

News Release - For Immediate Release
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Local Heritage Featured in Rhode Island Exhibit

The destitute lifestyle of early 20th century coal miners in southwestern Pennsylvania is being set this summer against the opulent backdrop of the mansions of Newport, Rhode Island.

“The Elms,” a replica French chateau built in Newport by Edward Berwind, is hosting an exhibit of the history and influence of the mines and miners of Windber, Pennsylvania on America’s growth in the industrial era.

Windber was the production center of the Berwind-White Coal Mining Company and the supplier for worldwide operations. The Windber mines operated from 1897-1962 and produced nearly 173 million tons of coal. The company supplied coal from Windber and its other mines at a rate of 80,000 tons per week to ships in New York Harbor. Berwind-White also became chief supplier to the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine and maintained coal bunkers along the eastern seaboard, at Caribbean ports, and in France and Italy. The story of the impact of Windber’s mines and their miners will be presented to thousands of visitors who will pass through The Elms this year.

The Elms estate was completed in 1901 at a cost of \$1,400,000. By that time, Edward Berwind had been head of the country’s largest individually owned coal company for 11 years. The roots of the Berwind-White Coal Mining Company’s empire ran deep into the ground around Windber, but Berwind spent his summers at The Elms, enjoying Newport’s ocean breezes as a member of society in America’s “Golden Age.”

The Windber Exhibit opened at The Elms this summer and will remain on display through October. It uses a mixture of visual and interactive media to enlighten and inform visitors about the size and scope of the Berwind-White Coal Mining Company. Period clothing, tools, accessories, photographs, and an interactive electronic map of Windber help reveal the importance of Windber - known as the first model mining community. In addition to designing

the Windber exhibit for The Elms, Chris Barkley, Director of the Windber Coal Heritage Center, will present a lecture on Windber's history to the Preservation Society of Newport County and its guests. The Elms is just one of 12 estates administered by the Preservation Society of Newport County.

The Windber Coal Heritage Center is owned and operated by The Progress Fund, a non-profit corporation dedicated to community improvement through project development and financing. The Windber Coal Heritage Center is the area's only interactive bituminous coal museum providing visitors with the opportunity to travel back in time to an early 20th century coal town that was home to several ethnic enclaves. The Coal Heritage Center offers high-tech interactive exhibits that describe the everyday life and stories of the ethnic coal miner and his family, the evolution of coal mining technology, the struggle for unionization, and the impact Berwind-White and the coal industry had on the town, the region and the nation.

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