

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

769

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter any categories and subcategories from the instructions.

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SEP 25 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Gordon Fox Ranch  
Other names/site number: Fox Tower Farm  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 680 West Broadway  
City or town: Lincoln State: Maine County: Penobscot  
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

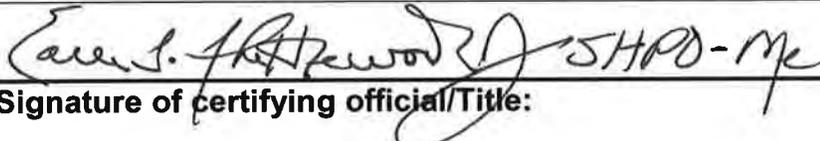
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

	<u>9/18/15</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<b>MAINE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION</b>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

**GORDON FOX RANCH**

Name of Property

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

*For Eason H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*11-9-15*  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

2

3

buildings

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

sites

1

\_\_\_\_\_

structures

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

objects

3

3

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- DOMESTIC / Single dwelling
- AGRICULTURE / Agricultural outbuilding
- COMMERCE / TRADE / Business
- OTHER / Observation Tower

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- AGRICULTURE / Agricultural outbuilding
- VACANT / NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

OTHER / No style

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Gordon Fox Ranch is a modest collection of wooden buildings located on the outskirts of Lincoln, Maine. Located in central Penobscot County, Lincoln is a large town with deep roots in the lumber and wood-processing industries. The Gordon Fox Ranch is situated in a rural portion of the town, about 2 miles south of the town center, along State Route 2, also known as West Broadway or the South Lincoln Road. The lot is 9.2 acres in size, and with the exception of one-and-a-half acres at the northern end which has been cleared, is heavily wooded. The clearing, adjacent to the road, contains both historic and contemporary buildings as well as a cellar hole and a large garden space that once contained the ranch's fox pens. The observation tower and ranch house both date to circa 1924, and the office is slightly later. Also on the property is a c. 1957 garage, a free-standing woodhouse that used to be attached to the ranch house, and a new, two-story frame house erected c. 2006. Although the presence of the newer buildings and the re-location (within the property) of three of the older buildings affects the integrity of spatial relationships and sense of feeling the property retains integrity of location, association, workmanship, materials and design.

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**Narrative Description**

See Figure 1 for location of individual resources.

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Historically this property was roughly rectangular in shape with a longer north to south orientation.<sup>1</sup> The driveway leading south from the road was centered along the road frontage, but as two small lots have been subdivided from the northeast corner of the lot the approximately one hundred foot long driveway is now closer to the eastern boundary line. At the end of the driveway to the east is the Garage (#1) and immediately to the south of that is the Observation Tower (#2). Across from the garage is the Ranch House (#3), and behind that, to the south is the new house (#4.) The Office (#5) is situated at the head of the driveway, south of the new house and the Observation Tower. Further to the south, and nestled along a line of hardwood trees, is the relocated woodshed (#6). Visible aspects of the site (#7) consist of a large garden space located to the west and south of the new house, and a small cellar hole to the east of the tower part of which is now located on the adjacent property. The north and west sides of the garden feature a raised berm. A small, newer, moveable chicken coop is also located in the back yard. The remainder of the property is wooded, and lines of hardwoods also run along the western boundary line and the street.

## 1. Garage, c. 1958

Non-contributing

The garage is a one-story wood frame building constructed most likely after the property changed hands in 1957. The building has a front gable roof oriented on an east-to-west axis and the single-bay, two-leaf board-and-batten garage door is on the west elevation. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the foundation is a concrete slab. Painted plywood sheaths the building with the exception of the gable peak which has recently been clad with wood shingles. The fenestration pattern is irregular, with one or two windows of various sizes on the north, east and south elevations.

## 2. Observation Tower, 1924

Contributing

The Observation Tower is a three story wood frame structure with concrete foundation posts. The building footprint is square, but the four sides taper inward from bottom through the second floor. At this point the four walls, now with a much smaller square plan, rise vertically through the third floor to the low-pitch gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The building is clad in new cedar shingles and narrow corner boards (not an original design feature) mark the corners.

The west elevation contains the entrance door, which is set in a vertical frame which projects forward of the sloping wall. A shed-roof covers the three-panel-and-glass door. On the south and north sides of the tower are a pair of casement windows on the first and second floors. The east elevation also has a casement window on the first floor. The west elevation window is original – the remainder of the casement windows are new but closely match the original. In the third story each elevation contains a one-over-one sash window.

The interior space has a wooden floor, exposed stud walls, and steep stairs/ladders leading from one level to the next. Trap doors at the top of the ladders provide additional floor

<sup>1</sup> The property is actually oriented north northwest to south southeast, but for convenience it is herewith described as being on a true north-south axis.

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space when closed. The building is platform framed with thick corner posts and angled wind bracing in the walls.

