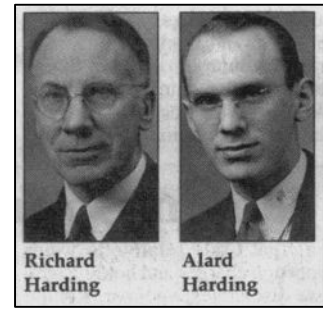


**HARDING STUDIO**  
Cookeville's Past in Photography  
By Jill Thomas  
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN  
Sunday, 13 June 2004  
<http://www.ajlambert.com>



In 1914 a young photographer from Indiana opened a studio in Cookeville, TN.

For the next 30 years, Richard Henry Harding made it his business to make Cookevillians look good. When he died in 1944, his son, Alard, continued the family business until 1974.

Now, some 65 of the more than 80,000 images taken by father and son at the Harding Studio between 1916 and 1974 will be highlighted in a new exhibit, *Images of Our Lives*, which opens Thursday at the Cookeville History Museum.

But the exhibit is not just about photos. Thanks to generous loans from the Tennessee State Museum, Tennessee Tech (which now owns the Harding Studio collection and photos) and to private donors, museum curator Larry Slaboda has been able to place on display the original turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century equipment used by Richard Harding.

“I was flabbergasted at what they had (at the Tennessee State Museum). I envisioned a medium-sized studio camera or two, something boxy you could set on a table or hold in your hands,” Slaboda said.

Instead, he found himself displaying huge, mounted cameras and five-foot-long enlargers that practically took up all the display areas in the little museum.

Cameras featured in the exhibit include:

A Graflex Century Master Studio Camera and stand made by Bausch & Lomb, an optics company known today for contact lenses.

“It’s absolutely beautiful,” Slaboda said. “It looks almost new.”

The wooden gears and braces have a quality that 100 years has not lessened and a shine that has improved through age and handling.

All visitors to the exhibit will automatically get a close-up view of the camera since they have to walk around it to get to the rest of the exhibit. The only place Slaboda could find that was large enough to hold the camera was in the center of the room.

There is a revolving circuit camera.

“They didn’t have a wide-angle lens, so they used this to get the same effect,” Slaboda said.

The camera is set on a tripod on top of a sort of lazy-susan turntable. The people to be in the photo were placed in a semi-circle and the camera panned across them very slowly. When the photo was developed the semi-circle look was gone and everyone seemed to be standing in a straight line.

“There’s a photo in the archives of Tennessee Tech where the east dorm and the west dorm appear to be standing side by side,” Slaboda said.

The most familiar photo from many which illustrate the workings of the circuit camera is the one in the permanent collection of the museum showing Dibrell’s 8<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry Regiment. It pictures a line of men on horseback in a wide-angle view of the Civil War vets. Even knowing that the men had not been in a straight line, but in a semi-circle, doesn’t change the effect of the photo.

There’s an elegant studio camera from about 1890 with a brass-enclosed French lens donated by Caroline Lowe Brown of Cookeville.

There are many more cameras on display. Slaboda became so fascinated by the old equipment that he set up a “photographic time-line as part of the exhibit. Cameras in that part of the exhibit. Cameras in the display include a variety from early hand-held cameras to old Brownies to a 1960’s James Bond spy camera.

In addition to the old cameras, the Harding Studio part of the exhibit includes ancient wooden boxes and glass plates, carbon arc spotlights and assorted memorabilia that Mary Harding Johns – Alard’s daughter, now a Cookeville dentist – saved after the studio was shut down and then donated to the Tennessee Tech State Museum.

But the main things in this striking exhibit are of course, the photos:

Elegant black and white portraits of women in the fashion of the day with hair styles that date from the 1920’s through the 1940’s.

A team shot of the girl’s basketball team at the former Darwin School, a school for African Americans in west Cookeville, perhaps from the 1940’s.

A hand-colored photo of a child’s funeral done in pastels that make the situation look cheery and surreal:

One of the many aerial shots taken by Alard Harding as he lay on the floor of an airplane with friends holding his legs to keep him from falling out:

A Christmas photo of four happy children sitting on the hard floor in front of a Christmas tree, each with one gift a piece.

And on and on.

Who are the people in the photos?

We may never know.

“Richard Harding had his own filing system,” said Slaboda. “He filed photos under the names of the people who paid the bills, not the subjects of the pictures. We may never know who the people are in these shots,” he said.

“Some day I’d like to open this up and display everything and have the community come in and see if they can identify their relatives,” he said.

The photographic studio was a family affair with father and son behind the camera: Alard’s wife, Mary (called “Lovey” by family and friends), doing the hand coloring of prints and the oil backgrounds; and Alard’s young nephew, Richard, helped with the proofs during his high school years.

