## **Power & Beauty**

By Edwin Eugene Ott 20180705

Located in the northwestern part of Laurens County is a wonderful place of natural beauty and history, the great shoals of the Saluda River at Ware Shoals. On the Laurens County side, one can see hydroelectric generating facilities and visit the Irvin Pitts Memorial Park. On the Greenwood County side there are many historic buildings in the Town of Ware Shoals. The park is great place for a picnicking, relaxing, and wildlife viewing. Many visitors wade or swim, but one should be very careful on the rocks and never venture out during high water.

Following is a short history of the hydroelectric facilities and images of the facilities, park, and wildlife:

During the colonial period, most settlement by the Europeans was around large rivers that could be used for navigation. In South Carolina, this limited major settlements to what is now called the Low Country, that is the area from the Coast to the Fall Line, excluding the Sandhills. Early settlement in the Piedmont and Mountains was sparse and primitive.

Following the Revolution and the invention of efficient cotton gins, settlement in the Up Country boomed. To sale cotton, it had to be transported to Fall Line towns like Augusta, GA/Hamburg, SC and Columbia. A period of canal construction in the 1820s was launched in South Carolina. Canals were constructed in Columbia that allowed passage over the Fall Line. It was claimed that the Saluda River was made navigable all the way up river to the great shoals at Ware Shoals, SC. However, cotton farmers in the western Piedmont continued to prefer shipping their cotton overland to the Fall Line ports. The invention of railways doomed the canals to idleness and history. In the 1850s, towns grew up around rail stops throughout the western Piedmont.

One resource of which the western Piedmont had a wealth was waterpower. Small water-powered grist mills sprouted along just about every large creek and river. One such mill was built by William Ware on the Saluda River at its great shoals which became thereafter known as Ware's Shoals. When industrialization came to the Piedmont at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, hydroelectricity generation was a much-prized asset.

Nathaniel B. Dial, president of the National Bank of Laurens, had a vision of building a large textile mill at Ware Shoals that would be powered by hydroelectricity. He formed the Ware Shoals Manufacturing Company and raised investment to begin the project. The first major construction was the dam, aqueduct, and power plant. These facilities were constructed on the Laurens County side of the river. Financial difficulties arose, and further investment was needed from Benjamin Riegel, a New York businessman. Mr. Riegel moved to South Carolina and took over the project. The mill was completed along with a model mill village, known today as the Town of Ware Shoals. The mill later became known as Riegel Mill. With the national decline in the textile industry, the mill was closed and now has been demolished.

See images on following pages:



Figure 1. The Great Falls of the Saluda River at Ware Shoals, SC.



Figure 2. The dam and aqueduct at Ware Shoals, SC.



Figure 3. The aqueduct that transports water diverted to the powerhouse over a half-mile away.



Figure 4. Powerhouse on Saluda River at Ware Shoals, SC.



Figure 5. Entrance sign to Irvin Pitts Memorial Park on Saluda River at Ware Shoals, SC.

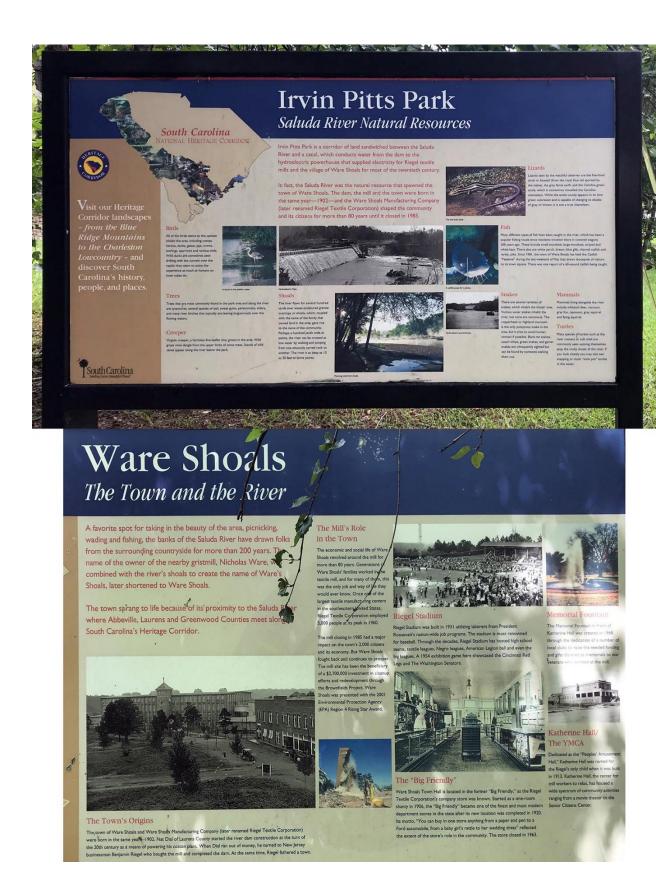


Figure 6. Kiosk at Irvin Pitts Memorial Park.