As with other structures on the property, the Observation Tower was in serious disrepair prior to 2005. At some point in the 1960s the homeowner removed the water-damaged third floor and installed a temporary roof over the resulting truncated-pyramid form. Both the tower and the still-attached office had sunk into the sandy soil. The tower was leaning on the office and there was moderate to severe sill and structural damage. In order to save the building it was jacked up, the sills and structural damage repaired and the original cedar posts replaced with concrete. The third floor and roof were rebuilt, windows were replaced as needed and the corners of the building trimmed. Drainage around the building was also improved. When the Ranch Office was built (see below) the lower west wall of the tower was removed: this too was rebuilt and a new doorway added.

### 3. Ranch House, 1924

Contributing

The main house on the Fox Ranch was erected for the ranch caretaker and family. The building faces north, toward the road, is one and one half stories high in a salt-box form, and has painted wood shingle siding and an asphalt roof. Historically there was little to no foundation – low cedar posts rested directly on the ground – but as sill repair is currently underway the house is supported by new wood posts in locations. Narrow painted trim boards mark the four corners of the house. Fenestration is simple and regular: on the façade the front door is centered between two windows; on the side elevations there is a window under the gable peak, another directly below it on the first floor and one in the rear pile. The east elevation and the east end of the south wall both contain pedestrian doors. All openings are trimmed with painted flat stock.

All of the two-over-one windows (with weights) have been removed and are stored in the garden shed, along with the internal five-panel doors and the external batten or four-panel-and-glass doors. On the interior, the plan of the building is intact but all of the finishes have been removed – including the maple floors (to be re-installed), collapsed chimney, fiber-board walls, trim, and ceilings. This was done due to collapse of the sub-structure, excessive moisture and extensive mold. The basement has now been stabilized, and the windows and doors will be repaired and re-installed in the future.

Although the ranch house has lost a considerable number of its original features and materials, it is still clearly recognizable as one of the ranch houses erected en masse starting in 1924. Each of the ranch houses built by the Gordon Silver Black Fox Company followed the same design: one and one-half story wood framed buildings with a salt-box form and attached rear woodshed. The facades were three bays wide, the interior plan contained two front rooms and a wide back kitchen on the first floor, a central staircase and two bedrooms on the second floor. The underside of the overhanging roof sheathing formed the gable soffits and lapped shingles were used instead of rake trim. On the front and rear elevations the rafter tails are exposed. This building does retain its integrity of design, setting, location, and association, and is also one of the least-altered examples of the type in the Lincoln area.

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## 4. House, 2006

Non-contributing

The main house was constructed in 2006 and is a two-story wood frame building with a side gable roof, concrete foundation, vinyl siding and a greenhouse and deck attached to the south (rear elevation). The ridge is oriented east to west and the façade faces north. The house is essentially vernacular and has the form of a high posted cape with irregular fenestration.

## 5. Ranch Office, c. 1924-1940

Contributing

The Office building for the fox ranch is a small, almost square wood frame structure with a front gable roof. It is located in the garden area, south of the driveway, the house and the tower. Walls are finished with painted wood shingles and the low-pitched roof with overhanging eaves has asphalt shingles. A small wooden cupola (installed recently) straddles the center ridge of the roof. Concrete blocks act as a foundation. Both the north and south walls contain pedestrian door openings, but the only door is a batten door on the north wall. There is a two-over-two sash on the west and north walls and a storm sash set sideways forms a window on the east elevation. The south wall has three fixed light windows (two of which are adjacent to each other), and a small horizontal window opening under the eaves.

The interior of this building contains exposed studs. A chimney was historically located in the southwest corner of the building, but that was removed when the office was moved. The interior walls contain penciled graffiti, including "One tool for one job" and "The man who loans tools is OUT."

When first constructed this building was built against the eastern first-floor wall of the observation tower: there was no wall between the office and the lower part of the tower. As with the tower the building had deteriorated significantly by 2006 and subsequently it was detached from the tower and moved to its current location. This allowed needed repairs to be made on both the tower and the office, including repairing the sill and the floor. The south wall of the office is new but it retains the angled slant of the tower base instead of a plumb, vertical wall. Currently the ranch office is used to store wood. This is the only extant example of a ranch office known in at this time in the Lincoln area.

## 6. Shed, 1924, moved

Non-contributing

Located at the south end of the cluster of farm buildings is a wood framed three-bay shed. Stud framed with an asphalt covered single-pitch roof the shed rests on concrete foundation blocks. The building faces east and has an exterior sliding door at center and a pair of one-over-one sash to the north. The north elevation contains a pedestrian door, and the rear elevation has a sliding two-light window. The façade has vinyl siding but the remaining walls are painted wood shingles. Painted corner boards and narrow painted trim on this building match the modest trim elements of the other c. 1924 buildings.

