

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# **REPORT ON THE WILDLANDS**



**State of Maine**

**Legislative Research Committee Publication 104-1A**

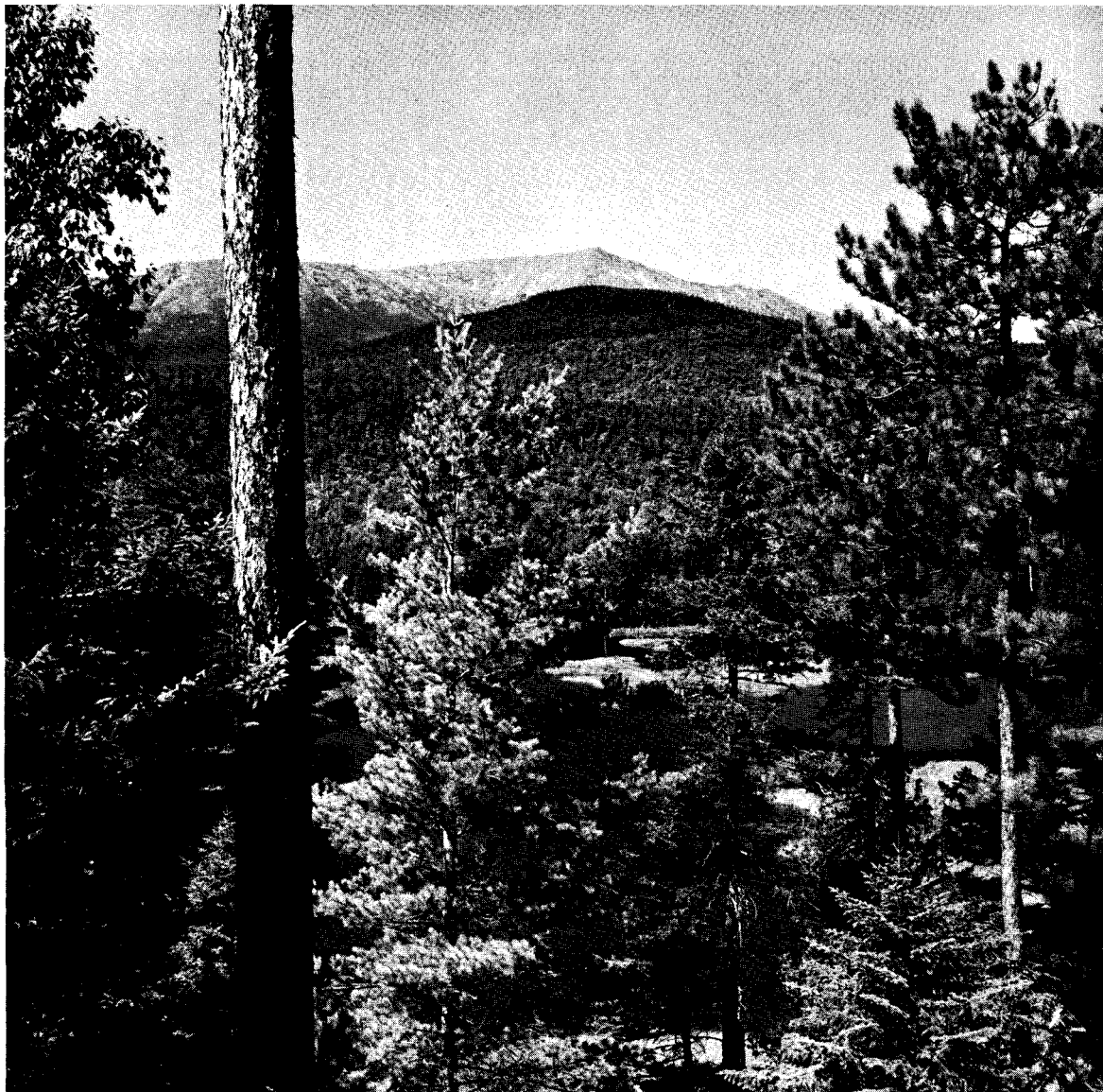


# **REPORT ON THE WILDLANDS**

Appendix F to Legislative Research Committee Publication 104-1,  
the report of the Subcommittee on Wildlands Use Regulation

