

In late 1998, as the Southern Forest Heritage Museum was getting its start, A woman named Evon Ballard Sonnier presented the Museum with a set of eight 2" X 3" black and white prints which had belonged to her family.

From time to time, one or more of these prints graced the pages of the Museum's quarterly newsletter "Edges and Trimmings" during the early years of the Museum.

Evon's parents worked and lived at Long Leaf during the 1930's and 1940's. Her father, Clarence was a machinist in the shop, and her mother Irene, ran the Long Leaf Hotel. At that time, the Hotel was almost brand new, having opened on September 1, 1936, replacing the old hotel built about 1913.

The hotel was more of a glorified boarding house / restaurant, than it was a 4 star Hotel by today's standards, but in 1941, it was probably the best that there was for miles around. The primary function of the hotel was to provide housing for single men working at the mill, rooms for travelers (mostly salesmen) and anyone else that might need lodging or food. The hotel dining room was open to all and served 3 square meals a day. Room and board was \$1.00 per day, while a single meal cost just 25 cents.

As construction began at Camp Claiborne, the hotel also overflowed with construction workers both staying at the hotel, or simply showing up for meals as Irene Ballard had such a reputation for good cooking that the hotel was known locally as the "Ballard Beanery".