

Railway Track Winds Through Bog For Twenty-Two Miles

The eight-ton gasoline locomotive, a logging engine, which had been converted from narrow to standard gauge, bucked and swayed as our engineer opened the throttle. Our party was travelling across Burns' Bog on a private railway system consisting of 22 miles of track and spurline, which is the property of Western Peat Company Limited.

Cornelius J. Schult, caretaker and fire-watcher over the 7000 acres of peat bog which is the largest in North America, left the controls of the "locomotive" to point out the endless piles of peat blocks drying hollow chimney-like stacks, stretching almost as far as the eye could see on each side of the railway track.

Every now and again the engine rattled over a siding where track curved away into the bog and as the two and one-half mile mark was reached out from the main plant, we ground to a halt beside a tall wooden tower.

Fire Tower

After climbing to the top plat-

form, approximately 40 feet in the air, we swept the bog with a pair of powerful binoculars. The cleared area was surrounded by a rim of trees, and the long straight ditches from which the peat blocks had been cut, stretched out in orderly rows with the piles of peat, looking somewhat like the prairies with its endless shocks of wheat, stacked for the drying effect of sun and wind.

This Delta bog harvest is sphagnum peat moss, one of many varieties of moss plants that grows in damp marshy areas. It builds up over the centuries and forms large deposits.

Peat has many varied uses and is shipped all over Canada and the United States. It is used in chicken and turkey houses as litter and in stables for bedding. Gardeners use large quantities as do golf course and greenhouses.

Many Uses

Due to the fact that peat moss absorbs and stores, not only soil

moisture but dissolved mineral plant food, lightens heavy clay to make useable loam and gives body to light sandy soil, it is in great demand.

Greenhouses use it for benchwork as it is ideal for growing seedlings and cuttings and its high absorbency when air-dried and sun-cured make it invaluable as a litter. It will absorb 18 to 20 times its own weight in moisture.

Downhill Run

On our return trip our guide let out the clutch of the little locomotive and it started coasting slowly back in the direction of the plant. He pointed out that all peat bogs are rounded and that we had stopped on the highest point. Usually if there is a small lake or pond it will be located at the top of the bog, for some reason.

Before the Western Peat Company's area could be worked the land had to be brushed and drained, he told us. Ditches six feet deep and 40 feet apart were

(Continued on Page 4.)