Prepared by John McKee  
15 November 1968

**State of Maine**  
**Legislative Research Committee Publication 104-1A**



Katahdin from Abol Pond

Maine has always been proud of its wildlands -- the Big Woods, land of Indian and trapper, of white pine tall enough for masts on His Majesty's ships, of mountain lion, moose, and eagle. Much of the wildness was still there when Thoreau went in by birchbark canoe, a little over a century ago. And much of it remains. There is spruce and fir, moose and beaver, lake and mountain and whitewater enough to satisfy generations of Americans. More and more, as northeastern U. S. develops, the Maine woods are becoming an almost unparalleled resource, both for tree production and for recreational opportunity. But who is to come forward to say that this resource must not be squandered? Can we guarantee that the next generations will be able to set out a canoe and know that adventure is just around the bend?



East Outlet, Kennebec River at Moosehead Lake

One reason there is any wildness left in the wildlands is that access has always been difficult. Roads designed for log hauling challenge the automobile in any season.



T4 R11 (Piscataquis County)





I-95 interchange, Medway (Penobscot)

But that's changing. Fast roads are reaching further into the wildlands. And many people who may not care to travel by paddle or snowshoe now have their choice of outboard, trail cycle, snowmobile, floatplane, or all the variants on truck campers. There's hardly a tote road that can't become a thoroughfare into the back country. And some of the lakes that a man used to boast of having fished are now being ringed by cottages, camps, and trailers.

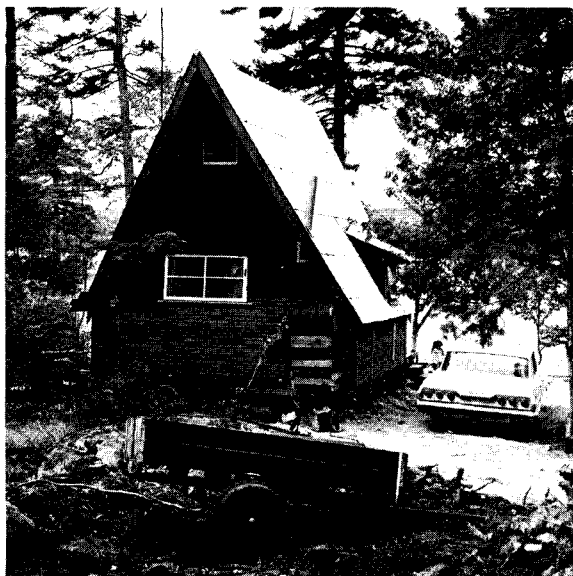


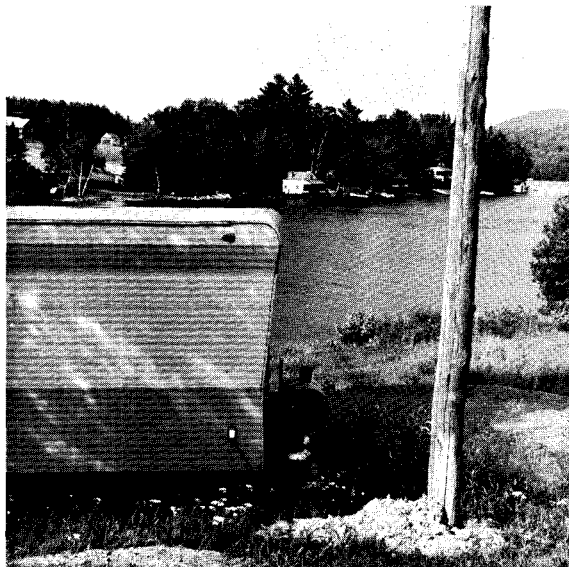
Middle Jo-Mary Lake, T4 Indian Purchase (Penobscot)

The wildlands, meaning Maine's unorganized towns and mainland plantations, make up a little more than half of the state's land area. Some of this has been subject to development for many years. It might surprise an outsider to learn that a place which may appear to have all the problems of a fair-sized municipality lacks the municipality's authority to deal with them. And as development in the wildlands quickens, the problems become acute.



Rockwood Strip (Somerset)





Camps and cottages have appeared in many parts of the wildlands. Some are isolated hunters' camps put up alongside a back road. Some come in threes, fours, fives along a shoreline. Some come all around a lake.