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Local "ranch houses" built in conjunction with the early wave of fox farming in the Lincoln area frequently had an attached, rear woodshed. The woodshed on this property was detached circa 2008, deconstructed, and moved in five sections to its current location. A new façade wall was constructed and a wooden floor inserted. The shed now stores some of the original doors and windows associated with the ranch house.

**7. Site****Contributing Site**

There are two visual features within the Gordon Fox Farm site: the berm surrounding the garden and the cellar hole.

To the west and south of the new house is a garden space that measures approximately 130 feet west to east by 80 feet north to south. Located along the north edge of the garden space is an earthen berm between two and three feet high and eight feet wide. The berm parallels the garden space and then briefly turns south at the western edge of the garden. The east end of the berm appears to have been destroyed by the foundation site work for the new house. However, if the line of the berm was extended eastward it would align with the south wall of the observation tower, and beyond that, to the south extant of the cellar hole.

The berm is thought to have been located just to the interior of the fence that surrounded the fox ranch pens. The size of the historic enclosure is estimated to be 400 feet by 150 feet and today would have extended onto the next lot (or two lots) to the north. The observation tower was most likely situated at the center point of the northern wall. A cleared path (woods road) runs along the south edge of the former enclosure, and numerous wooden posts and boards, as well as rolls and tangles of barbed wire, are discarded along or adjacent to this road. Although much of the cage wire is said to be buried within the former enclosure large rolls of it were still present on the site as late as 2005.

It is not known whether additional portions of the berm are extant within the denser shrubs, trees and undergrowth that now occupy the southwest and eastern part of the former enclosure. Based on historic photographs of other Gordon Fox Ranches in Lincoln, it is likely that the berm continued around the perimeter of the cages and was fenced on all four sides. Due to the subdivision of the original ranch, somewhat less than half of the former enclosure is now on an adjacent property. However, aerial photographs of the adjacent properties indicate that substantial site work for driveways and buildings has occurred in areas thought to have been within or along the perimeter of the enclosure and for that reasons these portions of the former ranch have lost integrity and are not included in this nomination.

Immediately to the east of the Observation Tower is a shallow, overgrown depression. The depression is roughly rectangular with the long-axis running east-to-west. The south edge of the depression is more or less aligned with the south wall of the observation tower. (The line of the berm, if fully extant, would pass in close proximity to the south wall of the observation tower and the south edge of the depression.) It is presumed, based on photographs of other fox ranches, that the depression represents the original location of the Ranch House (#3) and the former woodshed (# 6). A portion of the cellar hole is located on this property and a portion is located on the next property to the east. This part of the site has

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not been tested archaeologically.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1924-1940

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1924

1926

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person** (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

Euro-American

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Gordon, Dr. Fred E., builder

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.) (Refer to photographs)

Between 1924 and 1926 the Penobscot County town of Lincoln, Maine experienced a rapid and extensive growth of industrial fur farming. During these years Dr. Frank F. Gordon a dentist in Bangor, and his brother Dr. Fred E. Gordon, an optometrist in Lincoln, developed numerous fox farms - or ranches as they were called – in Lincoln, and to a lesser extent in other parts of Maine and New Hampshire. Each ranch contained as many as 200 fox in outdoor pens surrounded by a wooden palisade, a house for the caretaker, and an observation tower. Other facilities, including skinning and scalding rooms and food storage buildings, were shared among groups of ranches. The Gordons went bankrupt in 1926 and all their ranches were sold. Over the next decade and a half there continued to be at least two and as many as fifteen fox farming operations or companies in Lincoln. The subject of this nomination, the Gordon Fox Ranch on West Broadway (South Lincoln Road), is a rare surviving example of a fox ranch which contains a ranch house, observation tower, small office building, and the earthworks which supported the palisade. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, in the area of agriculture, for its direct association with the short-lived fox farming industry. The distinct form and massing of the observation tower and ranch house also make the property eligible under Criterion C, as exhibiting the specific characteristics of a type of company-built architecture. Finally, the resources may yield additional information about ranching activities, specifically the spatial organization and patterning of the animal pens and enclosures that give the property significance under Criterion D. The period of significance begins in 1924 and ends in 1940, the year the property was most likely sold out of farming.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion A: Agriculture**

The procurement of wild animal pelts – beaver, ermine, mink, fox, etc. – for sale to garment makers is a tradition that dates back to the earliest settlers of North America. The switch to fur farming for mink happened shortly after the Civil War, but it was not until 1895 on Prince Edward Island that the first fox were successfully bred in captivity specifically for their pelts. The following history summarizes the early years of the industry on Prince Edward Island:

The silver fox industry is one of the most interesting episodes in Island farming history, a boom that-- like all silver rushes-- ended almost as quickly as it started. The silver fox was a rare breed, with a beautiful fur that in fact resembled a black [fox] with just a hint of silver. The first attempt to raise silver foxes on Prince

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Edward Island was in 1872, when Benjamin Heywood managed to obtain several litters of fox pups and kept them in captivity. This attempt eventually failed, since he did not know that the foxes would destroy their pups if not secluded from outside interference. The real breakthrough in the industry came in Tignish in 1895, when experiments by Robert Oulton and Charles Dalton finally resulted in a mature litter with the all-important vein of silver in their fur. Oulton and Dalton joined forces and, by 1898, had two profitable fox ranches.

