Billeaud Sugar Mill in Broussard, La. was started by Martial Billeaud and was the largest sugar mill in the western area of Louisiana's vast sugar cane belt.

The original shed, which housed Martial Billeaud's first mule-driven crushing mill and open syrup kettle, stood near the site until the late 1930s, when it was destroyed by a storm.

Martial Billeaud was born in Bourgneuf, France, in 1836. In 1840, his family moved to the United States and settled in Vermilionville (now Lafayette).

Billeaud, like his father, became a blacksmith near Vermilionville. Eventually, he moved to the present site of Broussard.

He married Lucille St. Julien and the couple had five children, which started the "Broussard" branch of the Billeaud family.

In 1866, Martial leased a plot of land on which he grew sugar cane which was converted to syrup using a mule-driven crushing mill and open cooking kettles. In 1872, he converted from syrup to sugar, and in 1895, he incorporated the business as the Billeaud Sugar Factory Inc.

In the meantime, he bought thousands of acres of land to raise sugar cane.

The business is still in the family and has been operated by five generations of Billeauds.

In 1966, the Billeaud Sugar Factory was cited by the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce as the oldest business in continuous operation in this area. The factory was closed in 1980.

This photo is part of the permanent collection on display at the Lafayette Parish Clerk of Court office in the Parish Courthouse.