*(Preceding pages)*

Number 14 Plantation (Washington)

Millinocket Lake, T1 R9 (Piscataquis)

Smith Pond, T3 Indian Purchase (Penobscot)

Lake Cathance, Number 14 Plantation (Washington)

Moosehead Lake, Lily Bay (Piscataquis)

Pleasant Pond, Caratunk Plantation (Somerset)

Jerusalem (Franklin)

Lower Sysladobsis Lake, T5 ND (Washington)



Bottle Lake, Lakeville Plantation (Penobscot)



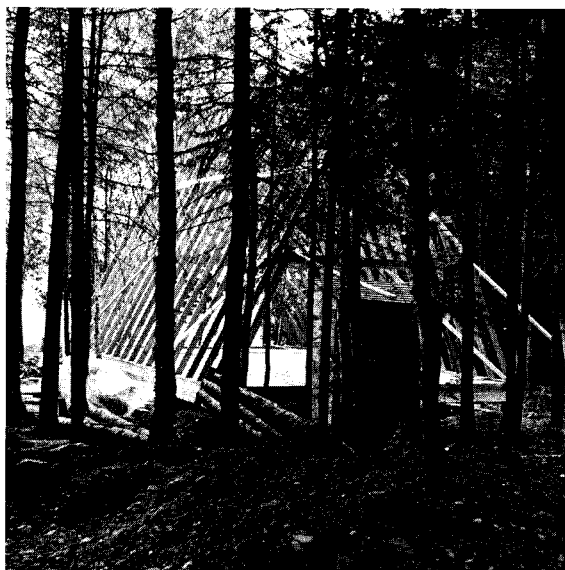
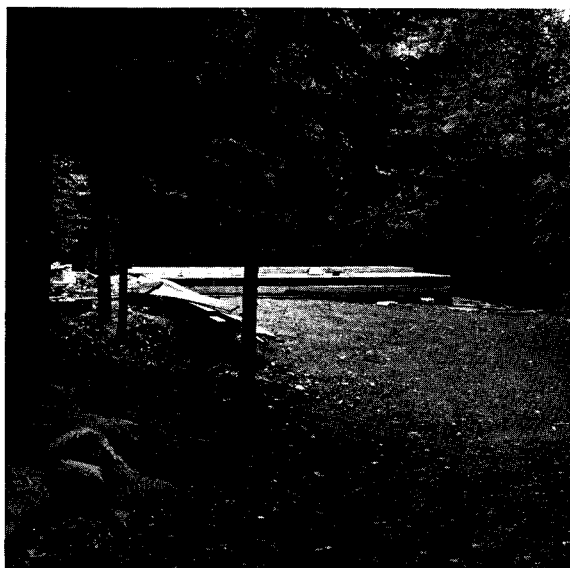
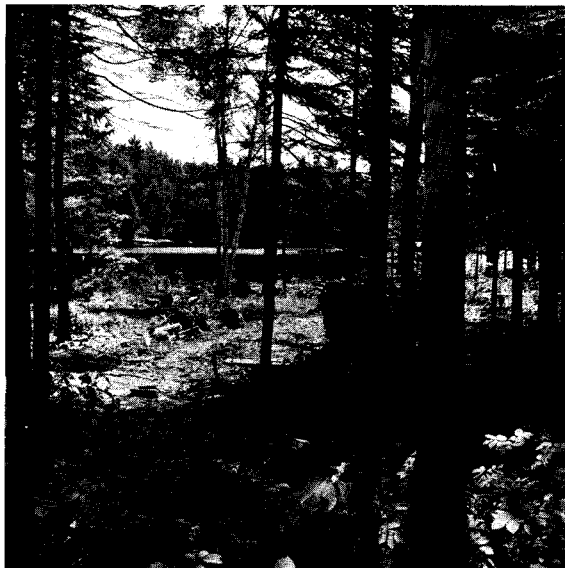
Some were built years ago, but many are just being built. Apparently no one knows just how fast camps are going up in the wildlands. Figures on the number of camp lots leased in the unorganized towns are on file in the State Bureau of Taxation, however. They suggest that this number may have doubled over the past ten years. What is certain is that a lot of building is going on in the wildlands.