But by the turn of the century, silver-fox pelt prices began rising sharply on the London market, and P.E.I. soon gained attention as the world leader in this rare commodity. Maintaining a monopoly was the key to the Island's status as capital of the silver fox market. Breeding pairs were few and far between, and in 1912, up to 85% of the silver foxes in captivity were held on the Island. Combined with the high demand for the fur in the fashion industry, this market stranglehold resulted in astronomical paydays for Island fox-ranchers. At the peak of the industry, pelts were selling for \$1,500 to \$2,600 each. By 1913, a breeding pair of first-class silver foxes sold for \$25,000.<sup>2</sup>

The first Maine farm to raise foxes for fur was started by Maurice F. Stevens in Dover, Maine in 1904. According to *The Black Fox Magazine* in 1916 Stevens had helped several other diversified farmers to add fox breeding to their activities. The following year ranches had been established in Portland, Houlton, Augusta, Lincoln, Freeport, Onawa (Monson) and Presque Isle with "hundreds" of other farmers having entered the industry with one or two pair of breeding foxes<sup>3</sup>. By this time the demand had shifted from black fox pelts to silver fox pelts: the foxes were of the same breed but had been carefully mated to encourage the recessive gene that produced patches of silver fur. In 1918 the Maine Fox Breeders Association was formed and in two years' time there were 64 fox farmers in Maine. In 1929 the number of ranches had grown to 250 and the net profit for farmers was said to be about \$135,500.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest known mention of the Gordon brothers entry into the industrial fur farming market was in the first edition of *The Black Fox Magazine* in January 1917. On page 14 there was an advertisement for the Katahdin Black Fox Company with Dr. Frank F. Gordon, President, Dr. Fred E. Gordon, Treasurer, and Maurice F. Stevens as director. The add stated that they had capitol of \$25,000 "covering foxes, ranch, farm and equipment." Shares in the company were being sold for five dollars a piece.<sup>5</sup> In December 1918 the same magazine published a letter from Fred E. Gordon stating that he was building a ranch in Lincoln, Maine. According to historian William R. "Bee" Sawtelle, the Frank H. Gordon Company was organized in 1924. Although details are scarce about the fate of the Katahdin Black Fox Company Sawtelle indicates that the newer company's plan was far reaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Kimberly Champion, Patrick Ledwell, Crystal Fall, et al. "Fox Farming" on Kensington P.E.I. website. <http://www.kennet.pe.ca/chip/english/farming/foxes.htm>. 12 July 2015.

<sup>3</sup> "Fox Industry Flourishing in Maine" in *The Black Fox Magazine* (New York, 1917), 6.

<sup>4</sup> "Fur Farming Industry in Maine Increasing" in *Portland Herald* (Portland, Maine: August 30, 1930). Copy on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

<sup>5</sup> "Katahdin Black Fox Company" advertisement in *The Black Fox Magazine* (New York: January 1917), 14.

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After much study and contemplation, it was decided that the business would be operated as a trust, with Fred as the custodian of all the foxes. He would ranch, feed, and care for them all, with foxes being sold only to those who had a full understanding of the plan. Sales were to be made on a speculative basis based upon the price of pelts. Others agreed to leave their foxes on the Gordon ranches, Gordon's only guarantee being good care of the animals and the production of one pair per year.

The Gordons were to have the option of buying the young of the investors at 75 percent of the price of the old pair. The owner agreed to sell the young and leave the old pair for yet another year, the terms remaining the same...All pups in the litter were to go into a pool.

It was in this manner that Gordon hoped to stimulate sales and increase the herd size. The purchase price of pups would go down to 37.5 percent and 16.25 percent until the original investment was paid secure, before going onto a fur pelt basis system

Gordon's price for a pair of foxes was \$2,000.<sup>6</sup>

In 1924 Frank F. Gordon started purchasing large tracks of land in Lincoln. In short time the brothers built at least 14 individual ranches, and in order to build out their investment they started a sawmill for lumber and posts and had a supply line for wire fencing and feed. A panoramic photograph shows "Gordon Ranches No's 6-7-8-9-10 near completion" and another, an aerial of the same vicinity depicts six ranches, each with a house, tower, palisade and acres of pens. These six ranches were located on the north side of town, off Route 2. (See Figure 2.) At least four other ranches were located south of town on the South Lincoln Road, and the headquarters and another concentration of ranches were located on Fish Hill. In addition to the ranches in Lincoln the Gordons had (or had "options" on) ranches in Washington County, Maine and New Hampshire and Marlboro, Massachusetts and held contracts in Minnesota, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Alaska, and France.