But the studio on Cookeville’s Westside business district was closed in the 1970’s when the photography industry began to go through so many changes and Lovey’s health was deteriorating.

For years, all the old glass plates and negatives, equipment and history were boxed up in the attic of the former studio on Broad St. Then the material was divided up and given to Tennessee Tech to borrow their collections,” Slaboda said.

“After that, putting it all together became a career!” he added.

“We could never have done this without the help we received,” he museum director Judy Dukes. “We were able to put this together with only \$4,000 and an additional \$1,000 that was donated by the Friends of the History Museum.”

“Everybody - - the Tennessee State Museum, TTU, private donors - - everybody donated so much. And vices department was invaluable in helping with the images. We can’t thank Mansil Johnson and Dean Carothers enough for their help,” she said.

The exhibit opens this coming Thursday, June 17, 2004, at 10 a.m. The Cookeville History Museum is located at 144 Lowe Ave. in Cookeville, TN, south of the Courthouse Square and across from the back of the Justice Center. Museum hours are Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Call (931) 520-5455 for additional information.



Cookeville’s Past in Photography  
Photo by Camille Fliss

Mary Linda Harding Johns, Alard Harding’s daughter and Steve Johns, both Cookeville dentists, and her cousin, Richard Harding, at right, who holds a photo of his and Mary Linda’s grandfather, the late Richard Henry Harding who founded the Harding Studio in Cookeville, TN.

**Harding Photo Exhibit Opening**  
Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN  
16 June 2004

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographic equipment and vintage photos taken in Putnam County highlight the new exhibit opening today at the Cookeville History Museum.

The exhibit is free to the public and features the work of father-son team who recorded portraits of the people and many of the goings-on in Putnam County from 1914-1974.

Early equipment owned and created by Richard Harding has been loaned to the museum from the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville and Tennessee Tech has loaned the museum photos from its collection of more than 80,000 photos negatives and pictures from the Harding Studio.

While the grand opening for the exhibit was to be held at 4 p.m. today, it may be viewed after today during regular museum hours – Thursday, Friday and Saturday of each week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Cookeville History Museum is at 144 Lowe Ave. in Cookeville, across from the Putnam Justice Center, TN.

Call: (931) 520-5455 for additional information.



At Cookeville History Museum  
Herald-Citizen Newspaper: 20 June 2004-Page7  
Photo by: Shawn Sidwell

Family members of the late Richard and Allard Harding, two generations of photographers who operated studios in Cookeville for 60 years, from 1914 until 1974, gathered last week at the Cookeville History Museum for the grand opening of a retrospective exhibit featuring the Hardingses' work and the equipment they used when photography was still in its youth. From left are Dr. Steve Johns; Mary Jennifer Johns; Chandler Johns; Dr. Mary Linda Johns, daughter of Alard and granddaughter of Richard Harding; Andrew Johns; Jucille Davis, longtime employee in the Harding Studio; Ruth Harding and Richard Harding, grandson of Richard Henry Harding; Donna Thomsen, a granddaughter, and Bill Thomsen; and Ursa Jean Burris, also a granddaughter, and Gene Burris. Hours for the museum, in a yellow house at 144 South Lowe Ave., across from the Putnam County Justice Center, are 10 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. each Thursday, Friday and Saturday; admission is free, and the public is welcomed. For information, call (931) 520-5455.

**Alard Clark Harding** – b. 20 January 1915, TN – d. 4 October 1980, Putnam Co., TN  
(1<sup>st</sup> Lt. U.S. Army WWII)

**Mary “Lovey” (Wayenberg) Harding** – b. 25 December 1913 – d. 31 October 1986  
Both Buried: Crest Lawn Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN

**Donald Henry Harding** – b. 24 July 1911, Logansport, IN – d. 13 January 1956, TN,  
s/o **Richard Henry Harding** (1883-1943) & **Ursa Carpenter** (1887-1956).

**Edith (Palk) Harding** – b. 31 January 1916 – d. 12 December 1983, d/o

**William B. Palk & Alice Delina Randolph.**

Both Buried: Crest Lawn Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN



Alard Clark Harding



Young Donald Henry Harding poses for his father, Richard Henry Harding early in the last century. Harding opened Harding Studios in the early 1900s and another son, Alard Harding took over and operated the studio into the 1960s.

Picture taken from the Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN on Sunday, 29 August 2004.

1900 Census 13<sup>th</sup> Dist., Broadway, Eel, Cass, IN

Dwl: 1805 – 88 – 91

**Richard A. Harding** is head of household, 57 yrs. old, b. February 1843, Jamacia W. I., md 19 yrs. to **Charlotte A.**, 42 yrs. old, b. September 1857, Canada (Eng), (father born in England, mother, Canada (Eng), 4 children born, 4 children living. Children: **Richard H.**, 17 yrs. old, b. January 1883, IN; Karl, 14 yrs. old, b. March 1886, IN; Bertha, 11 yrs. old, b. October 1888, IN & Inez Harding, 8 yrs. old, b. March 1892, IN.