Moosehead Lake, Harfords Point (Piscataquis)

Elliottsville Plantation (Piscataquis)

Moosehead Lake, Lily Bay (Piscataquis)

Turkey Tail Lake, T4 Indian Purchase (Penobscot)



Aside from the occasional backwoods hunter's camp, the shore-front cottage has been the typical development in the wildlands. Now a third kind of camp is proliferating. As major ski areas develop in different parts of the wildlands, skiers' camps sprout around them. They are often put just as close to the plowed road as possible. This is understandable, but it also raises health, safety, and other problems.



Little Squaw (Piscataquis)



Long Pond, Sandy River Plantation (Franklin)

So there's an active market for real estate in the wildlands. Lots for lease. Lots for sale. Subdivision. Some say it's inevitable.



Lower Lead Mountain Pond, T28 MD (Hancock)

*(Following pages)*

Rangeley Plantation (Franklin)

Long Pond (Somerset)

Long Pond, Sandy River Plantation (Franklin)

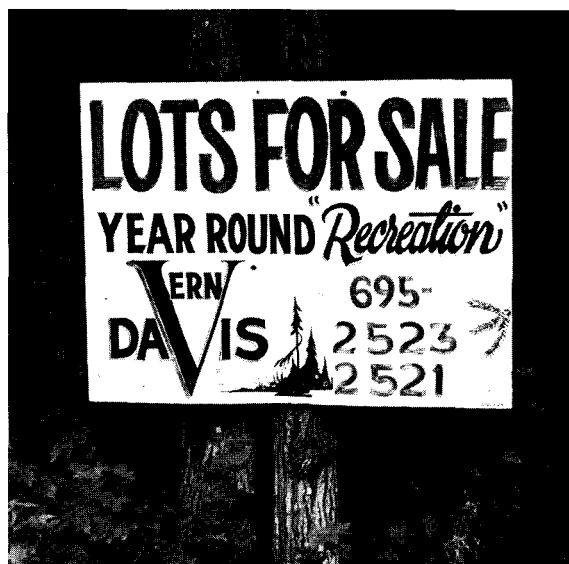
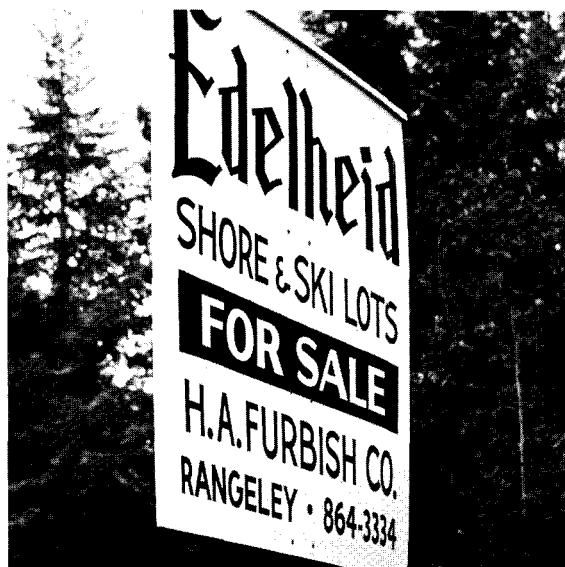
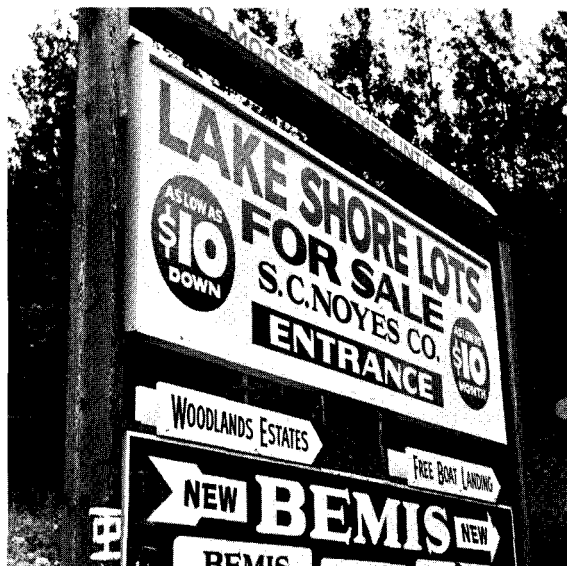
Little Squaw (Piscataquis)