By 1926 all of the Frank F. Gordon Company's assets had been placed into receivership. Based on the newspaper articles of the time, it appears that the Company had spent lavishly, and perhaps overrepresented the extent of the properties they actually owned outside of Lincoln. In addition, the fox did not reproduce as quickly as the investors hoped and an untold number – large enough to be a problem – had already died. Inasmuch as the industry was "highly speculative" no charges were filed for fraud, but the business was liquidated.<sup>7</sup>

Although fox ranching under the Gordon brothers ended abruptly the industry continued in Lincoln through 1942. Based on entries in the Maine Register in 1927 there were four fur

<sup>6</sup> William R. Sawtell, *The Fox Business With Accounts from Fox Farms in Maine* ([Shirley, Maine], 1994), 22.

<sup>7</sup> "Dyer Exonerates Black Fox Farms Enterprise He Writes to Dr. Gordon" in *Lewiston Evening Journal*. (Lewiston: February 17, 1925), 1 and Sam E. Conner, "But Little Is Left of the Gordon Fox Farm Extensive Purchases" (February 13, 1925), 14.

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companies and between 1929 and 1936 there were either five or six companies. Starting in 1937 these larger companies moved to disband, and their assets were sold to either the Lincoln Fur Farm, Inc. or one of 14 other individual farmers. The last year that the Maine Register listed any fox farms in Lincoln was 1942.

Between 1926 and 1940 the Gordon Fox Ranch was sold, along with other property in the immediate vicinity six times: first from the receivers to Herbert Gray (1926); then from Herbert Gray to the Lincoln Fox Farm Co. (1928); then from the Lincoln Fox Far Co. to Samuel L. Small and William McCrillis Sawyer (1931); then from Small and Sawyer to Haven Sawyer (1931), then from Haven Sawyer to the Lincoln Fur Farms Inc. (1936). This last company sold five parcels of land to Lawrence and Lucy Cliff in 1940. Lawrence Cliff was described as a real estate operator, not a fox rancher, in the 1940 census. However, it is unclear whether he lived on the parcel at 680 West Broadway or another from that purchase (his immediate neighbor was a fox rancher living on a rented property). As best as can be determined the former Gordon Fox Ranch was actively used for fox farming through 1940 if not later.

**Criterion C: Architecture**

The observation tower at the former Gordon Fox Ranch is a distinct building form developed specifically for the industrial fur industry. Review of the literature regarding the fox ranching industry in the first half of the twentieth-century indicate that an observation tower was an universally necessary building. While the shape and size of the towers varied by establishment they all were positioned immediately adjacent to the fox pens.

The historian Sawtelle described the observation towers at Borestone Mountain – a fox ranch owned by Robert T. Moore in the Monson, Maine area:

A minimum of two watch towers were manned and maintained to observe mating behavior and compatibility, the largest of which was equipped with a bed, a stove, a closet, a phone, and a light. The structure measured 15 feet by 15 feet and was cabled to nearby trees to prevent it from sliding off the small cliff on which it sat majestically overlooking the pens. Further around the periphery of the complex now sits the skeleton of another smaller tower, which was not livable, being used for but hours at a time.<sup>8</sup>

In 1923 the Bangor *Commercial* ran an article on the opening of a fox farm in East Corinth, and described the function of its tower:

Mr. Thurlow has a ledger compiled of the mating activity of the Corinth foxes, as the recorders watched from the watch tower, which resembled a lighthouse, but was square and had windows on top. On the bottom floor of the watch tower, the animals were killed with strychnine...and then pelted.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 20.

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A resident of Lincoln, who delivered milk to the Gordon Fox Ranches, recounted to Sawtelle his impression the observation towers:

Curious looking even back in the Thirties, the few remaining fox farm towers are really intriguing to those of us who know nothing of Maine's fox farming days. It seems that in addition to serving as a deterrent to would-be thieves, the towers' primary use was during mating season, which came in January. Mrs. Tupper says that during mating time, a 24-hour watch was kept. Each pen had a number, and when a pair of foxes were observed mating, the date and time were dully recorded so that when it came time for a female to give birth, she could be given 'a feed of liver,' a remedy believed to have a laxative effect.<sup>10</sup>

In Lincoln there were at least fourteen fox ranches between 1924 and 1940 and while photographs have not been found for all the ranches, those that were captured in images all show either a stand-alone tower, a tower adjacent to a house, or a tower incorporated into the roof of the ranch house. Only two towers are extant as of 2015, one at the Gordon Fox Ranch on the South Lincoln Road and the other off of West Road on the north side of town. The two stand-alone structures are very similar in form, although one is a story higher than the other. Both towers are square with side walls that incline towards the center before rising vertically at the top level, which contained windows on all four sides. The tower at the Gordon Fox Ranch is the shorter of the two – it contains three levels each smaller in footprint than the level below. As originally built the second level contained a small woodstove and door or hatch in the north wall, possibly for hauling up stove wood. Unfortunately no other interior furnishings or features are extant. The same is true of the observation tower off of West Road.

