing fields, a wet and undevelopable tract adjacent to Loantaka Brook near Britten Road, vacant parcels

along Spring Valley Road, a portion of the Rose Valle development, and the western part of the Chatham Day School property.