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STORIES of New Jersey

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CEDAR MINING IN NEW JERSEY'S SUNKEN FOREST

Mining and lumbering, two industries that seem to bear little relation to one another, have been combined uniquely in the swamplands of southern New Jersey in a district that looks as if it would yield nothing but mud and mosquitoes.

A century or more ago a sunken forest of white cedar was discovered in the Great Cedar Swamp which stretches for seven miles across the neck of Cape May peninsula, following the shores of Dennis Creek and Cedar Creek that drain the swamp's overflow.

Early settlers of the region dug into the thick muck of the swamp and brought up great trees that had lain for centuries covered more and more by the accumulation of swamp ooze. From these they cut logs and shingles for their homes.

Cedar mining was an important industry in South Jersey until about 50 years ago. Then, as cheaper cedar lumber was brought in from the northwest, the industry fell into a decline. Recently a small company of men engaged in removing peat for fertilizer from the swamplands near Haleyville in Cumberland County have discovered another sunken forest. Logs buried from 4 to 20 feet deep are now being mined and sent to the sawmill at Dennisville to be sawed into planks. Cedar is valuable for use as shingles, siding for boats, and for other purposes where it will be called on to resist water.



It is this quality of resistance to dampness that has preserved the buried cedar logs that have lain for countless years in the soggy swamp. Lumber cut from them is as usable as that made from living cedar and gives off the same fragrance as if it had been cut yesterday in the green forests.

It is not uncommon to find buried cedar logs

Searching for Cedar Logs. Courtesy Wide World