The second building at the former Gordon Fox Ranch that has architectural significance is the ranch house. A building with the same design – three bay, side gable, salt-box shaped frame structure with an attached woodshed – was constructed on each of the ranches built by Fred Gordon for his brother's company. The ranching operations were dispersed: groups of ranches were located on Route 2 in the vicinity of West Road, on the South Lincoln Road, in the Trans-alpine section of town. The headquarters and several ranches were on Fish Hill. Each ranch was overseen by a caretaker who lived in the ranch house along with his or her family. The ranch house, as with the rest of the infrastructure and the foxes themselves, were both owned by and constructed by the company. Almost all, if not all, of the houses were erected between 1924 and 1925 during which period the Gordons also built and operated a sawmill in order to provide the lumber necessary to support the ranch building boom.

At least four ranch houses exist in Lincoln that retain enough of their basic salt-box form and fenestration to be recognizable: three of these are on West Broadway (South Lincoln Road) and the fourth is on Route 2. Two others (one on Route 2 and one on South Lincoln Road) have retained their historic fenestration and foot print but have been raised to two full stories. A seventh house, located on the property with the other extant tower, is all but unrecognizable due to extensive additions and alterations. It is likely that others exist but are no longer distinguishable as a ranch house. Although the house at the Gordon Fox Ranch has

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 24. This quote originally appeared in Jeanne Steele "Fox farming's silver lining failed to materialize" in the *Bangor Daily News* (Bangor, Maine, July 3, 1976).

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been stripped of its interior finishes and the windows and doors are in storage, it nonetheless is one of the most intact examples of the company housing built to support the fox farming activities in Lincoln.

**Criterion D: Information potential**

Accounts and photographs of fox farming activities in and around Lincoln Maine indicate that large ranches were developed on the local landscape. Yet almost nothing of this important but short-lived industry remains today. After the demand for fox furs died out in the 1940s any companies that had not done so already sold their farms to private landowners. Whether the new owners were farmers, businessmen or tradespeople they all eventually removed or buried the wire from the pens, took down the exterior fences and either graded the perimeter ditches and mounds or let the woods reclaim them. As early as 1958 it is only possible to pick out one of the known the former ranches, let alone the stockade or pens, on aerial photographs.<sup>11</sup>

The existence of the berm at the Gordon Fox Farm on West Broadway provides an opportunity, should it ever be excavated, to provide information about the design of the enclosures (pens, palisade, berm) that contained the foxes. In addition, the cellar hole adjacent to the observation tower may provide information about the life ways of the caretakers who oversaw the property. Although the industry has been documented in photographs, contemporary articles and historical research the extent of its disappearance on the landscape elevates the importance of any remaining undisturbed features to yield potential information about fur producing practices.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information (If appropriate.)**

In 1944 Lawrence and Lucy Cliffs sold the parcel that included the former Gordon Fox Farm at 680 West Broadway to James Frank MacDonald and Frances T. MacDonald, who in turn sold it to Minnie Thompson in 1946. Minnie Thompson resided on the property until 1957 when her son Freeman Thompson and his wife Margaret purchased it. It was this later couple who built the garage. Freeman Thompson lived on the property until 1996 and after his death the property was sold by his daughter to the current owner in 2005. It does not appear that any of the Thompsons were involved with fox farming.

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<sup>11</sup> 1958 aerial photographs viewed at NETR On-line Historic Aerials at <http://www.historicaerials.com/aerials.php?op=home>.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Agnes Cole as told to Peggy Kneelenad. "Fox Farming." *Lincoln News*, July 12, 1979: 22.

Champion, Kimberly, Patrick Ledwell, Crystal Fall, et al. *Kensington, P.E.I.* n.d.  
<http://www.kennet.pe.ca/chip/english/farming/foxes.htm> (accessed July 12, 2015).

Conner, Sam E. "But Little Is Left of the Gordon Fox Farm Extensive Purchases." *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 13, 1925: 1, 12.

"Fox Industry Flourishing in Maine." *The Black Fox Magazine*, June 1917: 6-7.

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*Portland Press Herald*. "Fur Farming Industry in Maine Increasing." August 30, 1930.

Sawtell, William R. *The Fox Business With Accounts from Fox Farms in Maine*. [Shirley, Maine], 1994.