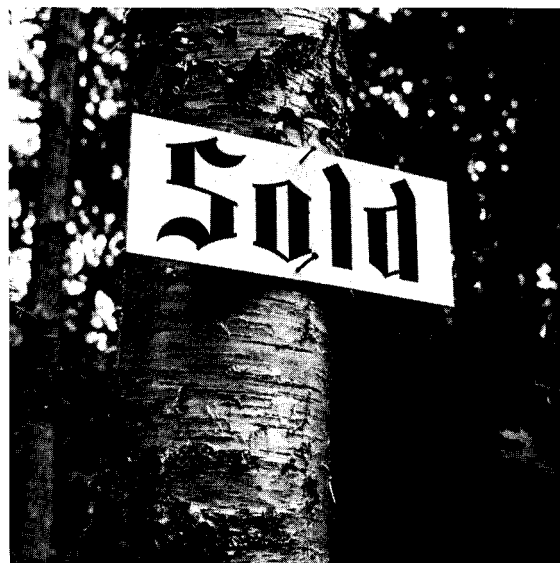
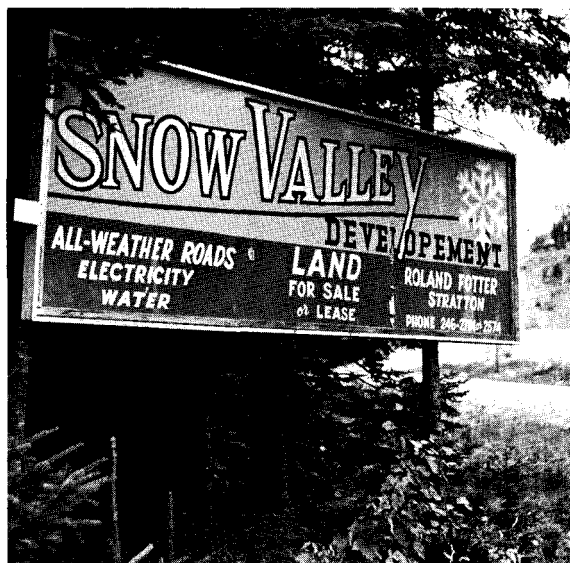
Elliottsville Plantation (Piscataquis)

Sugarloaf Township (Franklin)

Wyman (Franklin)

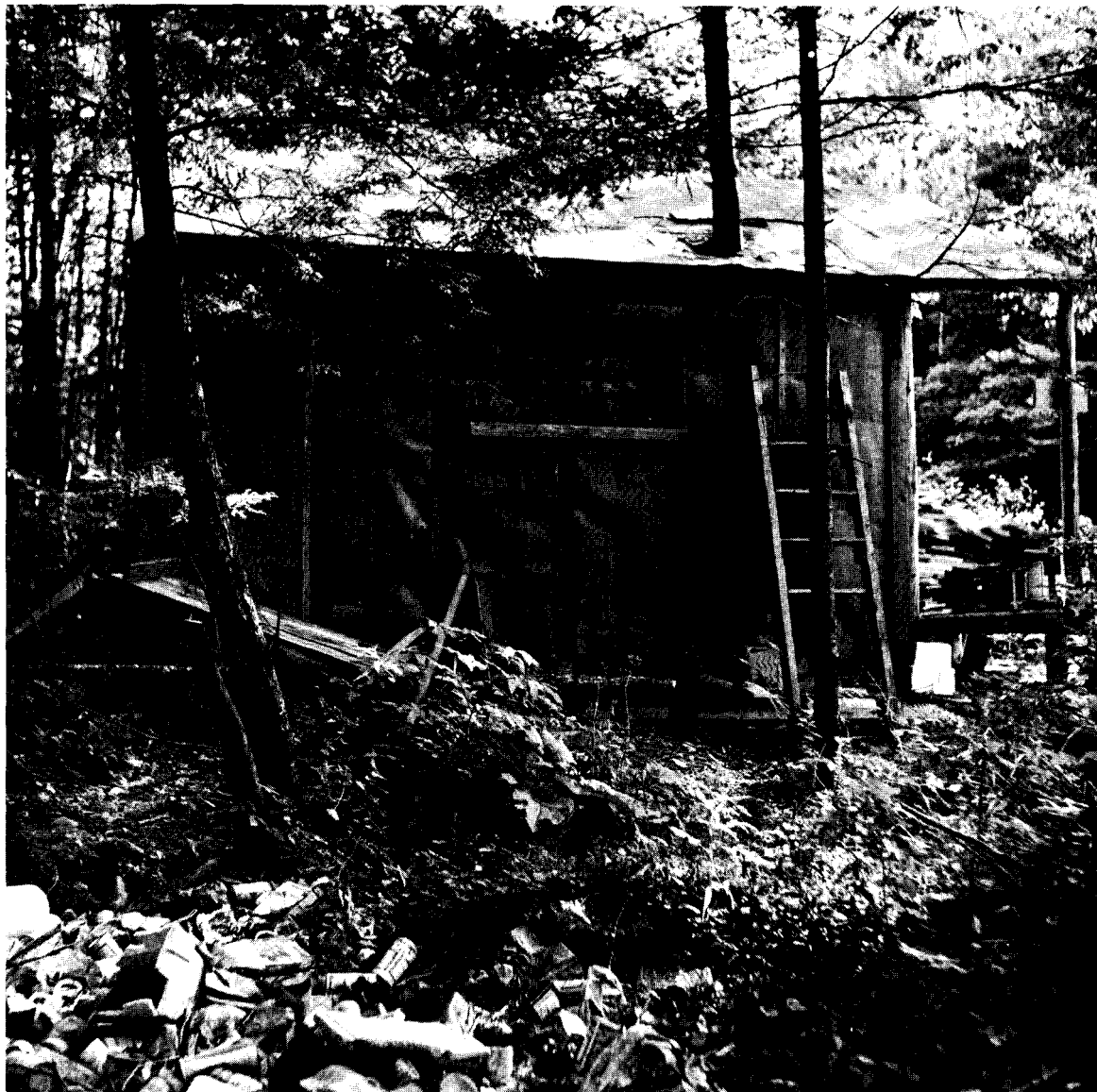
Long Pond, Sandy River Plantation (Franklin)