Figure 7. Irvin Pitts Memorial Park has three shelters.

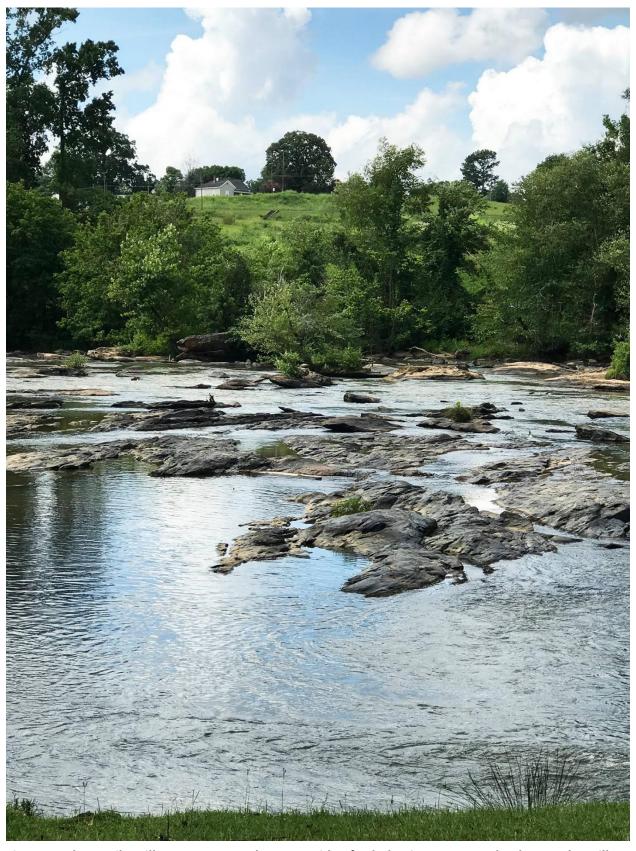


Figure 8. The textile mill was constructed on west side of Saluda River at Ware Shoals, SC. The mill has been removed.

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Figure 9. Toilet facilities at Irvin Pitts Memorial Park.

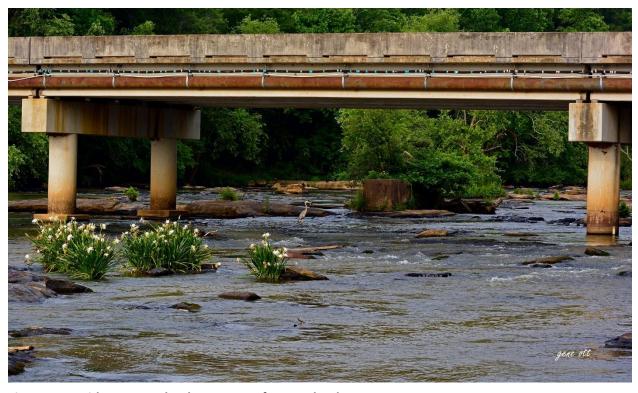


Figure 10. Bridge across shoals to Town of Ware Shoals, SC.



Figure 11. Rocky Shoals Tiger Lilies in bloom at shoals.



Figure 12. A boulder showing the power of moving water.



Figure 13. Great Blue Heron at shoals.



Figure 14. Baby Gulf-coast Spiny Softshell Turtle at shoals.



Figure 15. Domestic geese live at park and are well-fed by visitors.

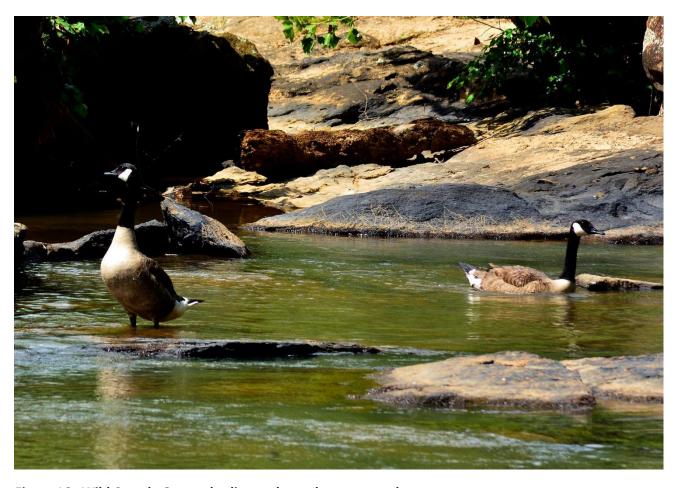


Figure 16. Wild Canada Geese also live at the park year around.