*The Black Fox Magazine*. 1917-1922. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012306601> (accessed July 12, 2015). Various articles and advertisements.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 9.6

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84:

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 534324 | Northing: 5020963 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |

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4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the nominated property include all of the land currently associated with the former Gordon Fox Ranch at 680 West Broadway in Lincoln, Maine. The boundaries are described by the town of Lincoln Tax map # 035 lot 007.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property that comprised the the Gordon Fox Ranches (and successor firms) in the South Lincoln vicinity between 1924 and 1940 included multiple lots of land. The nominated property was originally part of the River Lot #9, which included 99 acres at the time of Gordon's purchase. It is unknown how many ranches were established on this large lot, but it appears that the ranch at 680 West Broadway was probably twice as large as the current lot (doubled in width). The other half of that ranch, located to the northeast, contains no buildings or landscape features associated with the fox farming activities and thus was not included in this nomination.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Christi A. Mitchell, Architectural Historian  
 organization: Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
 street & number: 55 Capitol Street  
 city or town: Augusta state: Maine zip code: 04333-0065  
 e-mail: christi.mitchell@maine.gov  
 telephone: (207) 287-1453  
 date: 13 July 2015

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

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- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Gordon Fox Ranch

City or Vicinity: Lincoln

County: Penobscot State: Maine

Photographer: C. Mitchell

Date Photographed: 13 May 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0001.TIF  
*Ranch house, façade and west elevation: facing southwest.*
- 2 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0002.TIF  
*Observation tower center and garage to left; facing northeast*
- 3 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0003.TIF  
*Back of ranch house (left), west elevation of observation tower as viewed from the north edge of the berm; facing east.*
- 4 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0004.TIF  
*New house (left), east elevation of observation tower (center) and garage (right); facing west.*
- 5 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0005.TIF  
*Office, showing slanted exterior wall: facing northeast.*
- 6 of 7 ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0006.TIF  
*South and west elevations of office and south elevation of observation tower with new house and garage in background; facing north.*

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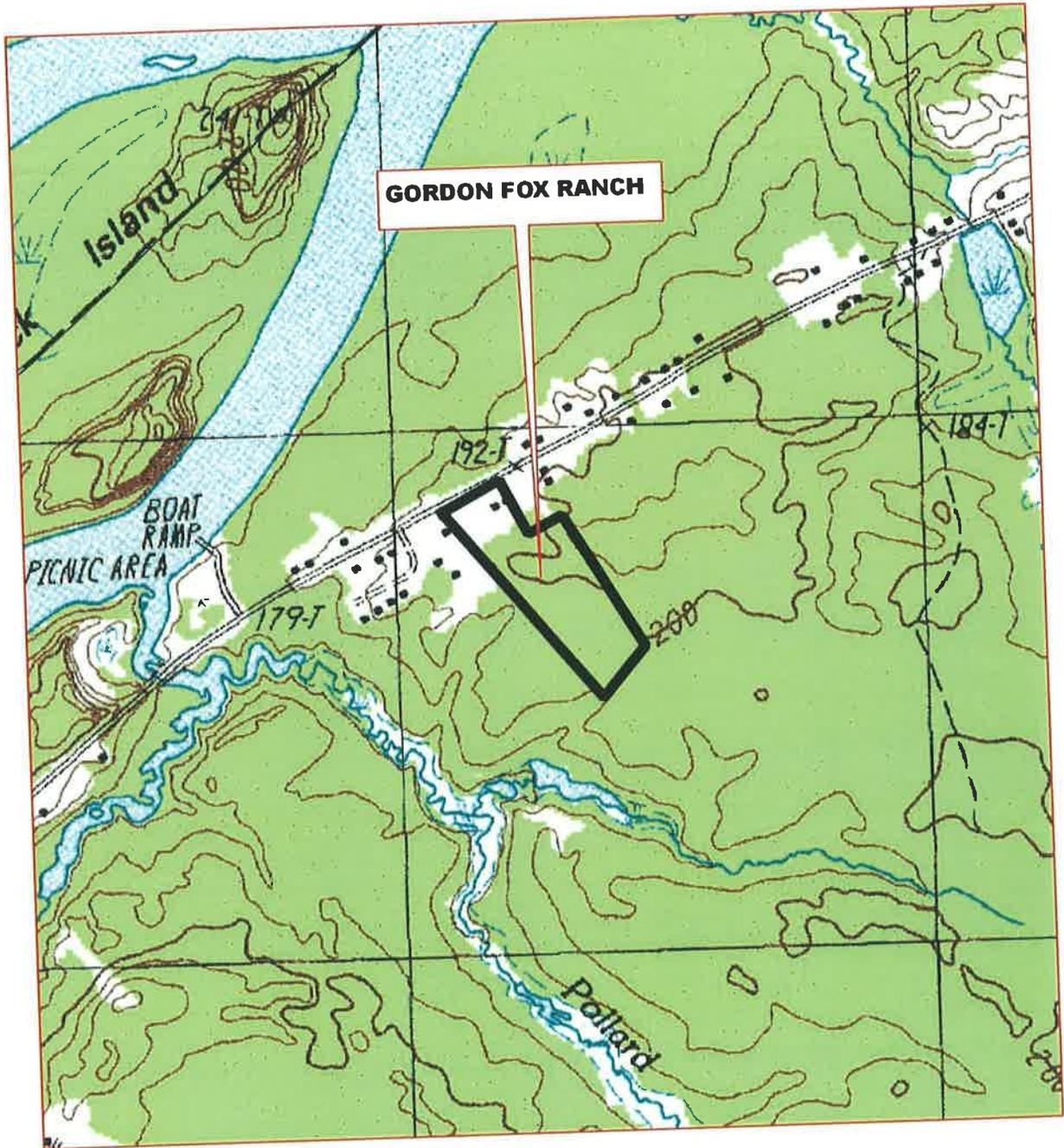
ME\_PENOBSCOT COUNTY\_GORDON FOX RANCH\_0007.TIF