Recreational development in the wildlands may be inevitable. The economic pressure is certainly there. But the point is too often missed. Development need not spoil the wildlands. Properly done, development can fit into the surroundings. It can provide safe and healthful recreation for camp owners and their visitors. It can preserve most of the wilderness appearance for those who can't buy in on all the good places. It can allow more people to come in and still spoil less land, which could soon make all the difference to a region's economy. It can do this without seriously affecting the output of pulpwood and timber. What's required is more care in development. It's bound to pay off.



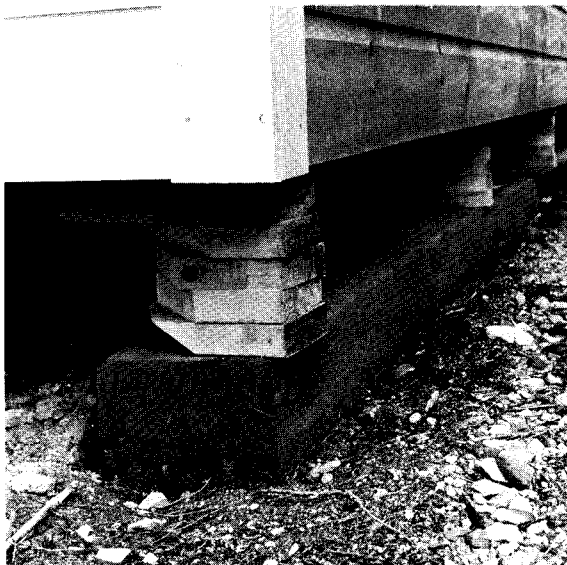
T1 R5 W (Aroostook)



Moosehead Lake, Lily Bay (Piscataquis)

