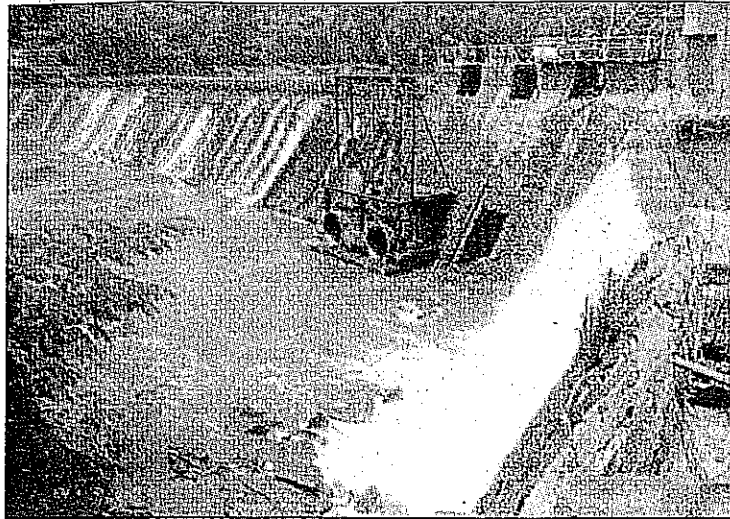


Hydroelectric dam's heritage celebrated as Ware Shoals prepares to get *feastive*



Staff photo by Vic MacDonald

Ware Shoals Hydroelectric Project on the Saluda River turned 100 years old on Thursday and was celebrated Friday with a program at Town Hall.

By **VIC MacDONALD**
Index-Journal regional editor

WARE SHOALS — Cake and catfish came together here Friday as Town Hall hosted a celebration of the town's once-thriving textile industry and still-going hydroelectric dam.

The Ware Shoals Hydroelectric Project turned 100 years old on Thursday, the anniversary of the day the Riegels fed the first cotton into the looms at Ware Shoals Manufacturing. The hydro project and the still-functioning dam that tamed the Saluda River and turned its power into electricity fueled the former textile giant for decades.

Though textiles now are gone from Ware Shoals, a Friday birthday party that included town council members, hydro project employees and town residents celebrated the fact that the stately dam stands proudly beside the shoals.

"We are the quintessential mill town," Mayor George Rush said. "The only problem is, we don't have a mill. The hydro made it all possible."

Though few from the town came to the party, many were working just outside in the town park, serving food and putting final touches on the 26th Annual Catfish Festival that continues today.

Why *feastive*? "We eat our way through it," Rush quipped.

The festival celebrates the good eating that fishing lines can pull from the Saluda River, just a stone's throw from Town Hall, and the family-oriented recreation available at Pitts Park beside the shoals.

The hydro project contributes to the outdoors mecca by marking portage routes around the dam for canoers and kayakers traveling the river, by providing fishing access and by installing duck boxes for nesting.

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DAM

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Water flow from the dam also is timed around the spawning cycles of fish in the river. And the hydro project sponsors a Christmas tree reclamation program.

The hydro project is managed by Consolidated Hydro Southeast Inc. in Piedmont, a subsidiary of Enel North America Inc.

"The FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) license for the hydro-electric plant was just renewed. It is good for 30 years," said Beth Harris, project engineer/manager, regulatory services for Consolidated. "We are working with the community to make the Ware Shoals facility work for everybody."

"We have appreciated your

cooperation all these years," Rush said.

Rush and Harris said the hydro project has been working with an Upstate kayak group to develop a whitewater recreation access area that could attract enthusiasts of that sport to Ware Shoals.

"The canoe and kayak folks like to do that sport on this part of the river," Rush said. "We can use the river for recreational and ecologically sound uses."

On a table in Town Hall, where the birthday cake and punch were served, was a framed archive of the town's history. What is thought to be the first town planning document and map for Ware Shoals has been salvaged and displayed. The May 30, 1906 map was found in the former Riegel textiles plant.

THE FEASTIVAL TODAY

Ware Shoals' 26th annual Catfish Festival continues today with the following schedule:

- 7:45 a.m., start of 5K run/walk at Ware Shoals High School
 - 9:30, mini-parade, West End to downtown
 - 10, opening ceremony — theme: remember the real season for the Memorial Day Weekend; following: WSHS Band with graduates and friends
 - Noon-5 p.m., new band talent search
 - 5-6, 3Fifty
 - 6-7, Danceworks, Etc.
 - 7-11, Hack Bartley and Shuffle
- Children's program includes the following activities:
- 10-11:30 a.m., and 1-1:30 p.m., ventriloquist
 - 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., and 12:30-1 p.m., storyteller
 - Noon-12:30 p.m., and 1:30-2 p.m., magician

And what would any festival be without food:
■ Catfish, chicken, ribs, strawberry shortcake, kettle corn, sub sandwiches, Greek food (gyros), funnel cakes, assorted baked goods, ice cream, lemonade and shaved ice.