*Berm, facing west. The raised berm is to the right of the garden area and curves gently left at the bottom of the frame. Three small trees are planted along the top of the berm.*

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**16 JUNE 2015**

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UTMs NAD 83 19/ 534324 / 5020963



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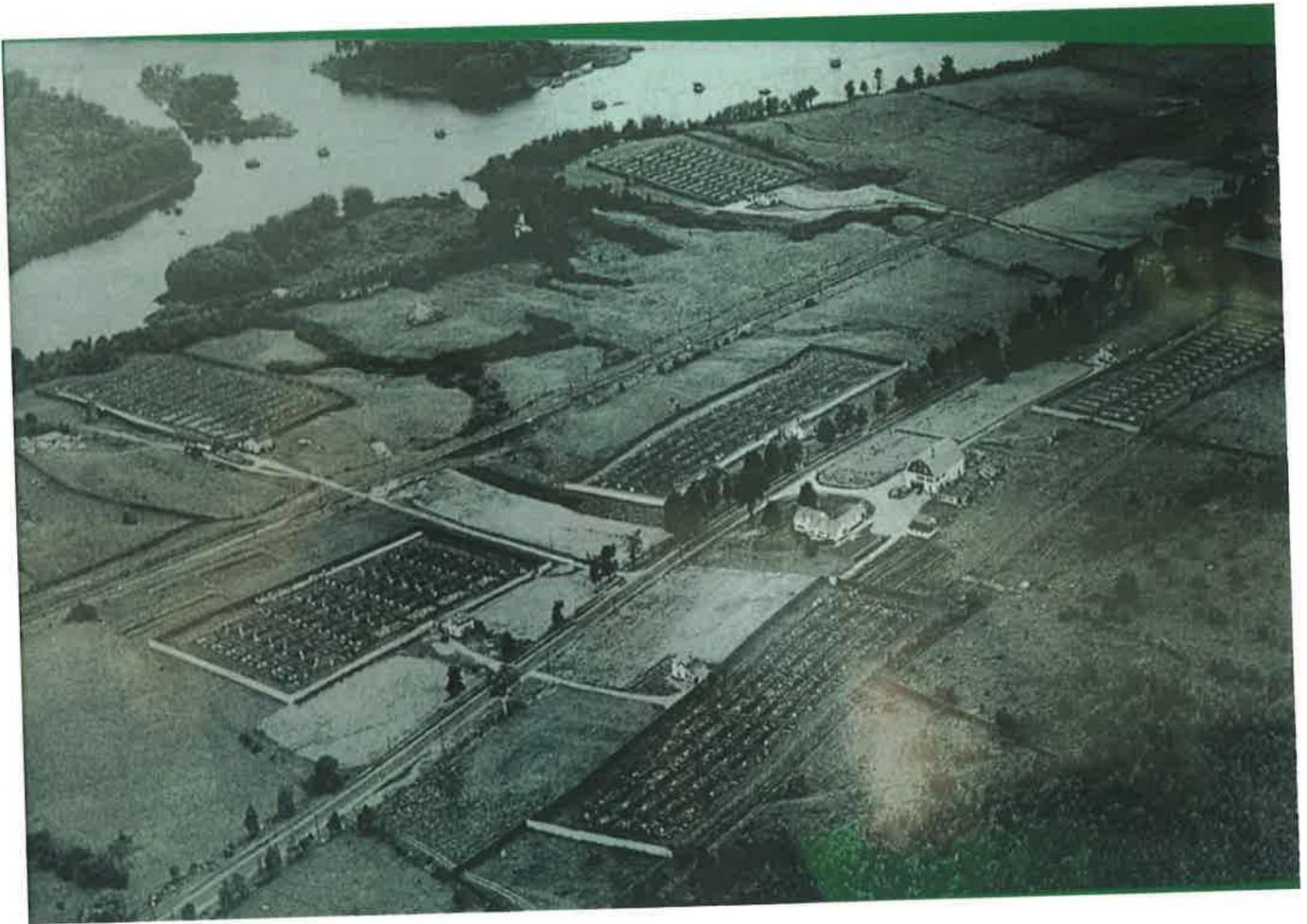
**Figure 1: Location of resources.**

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**Figure 2. Aerial view of Gordon Fox Ranches on Route 2 near West Road. *Photograph of a mounted photograph owned by Ronald Trott, Fox Farm Road, Lincoln, Maine.***













