

## Chapter 10

### ESTERNAY SECTION

The Esternay section is the area between River Road and the top of the ridge, generally called Long Hill, extending from the boundary of Long Hill Township to Southern Boulevard. The section lies in the Passaic River watershed with no part in the Great Swamp watershed. Esternay is steeply sloped, more so than the north side of the ridge. Until recently the western part of the section remained relatively undeveloped with a rural ambiance but building is currently taking place on the slopes. The sewer line has been extended to most of the western area. The eastern area has many parcels along River Road still with septic systems. The land is dry and along the top of the ridge outcrops of red shale can be found.

Near the intersection of River Road and Fairmount Avenue lies the tract formerly known as the Shale Pit, now called Esternay Field. It was created years ago when the red shale on the south side of Long Hill was excavated. The excavated site currently appears as a large outdoor theater with overgrown vegetation. A soccer field was constructed in 1974 and the area was renamed Esternay Field. The field where children play soccer is surrounded by steep slopes, narrow terraces, and dense thickets. People have been known to hunt for fossils that may be embedded in the loose shale that litters the area surrounding the field. Esternay Field is in a secluded setting since it cannot be seen from the road. Esternay Field is owned by Chatham Township. Although all the other property below the ridge is private property, formerly behind the existing homes there was an informal walking trail below and parallel to the ridge crossing the power line right-of-way and extending toward Southern Boulevard.

The land to the east of the power lines is a steep southern slope from the crest of Long Hill to River Road. Residential development is located near the base of the hill and at the top of the ridge. Toward the crest of the site the vegetation is mature woodland of beech, oak, maple, ironwood, and a few pines. As the land drops abruptly, the woods are filled with large poison ivy vines which climb the trees and stands of multiflora rose and Japanese barberry. There is much erosion of the rocky slopes below Huron Drive and many shale outcroppings and basalt boulders on the hillside. The exception to the steep slopes is the gently sloping meadow along Kincaid Lane, now developed with 8 houses.

There are scenic views from several places on this site. One of the best viewpoints is at the top of the hill under the power line. From here one can look north across the Great Swamp to the hills beyond Morristown, to the Madison- Florham Park areas and in the opposite direction south to the valley that lies between Long Hill and the Second Watchung Mountain.

### OPEN SPACE

Chatham Township owns two parcels in this section, Esternay Field and another steeply sloping parcel east of the power line right-of-way. That parcel is protected by a conservation easement held by the Passaic River Coalition. Although privately owned, the northern steeply sloped portions of the lots east of Esternay Field all the way to the Cardinal Hill apartments are generally wooded and relatively undisturbed since the terrain is rugged.