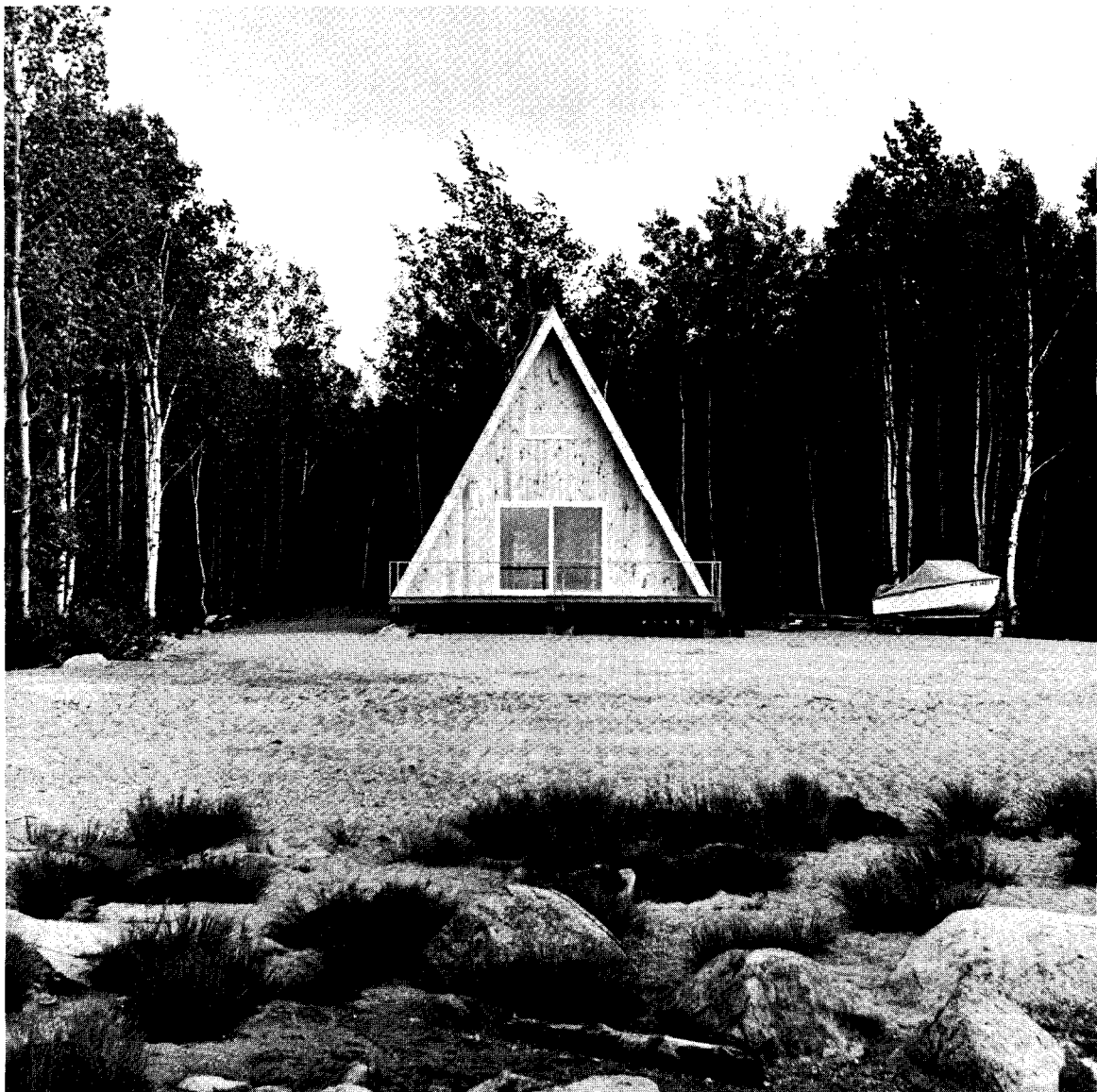


Smith Pond, T3 Indian Purchase (Penobscot)



Bottle Lake, Lakeville Plantation (Penobscot)