1910 Census Ward 5, Logansport, Cass, IN

Dwl: 1618 – 457 - 480

**Richard H. Harding** is head of household, 26 yrs. old, IN, Occupation: Mail Clerk Station Railroad, md to **Ursa**, 23 yrs. old, IN. Child: Richard Harding, 11/12 yrs. old, IN.

1920 Census 1<sup>st</sup> Dist., Putnam Co., TN – Washington Ave.

Dwl: 246 Family: 277 Line: 54

**Harding, Richard (H)enry** Head M W Owns 37 Married Photographer Studio IN Canada Canada

**Harding, Ursa** Wife F W 32 Married IN IN IN

**Harding, Donald (H)enry** Son M W 8 IN IN IN

(Donald Harding, born 24 Jul. 1911, IN – died 13 Jan. 1956 md Edith Palk, born 31 January 1916 – died 12 Dec. 1983. Both buried in Crest Lawn Cemetery, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN).

**Harding, Alard (C)lark** Son M W 4 11/12 TN IN IN

(Alard Clark Harding, born 4 Jan. 1915, TN – died 4 Oct. 1980. He md Mary “Lovey” Wayenberg, born 25 Dec. 1913 – died 31 Oct. 1986, both buried in the Crest Lawn Cemetery, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN).

Social Security Death Index:

Name: **Alard Harding**

SSN: 411-07-7151

Last Residence: 38501 Cookeville, Putnam, Tennessee, U.S.A

Born: 20 Jan 1915  
Died: Oct 1980 State (Year)  
SSN issued: Tennessee (Before 1951 )  
Name: **Donald H. Harding**  
SSN: 408-76-3589  
Last Residence: 37206 Nashville, Davidson, **Tennessee**, U. S. A  
Born: 13 Jan 1951  
Last Benefit: 37206 Nashville, Davidson, Tennessee, U. S. A  
Died: 15 Dec 1997 State (Year)  
SSN issued: Tennessee (1963 )

Herald Citizen Newspaper:

(May 29, 1913) R.L. Harding has opened a photography studio here. He was associated for past two years with the W.S. Lively photographic business in McMinnville and has purchased the Baxter Studio here and moved his family to Cookeville. John Baxter is returning to his home in Delaware.



**IMAGES COMMENDED**

Photography in Cookeville, TN

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN 2005

Lara Brossoit, at left, holds the 'Award of Commendation' presented recently by the Tennessee Association of Museums to the Cookeville History Museum for its exhibit, 'Images of Our Lives: The Harding Studio, 'designed and constructed by her father, Larry Slaboda, who died last June after completing the work. Clockwise around a giant camera from the studio operated in Cookeville by Richard H. Harding and his son Alard are, in back, Steve Johns; Richard Harding, grandson of Richard H. Harding; Mary Linda Johns, daughter of Alard Harding; Judy Duke, Cookeville museums administrator; and Madison Brossoit, Lara's daughter. The free exhibit will continue through May at 144 South Lowe Ave, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN.



**HARDING STUDIO**

The Harding Studio had its beginnings long before it opened its doors on Broad Street in 1916. Five years earlier Richard Henry Harding, a young man from Logansport, Indiana enrolled at the Southern School of Photography in McMinnville. His instructor, a renowned photographer, W. S. Lively, thought so highly of his student that he asked him to run the Lively Studios there, which he did. Later, while still a student, he opened his own studio on Cookeville's City Square... He moved it to West Broad Street in 1916, a location that was to become home to two generations of the Harding family business, and a location that seventy five years later would be placed on the National Register of Historic Places, a lasting tribute to the contributions to local history preserved in the product of this business.. thousands of images recording the lives and times of those generations that they served.

Picture of Richard Henry Harding and information found at the Cookeville History Museum, Cookeville, TN.

**Alard Clark Harding Obt.**

**COOKEVILLE** – Alard C. Harding, who for many years operated the Harding Studio of photography on Cookeville’s Westside, died Saturday morning, Oct. 4, 1980, at his home here.

Funeral services will be conducted in the chapel of Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home on Monday at 1 p.m. Mr. Harding was 65.

He was a veteran of World War II and a member of the First United Presbyterian Church.

The family will receive friends at the funeral home Sunday night from 7-9.

Officiating at Monday’s services will be the Rev. David Campbell. Burial will be in Crest Lawn Cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Mary “Lovey” Wayenberg Harding; a daughter, Mary Linda Harding Johns; and a nephew, Richard Harding.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society.

Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN: 5 October 1980.



Pictured is Alard Clark Harding (1915-1980). He became the first Eagle Scout of Putnam County on December 28, 1928. He had earned 28 merit badges at that point. Troop No. 12 was chartered in 1912 and later became Troop No. 108 as the districts were reorganized in 1930. Alard was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Henry Harding, who founded Harding Studio in 1913 and who took this photograph as well as numerous others in this publication. Courtesy of Dr. Steve Johns.

Source: Images of America Cookeville and Putnam County, TN, pg. 71.



Alard Harding, Cookeville’s first Eagle Scout, entered the U. S. Army in the Spring of 1942. He took basic training at Fort Benning, GA, after which he was assigned to the 66<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment. He served in France where he attained the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in WWII. He was discharged in 1945. He held the Bronze Star and other decorations.

**Harding Attains Honor For Superb Work:**

Word has just come of the distinction awarded our fellow townsman, R. H. Harding, in an exhibit and competition at the Golden Anniversary Convention of the Photographers Association of America, just concluded from July 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, at Milwaukee, WI. The Harding Studio was permitted to exhibit three fine examples of the photographers art, a likeness of a man, of a woman, and of a mother and child. This contest was open to members all over the United States and Canada, and it is indeed a unique and highly prized honor to be thus selected as a craftsman capable of producing work of the highest order. Those three photographs will compose a part of the Traveling Loan Exhibit of the Association and will be shown in all the principal cities of the U. S. and Canada, and will be displayed in the widows of the Harding Studio soon.

We are proud of our townsman and his splendid work.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 7 August 1930

**Lieut. Alard C. Harding, U. S. Army, Promoted:**

First Lieutenant Alard C. Harding, U. S. Army, now serving somewhere in Germany, has recently been promoted from the rank of a Second Lieutenant to his present rank, according to information received by his mother, Mrs. R. H. Harding, of Washington Avenue.

Lieut. Harding has been with an Armored Tank Division serving with the Ninth Army since going overseas the early part of last year and at the present in maintenance and executive officer of a Headquarters Company of the Ninth Army. He was in England, France, and other combat areas in Europe before going into Germany.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech, receiving his degree there in 1936 at which time he was also awarded the Science Medal. Since entering the service, he was stationed at Ft. Knox, KY, and Ft. Benning, GA. At Ft. Knox, he was commissioned a second Lieutenant.

Lieut. Harding is married and his wife, Mrs. Mary Weyenberg Harding, is residing in Louisville, KY. In civilian life, he was associated in business with his father, the late R. H. Harding, who earned and operated the Harding Studio.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 15 March 1945.

**Liet Alard C. Harding Awarded Bronze Star**

First Lieutenant Alard C. Harding, who has been in the European Theatre of War for the past year is now stationed in Germany, and is with the 67<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and wears on his shoulder loop a green strip (showing combat troop leader) on which is the regimental insignia. Lieut. Harding saw service in France and was in the Battle of the Belgium Bulge. He has been awarded the Bronze Star for heroic achievement against the enemy on January 10. On his ETO Ribbon are four battle stars.

Since V-E Day he has spent much time in Germany, and for several weeks was stationed in Berlin. He recently sent his mother, Mrs. R. H. Harding, a collection of interesting snapshots made during his stay there, showing buildings of historic interest, famous statutes (not destroyed by bombs), views of Linden, once considered the most famous street in Europe, and many others. In a recent letter, Lieut. Harding states "the total devastation and destruction of Berlin is beyond imagination until one has seen it – it really is an education. His homecoming is indefinite.

The junior Mrs. Harding makes her home in Louisville, KY, while he is away on foreign duty.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 30 August 1945.

**The Hardings Return From Visit With Daughter:**

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Harding, their son and daughter, Richard and Donna Harding, have returned from a two week's visit in Little Creek, VA, which is located near Norfolk. They were guests of their daughter and sister, Mrs. V. E. Burris, Jr., Mr. Burris and infant son. Mr. Burris is stationed there with the United States Navy.

The Hardings went especially to see their grandson and nephew born, July 29, who has been given the name of Ronald Mark. He and his parents are receiving numerous congratulations from any friends here, their former home, and their circle of naval friends. Mrs. Burris is the former Miss Jean Harding and the baby's paternal grandparents, are Mr. and Mrs. V. E. Burris of Cookeville.

Putnam County Herald, Cookeville, TN: Thursday, 25 August 1955.

**Richard Henry Harding**

b. 13 January 1883, Logansport, IN

d. 12 January 1943, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

Wife: Ursa Carpenter, md 18 August 1908, Logansport, IN

Father: Richard Alexander Harding

Mother: Charlotte Ann Wales

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