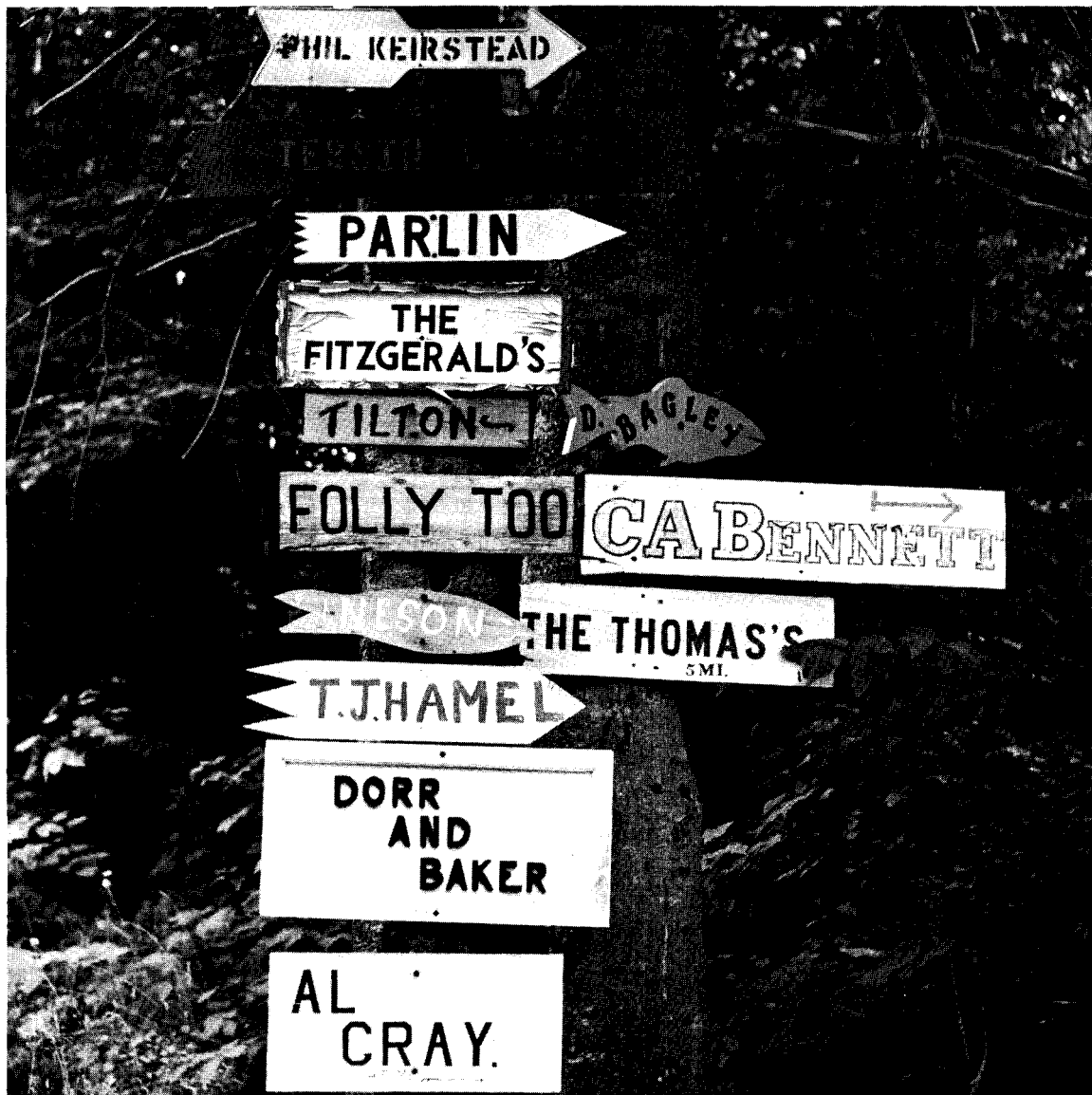
An outhouse too close to water or roads presents an obvious danger. There's no reason why this should be tolerated today. A number of other building practices are all too common in the wildlands. Foundations and other structural parts may not be adequate -- a sort of built-in dilapidation. Equally important, the buildings may go up in a bad place. Pollution is one danger when a cottage is too close to water or a roadway; loss of the woods character of the wildlands is another. Shorelines are particularly vulnerable. A reasonable setback, together with some screening by natural foliage, is likely to improve the view from both directions. And without setbacks, soon hardly anyone will be able to feel the immensity and the seclusion of the Maine woods.



Mooselookmeguntic Lake, Rangeley Plantation (Franklin)



Lakeville Plantation (Penobscot)



Frenchtown (Piscataquis)



No one doubts that there are plenty of people in the wildlands. It also seems clear that there will be more and more people seeking the wildlands experience. The question is whether or not the wildlands will continue to offer their challenge. It's still the Big Woods, but it may not be for long.



East Outlet, Kennebec River at Moosehead Lake

Photographs for this report were taken in the wildlands during July and August, 1968, under contract to the Legislative Research Committee of the Maine State Legislature.